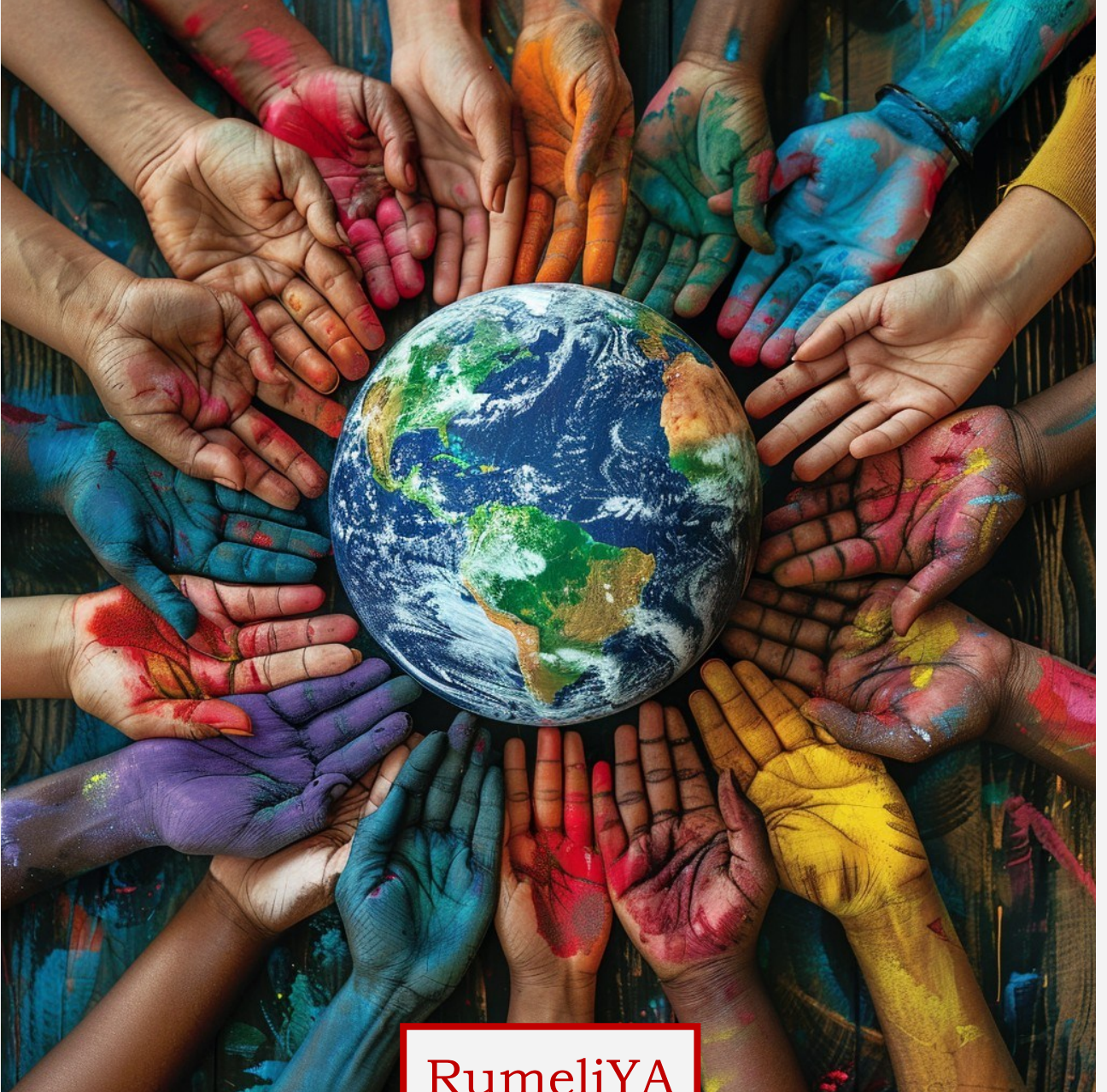


DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND BILDUNG

An Interpretation

Özgün Şerif Sağdıç



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Preface

Freedom heightens energy, and, as the natural consequence, promotes all kinds of liberality. Coercion stifles energy, and engenders all selfish desires, and all the mean artifices of weakness. Coercion may prevent many transgressions; but it robs even actions which are legal of a part of their beauty. Freedom may lead to many transgressions, but it lends even to vices a less ignoble form (Wilhelm von Humboldt, *The Limits of State Action*, 1792).

The core idea of this book is the concept of *Bildung*, which has profoundly influenced educational thought in German-speaking countries, as well as in Scandinavia and Continental Europe. *Bildung* is a German word. Its scope of use has expanded over time, and it has taken on different meanings. The term's etymology can be traced back to 13th-century, where it was first used. Intellectually speaking, there are obvious similarities with ancient education.

This book explores the challenges of democratic citizenship education from the perspective of the concept of *Bildung*. As the concept of *Bildung* has undergone numerous transformations over the centuries, it is important to examine its evolution through the lens of a particular thinker. The concept of *Bildung* grew in significance in the German intellectual world as its interpretation evolved over time. The story of Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) is a good example of this. He was a multifaceted thinker who was a linguist, education researcher, anthropologist, and political philosopher. His works consistently took as their starting point the human being and the potential inherent in humanity. He was raised as an aristocrat to gain influence in Prussian politics, but he dedicated himself to a completely different function of *Bildung*: bridging the gap between popular culture and the upper classes of society. This is precisely why I chose to approach this research through Humboldt's interpretation of the concept of *Bildung*: the idea that the concept possesses the power to reduce class divisions.

During the Enlightenment, educational theories and their applications were the subject of intense debate; these debates gave rise to fundamental issues that are still discussed in the literature today. Humboldt was a central figure in these debates. These were the different facets of his multifaceted identity, but all of them were tied together by one common thread: the human being and the potential inherent in humanity. Humboldt was convinced that education was the key to fostering a social and universal identity. Humboldt's entire intellectual world was deeply rooted in this idea. His political theory, which contributed to the development of liberalism, clearly reflected this. He believed that the state had to be organized as an institution that would lay the groundwork for individual education. Humboldt's current international scholarship positions him firmly outside his conventional portrait: as a thinker closely aligned with democratic culture and intercultural dialogue. This book focuses directly on Humboldt, but its broader aim is to open a door to the debates on education conducted by Continental European thinkers.

Humboldt's theory of *Bildung* has recently been discussed in the international literature on a range of topics. These include gender and the role of women (Kuster, 2022), postcolonialism and sexism (Spieker & Wischmann, 2022), international communication (Walker, 2022), theories of civil society (Benner, 2023b), and cosmopolitanism (Mattig, 2023). Current compilations and guides in the fields of democratic education and citizenship education also draw on the perspectives of various thinkers. This book, however, sets out a unique interpretation of democratic citizenship education in the tradition of Humboldt. It is very important to talk about the problems of education for democratic citizens today, and to do this in the context of Humboldt's theory of *Bildung*. This book confidently puts the theory of

Bildung at the center of Humboldt's ideas and provides a definitive interpretation of this theory in the context of education for democratic citizenship.

Chapter I of the book introduces the concept of *Bildung*. In Chapter II, I examine the ideas of the thinkers who influenced the secularization of *Bildung*. In Chapter III, I present Humboldt's neo-humanist theory of *Bildung* and his views on the Enlightenment and democracy. Chapter IV addresses democratic citizenship education and some of the current problems in this field. In Chapter V, I present a discussion of the philosophy of education that addresses current issues in democratic citizenship education from Humboldt's perspective on *Bildung*. At the end of the book, I have added the Humboldt's biography with his intellectual life and contributions to educational thought.

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Author's Biography



Özgün Şerif Sağdıç completed a graduate degree on the modular Philosophy of Education programme at Ankara University in 2019. He earned his PhD from Ankara University's Institute of Educational Sciences, Department of Philosophical, Social, and Historical Foundations of Education in 2026. His doctoral dissertation is titled *Democratic Citizenship Education Based on Wilhelm von Humboldt's Theory of Bildung*. Alongside his academic career, he has gained professional experience working as an educator in private institutions, an international trade manager, and a freelance translator. His scholarly portfolio includes books, peer-reviewed articles, conference papers, and book translations. He is an active contributor to the academic community, serving on the editorial board and reviewing for a range of national and international publications. He currently serves as Chair of the Organizing Committee for the 2nd National Congress on the Philosophy of Education and participates in research projects funded by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TÜBİTAK), while also conducting postdoctoral work focused on democratic citizenship education.

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Wilhelm von Humboldt (Portrait by Thomas Lawrence)

Abbreviations¹

Ideenschrift	Ideen zu einem Versuch, die Grenzen der Wirksamkeit des Staates zu bestimmen (The Limits of State Action)
Bildungsschrift	Theorie der Bildung des Menschen (Theory of Bildung)
Anthropologie-Schrift	Plan einer vergleichenden Anthropologie (Plan for a comparative anthropology)
Die Vasken	Die Vasken oder Bemerkungen auf einer Reise durch Biscaya und das französische Basquenland im Frühling des Jahrs 1801 (The Basques, or Observations on a Journey through Biscay and the French Basque Country in the Spring of 1801)
Schulplan	Der königsberger und der litauische Schulplan (The Königsberg and the Lithuanian School Plan)
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
GCE	Global Citizenship Education
CMEB	Commission on Multi-Ethnic Britain

¹ The main text uses the abbreviations for Humboldt's works that are commonly used in German literature.

1 Introduction

This chapter explores the theoretical and historical foundations of the concept of *Bildung*, which is central to this book. First, the layers of meaning within the concept are explained and its differences from *Erziehung* are highlighted. The reasons why it cannot be easily translated into English and why it is retained in its original German form in this book are justified.

What is *Bildung*? General Definitions

Basically, *Bildung* is all about the intellectual and spiritual growth of the individual (DWDS, 2025). Beyond its meaning as education, *Bildung* also conveys the concepts of enlightenment, civilization, and the enrichment of cultural heritage. When we think about it in terms of teaching, it's not just about gaining, understanding, or learning new information. It's also about how it can make life better for people (Ødegaard & White, 2018, p. 74). *Bildung* is also defined as an education that includes a person's intellectual transformation, self-development, and acculturation (Sağdıç, 2021, p. 228). So, we can't reduce the concept to just one of these meanings. Instead, we can explain it based on the relationships these meanings have with each other.

Bildung is a lifelong process of development that includes how learning activities are integrated into one's own life and self-understanding (Klafki, 2000, p. 90; Varkøy, 2010, p. 89). So, the idea is like an educational journey that starts when we're kids and keeps going until we're old. *Bildung* is a lifelong journey of both struggle and opportunity. It's all about developing critical thinking skills, shaping your character, and discovering yourself (Sjöström & Eilks, 2020, p. 56). It's not just about formal education, but about all kinds of learning, like for adults, and public education, and spreading knowledge to the public. It's also about cultural enrichment and helping people become well-rounded individuals.

The Distinction Between *Bildung* and *Erziehung*

To clarify the difference between the two concepts, I will take a closer look at *Erziehung*. In the twentieth century and today, *Erziehung* is primarily defined through an educational approach that emphasizes socialization. Wulf (1984) defines it as "a process of socialization that, while purposeful and goal-oriented within the framework of pedagogical rules, can also occur unintentionally" (p. 187). Another definition highlights the institutional aspect of education: "*Erziehung* corresponds the moral communication between individuals and institutions, as well as with and through the media, insofar as it aims to have a lasting impact and presupposes a power imbalance" (Oelkers, 2004, p. 303). Both definitions address *Erziehung* within its institutional and social context. Furthermore, their mention of the tools and communication used in education indicates that they encompass meanings related to the educational process.

The distinction between *Bildung* and the concept of *Erziehung*, which refers directly to education, dates to the second half of the eighteenth century. However, a clear distinction between the two has yet to be established; even during that period, *Erziehung* and *Bildung* were used interchangeably (Vierhaus, 1974, p. 511). The primary reason for this lack of clarity is that *Erziehung*, just like *Bildung*, is a pedagogical concept with deep historical roots. *Erziehung* defines education as the process of enabling individuals to engage in purposeful action together with and for others, whereas *Bildung* concerns itself with the content and outcome of this education. An educational book published in Leipzig in the early nineteenth century presents this distinction with the following definition: "*Erziehung* should educate (*bilden*) people in a humane way (i.e., in a way appropriate to their nature)" (Zachariä von Lingenthal, 1802, p. 143). The use of the verb *bilden* instead of *erziehen* in the predicate of this sentence indicates that *Bildung* represents the outcome achieved through education.

Can *Bildung* be Translated Into English?

In Grimm's (1860) classic dictionary, which traces the earliest uses of *Bildung*, it is specifically emphasizes that the concept is unique to the German language (p. 22). It is precisely at this point that the ongoing debates in the literature regarding how *Bildung* can be translated into other languages become apparent.

Regarding the possibility of translating the concept into English, the following points can be noted: *Bildung* is regarded as a concept derived from the legacy of German idealism that cannot be translated into English due to its historical baggage (Kokkos, 2017, p. 331; Ødegaard & White, 2018, p. 74; Sjöström, Frerichs, Zuin, & Eilks, 2017, p. 166). English terms such as *formation*, *culture*, *self-cultivation*, *education*, and *edification* fall short of capturing the concept's philosophical depth. Differences in worldviews across cultures also complicate the translation of the concept. Consequently, directly equating *Bildung* with *education* in English carries the risk of overlooking the concept's rich cultural and historical heritage, as well as its unique philosophical context, which encompasses discussions in the realms- of ethics, critical thinking, and values (Sjöström et al., 2017, p. 166). In the international literature on the philosophy of education, the term has also been retained in its original German form to prevent a narrowing of meaning (Elmose & Roth, 2005; Standish, 2002).

Many thinkers have interpreted *Bildung*, and the concept has found its own unique counterparts in various disciplines according to the era. This also leads to the following conclusion: *Bildung* should be viewed as a system of thought rather than merely a concept. To make sure that the meaning isn't limited, the original German version of the concept is also used in this book.

The Historical Development of *Bildung*

In this section, Humboldt's approach is examined from the perspective of *humanistic education* and the ideal of reaching humanity through education. First, the historical background of the concept of *Bildung* is explored; the section touches on the concept's common counterparts in the German educational tradition and how Enlightenment-era educators approached the concept. The secularization of *Bildung* is considered in conjunction with the question of how education was transformed by the Enlightenment. For this reason, the views of the thinkers who inspired the Enlightenment are also reinterpreted.

Educational theorist Klafki views *Bildung* as a key concept in the field of educational sciences (Koller, 2021, p. 100). This idea is related to a specific educational theory, especially in German-speaking countries and in Scandinavia (Sweden, Norway and Denmark). These examples show that *Bildung* is more than just an idea; it's a theoretical framework. Therefore, instead of explaining the concept directly, it would be better to talk about the changes it has undergone over time and how different thinkers have theorized about it.

The word *Bildung* originally had a religious meaning, but during the Enlightenment, it took on a new meaning related to teaching and learning. During this process, many thinkers looked at the idea from their own intellectual perspectives, reinterpreting it in different ways. In the eighteenth century, it went beyond its original meaning and became a universal idea that explains social and education for all.

Two distinct definitions of *Bildung* can be identified throughout its history. The first was formulated in the Middle Ages by writers and philosophers who interpreted religious and philosophical concepts through their aesthetic dimensions. During this period, *Bildung* referred to the shaping of the individual, both internally and externally. Simply put, *Bildung* was the process by which a human being, created in the image of God, carries this image within

their mind and develops it (Gadamer, 1960/2008, p. 14). *Bildung* was mainly seen as the process of developing oneself in one's own image and becoming human and referred to inner formation achieved through one's own activities and had a mystical connotation. Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) used the concept in his 13th-century translation of the Bible. He chose the term *Bildung* to translate the Latin word *imago* because, in Old High German, it meant "the original production of objects such as pottery" (Tröhler, 1998, p. 11). In Eckhart's translation, the concept corresponds to the individual's natural ascent toward true humanity in the sense of religious transcendence (Tröhler, 1998, p. 12). Before *Bildung* embarked on its journey toward secularization, the concept's religious usage became rooted in the idea that the individual bears the image of God as a reflection of Him. There is also a linguistic rationale for this usage. The word *Bild*, at the root of the concept, carries the meanings of *image* and *likeness* in modern German, just as it means *picture* (Liedman, 1993, p. 79).

The Latin equivalent of *Bildung*, *formatio*, found its place as early as 1738 when Shaftesbury's phrase *inward form* in his work *Soliloquy or Advice to an Author* was translated into German as *innere Bildung*. In this work, Shaftesbury does not treat the shaping of the soul as a religious matter; rather, he sets forth the aesthetic-moral ideal of personality within secular culture. This expression, rendered as *innere Bildung* in German, signifies the shaping of human character through *Bildung*. Consequently, the use of *Bildung* during this period indicates that the concept was understood in a secular rather than a religious context (Rauhut, 1953, p. 89). In that work, Shaftesbury says that writers should criticize their own work to become good advisors. He also thinks that the path to becoming a good thinker also lies through this process. He explains this process using the concepts of *form* and *formation*. Twenty years after the work's publication, in 1758, these concepts were translated into German as *bilden* and *Bildung* (Horlacher, 2012, p. 138).

The term *external formation* began appearing in dictionary entries in the second half of the eighteenth century. The first major scientific dictionary of the German language, published in 1774, defines *bilden*, the verb form of *Bildung*, as "to give an object its external form" (Adelung, 1774/1811, p. 1015). The dictionary also includes the following example sentence for *bilden*: "She had an extraordinary and intriguing face (*Bildung*)" (Adelung, 1774/1811, p. 1015). The same dictionary defines the other branch of the concept's meaning, "internal formation," as "directing the faculties of the mind and will toward their proper ends and forming a heart and human nature" (Adelung, 1774/1811, p. 1016). This final interpretation brings the concept closer to its educational counterparts but has not yet been freed from mystical influence.

So far, the first approach examined revealed that *Bildung* primarily has religious connotations. It refers to the process by which a person achieves self-determination by becoming like the image of God. However, this meaning largely remained a textual interpretation.

2 Classical Theories of *Bildung*

Bildung must develop the potential of individuals and society, supporting their enlightenment by engaging in evolving social conditions. It must lay the groundwork to make this possible. At the same time, it must safeguard freedom, autonomy, and balance, which are prerequisites for this development (Sorkin, 1983, p. 66). Because *Bildung* transforms alongside social processes and is viewed as an ideal that prioritizes freedom by pointing to the transformation of society through individual development, it can transcend the individual plan and assume a universal identity.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, there were more attempts to explain the concept in terms of its social dimensions to transcend the framework derived from German mysticism. To understand this social aspect of *Bildung*, we shall first examine Rousseau, who influenced Enlightenment educational thought and did not belong to the German tradition. He laid the groundwork for classical theories of *Bildung* and provided an intellectual framework similar to Humboldt's theory of *Bildung*². Furthermore, examining these highlights the secular dimensions of *Bildung* that developed in a dialectical relationship with the Enlightenment.

By the eighteenth century, some thinkers continued to use both definitions of *Bildung* to interpret education. However, the second definition, having broken away from its divine origins, began to correspond not to the external shaping of human beings, but to holistic human development (Koller, 2021, p. 70). It is no coincidence that Humboldt developed his own theory of *Bildung* during this period of secularization. The concept's new definition should not be sought in its divine origins, but rather in the context of the relationship between the Enlightenment and culture. Thinkers such as Rousseau, Mendelssohn, Kant, Herder, Pestalozzi, Fichte, Hegel, and Herbart—who shaped the development of the concept of *Bildung* in the field of education both before Humboldt and during his time. Of course, this list does not exhaust the rich circle of thinkers involved. Humboldt approaches the theory of *Bildung* within the framework of Enlightenment thought; he emphasizes that individuals are equal in terms of their moral, aesthetic, and sensory faculties. Thus, his distinctive approach becomes clear. This unique approach also played a role in education acquiring an institutional identity; it strengthened Humboldt's position in educational reforms. To highlight the originality of Humboldt's ideas, thinkers from the German tradition who represent classical theories of *Bildung* will be examined in chronological order.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

The French philosopher Rousseau, as one of the figures behind German reform pedagogy, served as a source for the educational approach of neo-humanism; for this reason, it is necessary to examine his views closely. Rousseau transforms the understanding of childhood based on social classes in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the *Ancien Régime* into the modern concept of childhood with the phrase, "What our nature allows us to be" (Rousseau, 1762/2017, p. 2). Accordingly, children are not miniature versions of adults; they possess distinct mental and sensory capacities.

² Humboldt's views on *Bildung* are characterized as a theory. Humboldt explains the path followed by the *Bildung* process in conjunction with conditions such as *freedom* and *a variety of situations*. He presents this process, with its theoretical foundations, as a dynamic process that continues throughout one's entire life. Indeed, Humboldt's work on *Bildung* is titled *Theorie der Bildung des Menschen* (Humboldt, 1903a). In both German and English literature, Humboldt's views are referred to as a theory of *Bildung* (Benner, 2023a; Koller, 2021; Lüth, 1998; Sorkin, 1983).

For Rousseau, education was never merely a means to an end. In his view, it is an endeavor that defines human existence and holds constant importance for well-being throughout one's life (Hofman, 2021, p. 72). This inclusive approach aligns Rousseau's philosophy of education with the concept of *Bildung*. Rather than limiting individuals to specific fields, such as professional preparation, or to formal schooling, education aims to nurture individuals as human beings throughout their lives. So, where should we look for the foundations of this similarity? Rousseau's concept of perfectibility comes into play precisely at this point.

In *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality Among Men* (1755), also known as his *Second Discourse*, Rousseau develops the idea of the capacity for perfection and maturation. According to Rousseau, goodness and evil are not innate; rather, they are shaped by the individual. From this perspective, both are the result of the development of the capacity for perfection and maturation—a capacity unique to human beings and linked to free will (Benner & Brüggen, 2004, p. 188). This capacity stems from human nature but becomes evident through historical development. As Rousseau noted, this capacity “develops all other capacities with the help of circumstances and resides within us both as a species and as individuals” (Rousseau, 1755/2013, p. 103).

According to Rousseau, the capacity for self-improvement and maturation does not stem from inner nature alone, nor does it spontaneously emerge from sensory motivation to learn. Human potential is realized and one becomes educable only when learning establishes a reflective relationship with acquired knowledge. Throughout their lives, people realize their capacity to learn new things and connect with what they have learned. This concept underwent a transformation in German Enlightenment pedagogy and became known as *educability* (*Bildsamkeit*). It is now understood as the development of human capacities aimed at educating people as citizens (Benner & Brüggen, 2004, p. 190). The transformation of this concept by German Enlightenment pedagogues demonstrates that human beings are open to development according to their individual and social circumstances. The innate, yet undeveloped and malleable, faculties within human nature make the capacity for learning possible (Benner & Brüggen, 2004, p. 191).

In the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau explains that environmental factors create inequality among people. He acknowledges that people are not born equal and that nature creates physical, rational, and spiritual distinctions (Rousseau, 1755/2013, p. 87). Rousseau's significance to Humboldt extends beyond being a milestone in the development of the neo-humanist approach to *Bildung*. Rousseau directly influenced Humboldt's theory of *Bildung*.

In both discourses, Rousseau points out that freedom has been abused throughout the history of civilization. This observation suggests that human freedom, rather than human nature, possesses the power to transform history. Ideas are the product of freedom, not nature (Kontio, 2012, pp. 33-35). Because they are formed through the actions of human consciousness, they are embedded in a cultural context. In this context, human history is a cultural project and a process of *Bildung*. The history of civilization described by Rousseau in his *Second Discourse* can be read as a process of *Bildung* because human freedom is a prerequisite for human history itself.

The following conclusion follows from this: Human beings, as makers of history, possess freedom and a condition of *educability* on the path to achieving *Bildung*. The intellectual counterpart of this *educability* is Rousseau's concept of the capacity for self-improvement and maturation. Consequently, Rousseau is an important intellectual figure in the development of neo-humanism.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786)

The second aspect of *Bildung*, situated within the context of the Enlightenment and culture, is examined considering Mendelssohn's and Kant's views within the framework of the relationship between *Bildung*, the Enlightenment, and culture. First, the connection between Kant's Enlightenment philosophy and *Bildung* must be explained. In German Classicism, *Bildung* is associated with self-determination, freedom, independence, autonomy, and creative self-activity. An individual's creative self-activity occupies a central place in the process of *Bildung*.

According to Kant (1795/2015), "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage. Nonage is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance" (p. 311). This nonage lies "not in lack of understanding but in indecision and lack of courage to use one's own mind without another's guidance" (p. 311). Kant (1795/2015) also explains the reason for this: "He has even grown to like it, and is at first really incapable of using his own understanding because he has never been permitted to try it" (p. 312). He states that the only requirement for the Enlightenment process is freedom, which he defines as "freedom to make public use of one's reason in all matters." (Kant (1795/2015, p. 313). By linking the Enlightenment to freedom, Kant defines *Bildung* as the capacity to envision the rational being's emancipation, or liberation from the determinations of others. He relates this capacity to the self-determination of thought (Klafki, 2000, p. 87).

Another thinker who wrote about the Enlightenment during the same period as Kant was Mendelssohn. He noted that *Bildung* is divided into two branches: Enlightenment and culture. Together, these three concepts shape social life. At that time, *Bildung* existed in writing, but its significance and semantic content as a central concept in the intellectual discourse of the German philosophical world was just beginning to be recognized (Vierhaus, 1974, p. 509). Mendelssohn explains *Bildung* in conjunction with Enlightenment and culture. His emphasis on the variables of life lends a dynamic dimension to the concept. According to Mendelssohn:

The words *enlightenment* (*Aufklärung*), *culture* (*Kultur*) and *Bildung* are still newcomers to our language. At the present time they belong merely to the language of books. The common masses scarcely understand them. Should this be a proof that the theme is also novel to us? I do not believe so. One says of a certain people that they do not have a definite word for virtue or for superstition, although one may correctly ascribe a considerable measure of both to them (Mendelssohn, 1997, p. 313).

Mendelssohn distinguishes between the deep-rooted presence of *Bildung* in written language and its novel social usage. This distinction clarifies the concept itself and its sphere of application. According to Mendelssohn, *Bildung* is an umbrella concept that encompasses the Enlightenment and culture. One aspect of *Bildung* is oriented toward practical life, where culture takes shape. Culture encompasses social endeavors, intellectual production, the arts, and crafts. The other aspect is oriented toward theoretical life, where the Enlightenment becomes evident. The Enlightenment encompasses rational knowledge and the ability to reason about the objects of human life. Thus, Mendelssohn emphasizes that the education of the people can only be safeguarded from social decay through the coexistence of culture and the Enlightenment.

Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803)

When considering the conditions that shaped Herder's approach to *Bildung*, it is important to note that the nineteenth century was Germany's *century of education*. During this period, *Bildung* truly came to the forefront of education (Horlacher, 2021, p. 127). Herder conceived of *Bildung* as the living influence of the teacher and the individual's self-forming activity. Thus,

the concept transcends the boundaries of education (*Erziehung*) and instruction (*Lehre*), attaining a breadth that encompasses society and humanity. Neo-humanism has also interpreted the concept within this broader scope (Vierhaus, 1974, pp. 515-516).

Herder's phrase *Bildung der Menschheit* transcends the perfectionist perspective of the Enlightenment. This phrase describes the attainment of a new human ideal through *Bildung*. This intellectual shift paved the way for the historical development of the humanities in the nineteenth century. Gadamer (1960/2008) emphasizes Herder's critical role at this historical juncture, drawing on Herder's definition of *Bildung* as "rising up to humanity through culture" (p. 11).

The individual is a multifaceted social being. Therefore, education should be conceived as an organic, reciprocal process in which people influence one another within their social environment. This idea belongs to Herder. Classical theories of *Bildung* are based on the maturation of human beings through education. According to Herder, humans were the first beings granted freedom in creation. Thanks to their capacity for reason, a faculty not found in other beings, they are able to make their own choices (Herder, 1784/2020, p. 132). In this regard, *Bildung* is not merely a simple maturation process, but rather, the shaping of the self through one's own will and the transformation into a being endowed with freedom of action.

Herder's philosophy of *Bildung* aims to create a society of self-determining individuals. These individuals deserve respect and esteem regardless of their social background or class to achieve the ideal of freedom. According to Gjesdal (2015, p. 703), an individual who can see the world through the eyes of others gains experiential richness, cultural enrichment, and cognitive depth. Diversity is indispensable to development. This diversity encompasses individuals within the same culture as well as perspectives from different temporal, geographical, and cultural horizons.

Herder's statement that *Bildung is rising up to humanity* indicates that this process signifies an internal movement in a state of constant flux and development rather than the attainment of a specific outcome. Thus, *Bildung* defines itself as its own purpose; it does not aim at an external goal. Gadamer (1960/2008) relates this concept to nature. According to Gadamer (1960/2008), since *Bildung* is an ongoing process of internal development, it never culminates in an external goal (p. 15). As a dynamic concept of development and progress, therefore, it plays a role not only in individual progress, but also in social and universal progress.

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827)

According to Pestalozzi, a person is the product of three things: nature, society, and their own self. In other words, just as an artist shapes a work of art, a person shapes themselves and their environment through their will. This process of human self-formation (*sich bilden*) can be likened to a sculptor transforming a design into a stonework masterpiece. In this case, the individual consciously transforms their environment into a work of art (Richter, 1971, p. 16).

At the core of Pestalozzi's work lies the examination of humanity through *Bildung*. According to Pestalozzi, rather than pursuing sacred salvation, humans should follow the path to becoming civilized individuals. This is possible only through instilling a sense of individual responsibility during early childhood (Gjesdal, 2015, p. 703). In his approach to *Bildung*, Pestalozzi emphasizes the active, creative aspect of humanity as a force that builds civilization and creates works. He views human beings as products of themselves, society, and nature in the process of self-formation.

Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814)

Examining Fichte's approach to *Bildung* during this period reveals that he based his concept on the *absolute I* and the *not-I* outside of it. Human beings are defined by their struggle to achieve harmony with their inner image (*Bild*) and perfect it. According to Fichte, this struggle is the greatest good; it is a state of perfect balance for a rational being (Gjesdal, 2015, p. 701).

According to Fichte, the human ideal of *Bildung* cannot be realized in isolation. Rather, it takes shape only within society through free interaction and mutual understanding. An individual realizes his or her own identity through what he or she encounters and learns from others. However, human beings should not be determined by external factors. The *absolute I* is not subject to direct determination by the *not-I*. The purpose of a human being is the self (Fichte, 1794/2006, pp. 117-119).

Culture, on the other hand, is the ability to reshape and transform external elements according to one's own concepts. Fichte expresses the educational process through this concept. According to Fichte, "The perfect harmony of man with himself, and that this may be practicable, the harmony of all external things with his necessary practical ideas of them, the ideas which determine what these things should be; this is the ultimate and highest purpose of human existence" (Fichte, 1794/1847, p. 23).

Freedom requires granting freedom to others. In this sense, *Bildung* cannot be limited to a person's self-formation. In a society of rational individuals, *Bildung* means transforming both the individual and society so that all members are equal. As rational beings in society, citizens must be equally educated; this education should aim to develop their abilities in a balanced manner.

Fichte expresses this idea in his own words as follows:

... If the faculties of all are essentially the same, —as they are, since they are all founded upon pure Reason; —if they are all to be cultivated after a similar fashion, which is what the law requires;—then the result of such a cultivation must be similar capacities in every respect equal to each other: —and thus by another way we arrive at the ultimate end of all society, as declared in our former lecture, —the perfect equality of all its members (Fichte, 1794/1847, p. 40).

Through these words, Fichte emphasizes the necessity of providing an education geared toward equal abilities to individuals in society. According to him, societies exist to make all citizens equal. However, these statements alone are insufficient to determine whether an egalitarian education truly produces equal outcomes.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)

Hegel's interpretation of the concept reveals the universal aspect of *Bildung*, or its expression as an ascent to the universal. The establishment of humanity as intellectual and universal beings constitutes the universal aspect of Hegel's approach to *Bildung*. The intellectual and rational dimension of humanity demands a break from the natural and unmediated. This break is what makes humanity in need of a universal orientation. Leaving the particular behind and rising to the universal is humanity's duty. While developing instrumental abilities, *Bildung* shapes the individual. Through self-awareness, individuals establish themselves as intellectual and universal beings.

Some studies examine Hegel's approach to *Bildung* as a pedagogical term that develops human potential and abilities. In these studies, Hegel's interpretation of *Bildung* is considered not

only as the self-development of an individual, but also in relation to its social aspect. The individual shapes themselves within a dialectical process that guides their actions. This process of self-formation is not purely individual; it is an endeavor that takes place within a historical and social context through interaction with others. This dialectical dynamic enables the spiritual being to realize itself. This self-realization is manifested through liberation from dependence on nature and predetermined circumstances.

According to Hegel, the path to *Bildung* is a process involving the formation of universal subjects of thought, will, and action. These subjects are developed historically and socially within cultural forms around the world (Bykova, 2020, p. 426). Hegel views human history as the history of human communities and communal ways of life and regards individuals as social actors. Through *Bildung*, society and culture cultivate the talents, skills, and characteristics of the individual, who then develops himself or herself (Bykova, 2009, p. 290).

This social dimension of Hegel's approach to *Bildung* corresponds to the self-cultivation of the self through social processes. This process of self-cultivation emerges within the social sphere formed through relationships with others and takes place through the individual's active participation. In this sense, the process of individual self-cultivation coincides with the cultivation of humanity within the historical-cultural world. Consequently, this process is not merely theoretical, occurring through the individual's acquisition of knowledge about their environment. Rather, it is a practical endeavor that occurs through production, not imitation. In this context, *Bildung* cannot be reduced to an individual intellectual activity (Bykova, 2020, p. 431). The social nature of the individual's acculturation process means that, in conjunction with humanity's acculturation within the historical-cultural world, the individual produces a tangible outcome.

Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841)

Herbart is known for his contributions to the development of education as a scientific discipline. He primarily used the concept of *Erziehung* in his writings. His conception of education as a science with philosophical foundations yet oriented towards practical applications (Oelkers, 2021, p. 160) established him as a notable figure of the Humboldt era, as well as a significant influence on subsequent periods. Here, I will take a closer look at Herbart's concept of *educability*. While not a direct foundational element of the theory of *Bildung*, it can be considered a fundamental category of *Bildung*. This is because Herbart's pedagogy revolves around the question of *how education is possible* within the framework of the tension between freedom and natural determination. Herbart addresses this issue more systematically than his contemporaries. He focuses on the potential of human beings as self-shaping entities and on the relationship between education and the individual's process of self-formation. In its simplest form, *educability* is a person's ability to adapt to new situations, develop, and remain open to new learning experiences (Siljander, 2012, pp. 90-91).

Herbart's pedagogy stems from his identification of morality as the most important aim of education. Morality is at the heart of learning and teaching. This justifies Herbart's approach to the concept of *educability*, which yields moral outcomes. A child's *educability* is fundamental to the formation of their character. Herbart considered *educability* to be the primary factor in the development of a child's character and positioned moral character formation as the goal of education (Herbart, 1902, p. 1; Oelkers, 2021, p. 165).

Although Herbart participated in the Prussian educational reforms, he did not view education as a branch of politics. He opposed the idea of education serving the state. He also distanced himself from the uniform, formal education provided by the state, which was not tailored to the individual child (Oelkers, 2021, pp. 161-162).

Why Humboldt? A Comparison of Thinkers

During the Enlightenment, intellectuals placed significant emphasis on the capacity for autonomous thought, which they believed could emerge because of rational thinking. This notion was particularly significant in the context of challenging traditional authorities. The concept of *Bildung*, as understood within the context of the German Enlightenment, can be elucidated as follows: *Bildung* resurfaced in the 1790s alongside neo-humanism and evolved into the secular social ideal of Protestant Germany (Sorkin, 1983, p. 66). Consequently, neo-humanism can be regarded as the intellectual basis that transformed *Bildung* into a social ideal within the German Enlightenment.

The relationship between *Bildung* and the principles of the Enlightenment is evident in the definition of the concept as a rational process of self-determination that involves liberation from the determinations of others and requires this liberation. Creative self-action constitutes the fundamental practice of *Bildung* (Klafki, 2000, p. 87). This definition also reveals the connection between *Bildung* and moral self-determination, one of the fundamental principles of the Enlightenment. As is evident, during the period of German Classicism and neo-humanism—of which Humboldt was a part—*Bildung* shed its divine origins and evolved into a secular pedagogical concept.

The process of *Bildung*'s secularization can be traced through the views of various thinkers. Rousseau's fundamental arguments play a critical role in this transformation. Rousseau draws a parallel between the purpose of education and the purpose of nature itself. Rousseau (1762/2017, p. 7) posits that human inclinations are rooted in human nature. When individuals exercise the inherent freedom of their own nature in the face of genetic inclinations and social pressures, they take their own nature—not God—as their model. Rousseau's conceptualization of freedom as being in opposition to the social environment and his designation of nature as the model have paved the way for the secularization of the concept of *Bildung*. According to Meister Eckhart, a representative of the mystical tradition, humans are educated to reach God. According to Rousseau, however, humans educate themselves in accordance with their own essence and nature, thereby signifying human freedom (Ladenthin, 2021, p. 149). This approach is in direct opposition to the conventional understanding that utilizes a divine being as its paradigm. In contrast, this secular approach proposes that human nature—the very foundation of human freedom—should serve as the model. Consequently, a dialectical relationship can be established between *Bildung*—devoid of its divine origins—and the human-centered notion of the Enlightenment. Humboldt, esteemed as the foremost proponent of the neo-humanist approach to *Bildung*, eschews a uniform and goal-oriented conception of education. Instead, he advocates for an unencumbered educational process, unbound by social constraints, as a prerequisite for *Bildung*, thereby contributing to the concept's secularization.

Unlike other thinkers, Humboldt regarded *Bildung* as an educational theory, with educational issues at the core of his work. While Herbart contributed to the terminology of educational science, he lacked a systematic theory of *Bildung*. Similarly, Hegel supported Niethammer's neo-humanist view that the middle school curriculum should be based on a classical education including Greek and Latin languages and literature. However, Hegel did not produce a work directly focused on education (Wood, 1998, p. 300).

Comparisons can be made between Humboldt and other thinkers to illustrate the areas in which he differed from them. One such comparison is based on the approaches of Hegel and Humboldt to the concept of alienation. Humboldt's intellectual process leading to his conception of alienation can be explained as follows: At the core of Humboldt's view of the state as an institution of *Bildung* is his anthropological approach. According to Humboldt, the purpose of human beings is not to acquire property, but rather to realize their unique

individuality, transforming their spiritual, physical, and moral faculties into a balanced whole (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 106). This cycle represents the process by which human beings develop through an endless process of *Bildung*, in which *Bildung* itself becomes the purpose. Humboldt explains how a person turns the wealth of others into their own wealth through the principle of alienation. He describes this process with the phrase, “here it is crucial that he should not lose himself in this alienation, but rather reflect back into his inner being the clarifying light and the comforting warmth of everything that he undertakes outside himself” (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 284). These statements reveal that the individual’s mystical liberation from the self (*Entbildung*) is transformed into the principle of alienation from the world (Ladenthin, 2021, p. 155). This transformation signifies that, in Humboldt’s work, the concept moves away from its mystical connotations.

Similar to Humboldt’s conception of the mutual interaction between the subject and the world, Hegel interprets the interaction between the subject and objective validity through the process of *Bildung* as follows: The subject approaches itself within the objective toward rationality and universality (Klafki, 2000, p. 92). However, this formulation differs from Humboldt’s theory of *Bildung*. Hegel gives one pole of the dialectical relationship, the objective, superiority over the subject. This line of thought leads Hegel to conclude that individuals must struggle against their pure subjectivity in the process of *Bildung*.

Bildung, in its absolute determination, is therefore liberation and work towards a higher liberation; it is the absolute transition to the infinitely subjective substantiality of ethical life, which is no longer immediate and natural, but spiritual and at the same time raised to the shape of universality. Within the subject, this liberation is the hard work of opposing mere subjectivity of conduct, of opposing the immediacy of desire as well as the subjective vanity of feeling (*Empfindung*) and the arbitrariness of caprice. The fact that it is such hard work accounts for some of the disfavour which it incurs. But it is through this work of *Bildung* that the subjective will attains objectivity even within itself, that objectivity in which alone it is for its part worthy and capable of being the actuality of the Idea (Hegel, 1833/1991, p. 225).

From Humboldt’s perspective, however, the subject engages in a living, free interaction with the outside world. The subject integrates with its sociocultural environment, elevating *Bildung* to a universal dimension and enriching the concept of humanity in the process. During this process of objectification, the subject does not lose its pure subjectivity. Hegel, on the other hand, argues that one must struggle against pure subjectivity to attain a higher form of liberation. The fundamental difference between the two thinkers lies in their interpretations of mutual interaction. According to Humboldt, human beings experience the world as an initially unknown, foreign, and unique entity through alienation, which is the formative element in the mutual interaction between the self and the world. Humboldt’s initial application of the concept of alienation within his theory of *Bildung* highlights humanity’s active emergence into the world. Human beings become active as a new starting point through *energeia*³ within their being. While interacting with the external world, they do not lose themselves in the process of alienation. On the contrary, they find the opportunity to “reflect back into his inner being the clarifying light and the comforting warmth of everything that he undertakes outside himself” (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 284). According to Humboldt, *Bildung* occurs when an action affects a person’s inner self, provided the action is the individual’s own and directly connected to them (Nipkow, 1977, p. 211). However, in Hegel’s conception of *Bildung*, there is no counterpart to

³ *Energeia* means action, activity, and dynamism. It is the power that makes possible what we can only imagine. It is the active power of life and spirit in a being that breaks free from its potential state and takes a step toward self-realization (Güçlü, Uzun, Yolsal, & Uzun, 2003, p. 468).

the individual reflecting the riches of their surroundings into their own being (Kencklies, 2022, p. 586).

Education plays a central role in Herbart's philosophical system (Oelkers, 2021, p. 160). In this respect, Herbart differs from the other thinkers examined, except for Humboldt. Unlike Kant, who viewed education as an application of practical philosophy, and Hegel, who viewed it as part of a general theory of human rationality and culture, Herbart examined education as a distinct, systematic field. However, Herbart's use of *educability* (*Bildsamkeit*) rather than *Bildung*, his emphasis on the moral aims of education, and his focus on private tutoring rather than school education (on the grounds that the latter had become standardized)—as discussed by Oelkers (2021, p. 162)—indicate that he was oriented toward establishing an individual-centered theory of education. Due to the historical distinction between *Bildung* and *Erziehung*, Herbart can be viewed as a theorist of *Erziehung* rather than *Bildung* (Siljander, 2012, p. 88). Humboldt, on the other hand, approaches education from the perspective of *Bildung*; he conceives of it as a lifelong, never-ending process of formation. In his famous work on political philosophy, *Ideenschrift*, although he did not publish a work specifically titled direct education, he views the state as an *institution of Bildung* that creates the conditions enabling popular *Bildung* (Beiser, 2018, p. 213). At the center of all his writings lies a modern theory of *Bildung*, which Humboldt defines as “a continuous task of understanding both the individual and social dimensions of human existence” (Benner, 2023a, p. 13). Based on this definition, Humboldt can be considered a thinker of *Bildung*. He examines the philosophical background of *Bildung* and its connection to socialization processes. By addressing the concept in its individual, social, and universal dimensions, Humboldt regards *Bildung* as a prerequisite for global citizenship. The deep connection between Humboldt's theory of *Bildung* and the Enlightenment posits that individuals of diverse identities can become enlightened while preserving their uniqueness, and that an ideal of humanity can emerge from enlightened nations.

Humboldt differs from Locke and Rousseau in terms of both his era and his perspective on education. According to Humboldt, education cannot be reduced to either what is written on a *tabula rasa* or the unfolding of our inner nature (Oelkers, 2001, p. 89). Rather, education strives for an aesthetic individuality that shapes its inner form through not only knowledge, but also holistic experience.

Building on the Humboldt-Hegel comparison, we can also compare Humboldt, Herbart, and Rousseau. Unlike Herbart's concept of *educability*, Humboldt's concept of *power* (*Kraft*)—which can be used in both singular and plural forms—describes the individual's *educability* in a universal sense, not a uniform one. According to Benner (2023a), Humboldt uses the concept of *power* to refer to both the action itself and social actions. Humboldt defines human power or powers as a bridge between the present and the future. Human abilities are not merely the sum of predetermined uniformities at the individual or societal level. Parallels can be drawn between Humboldt's concept of human power, Rousseau's notion of *nature within us*, and Herbart's concept of *educability*. Through the concept of human power, Humboldt describes the dynamic structure of the tension that exists among the diversities within individuals' worlds. It is also noteworthy that the concept of self-perfection and maturation in Rousseau's thought transformed into *educability* in German Enlightenment pedagogy. There, it began to be understood as the development of human powers aimed at educating people as citizens. The idea that human beings, in the sense of being liberated and shaping history, must possess *educability* to attain *Bildung* alludes to Rousseau's concept of the capacity for self-perfection and maturation. Kontio (2012, p. 42) also believes that the capacity for self-perfection and maturation aligns with Herbart's concept of *educability*.

This comparison highlights the distinctive aspects of Humboldt's theory of *Bildung*. After comparing Humboldt with other thinkers of classical *Bildung*, I will examine the neo-humanist approach to *Bildung*. This will elucidate the intellectual process underlying Humboldt's theory and illuminate the path leading to it.

3 Rethinking Humboldt: *Bildung*, Democracy and the State

This chapter examines the neo-humanist approach to *Bildung* and analyzes Humboldt's theory in detail. The focus is on the connection between Humboldt's theory of *Bildung* and neo-humanism, as well as studies of his theory in the context of the relationship between the individual and the universal and his conception of democracy.

The Historical Development of Neo-Humanist *Bildung*

Paulsen was the first person to use the term *Neo-Humanism Era*. He believed that education in this new era should focus on what is good and beautiful. It focuses on what is valuable, not what is useful. Paulsen bases this idea on Aristotle's view that people work to have time for leisure. From this point of view, the most important things are play, leisure activities, and art, not work. Paulsen also says that actions are best when they are valuable in and of themselves, not when they are useful or serve others. The new era's slogan is *education for humanity* (Paulsen, 1885, p. 515). This is the basis of Aristotle's idea of leisure, which is the foundation of neo-humanism. Neo-humanism is based on the idea that an activity's inherent value shows its educational value.

Another characteristic of this period is the unique meaning of the pedagogical use of the term *Bildung*, which differs from its other applications. The period's intellectual foundation is based on the distinction that Rousseau made in *Émile* between an education focused on equality, fraternity, and freedom in the natural state of humanity, and an education aimed at professional development. Given his influence on the neo-humanist approach to *Bildung*, it is meaningful to address Rousseau's conclusions about education to understand the historical background of this approach. From another perspective, a parallel can be drawn between Rousseau's opposition to the Enlightenment's progressive optimism and the *humanistic education* of neo-humanist *Bildung*:

From our first years a senseless education adorns our mind and corrupts our judgment. Everywhere I see huge establishments in which young people are brought up at great expense to learn everything except their duties. Your children will not know their own language, but they will speak others which are nowhere in use-, they will be able to compose Verses which they will hardly be able to understand; without being able to disentangle error from truth, they will possess the art of making them unrecognizable to others by specious arguments; but they will not know the meaning of the words magnanimity, equity, temperance, humanity, courage... (Rousseau, 1750/2010, pp. 20-21).

The educational implications of these statements from Rousseau's *Discourse On The Arts & Sciences (First Discourse)* lie in the philosopher's opposition to institutionalized education. He believed that the useless things taught to children in their early years serve no purpose other than to corrupt their morals. In his 1762 work *Émile*, Rousseau further develops these ideas within the framework of negative education. He proposes a form of negative education for children, who are natural human beings, through which adults can rediscover their original nature and restore their origins as virtuous beings. However, the child's integration into society is inevitable. Therefore, negative education must evolve from merely sustaining the child in an isolated natural environment to preparing the child to cope with society (Hofman, 2021, p. 79).

According to Rousseau, since school curricula do not include virtue, institutions are unable to help citizens adapt to their social environments as moral individuals. Consequently, they cannot foster moral development. Instead, by imparting theoretical knowledge that does not contribute to moral improvement, schools may produce individuals who are self-centered (Hofman, 2021, pp. 72-73). Prioritizing the moral dimension of human development brings this view into line with neo-humanism. Drawing on Rousseau, Paulsen (1903) examines how

linking the concept of *Bildung* to a nature-appropriate upbringing is consistent with the concept's etymological roots. He argues that the original uses of the terms *bilden* and *Bildung* are consistent with the meanings that the concept acquired in educational literature during the second half of the eighteenth century. Initially used to describe the shape of inner life, the concept began to describe the step-by-step development of an organic being. Thanks to this connection, *Bildung* came to be seen not as the upbringing of a human being towards a specific goal, but as the development of a human being as an organic entity in harmony with nature. It became the leading concept of the educational reform movement that followed Rousseau (Paulsen, 1903, p. 659).

Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729-1812) was a neo-humanist expert in poetry and rhetoric. A leading figure in classical philological research, he viewed the Classical Age — with its history, heritage, art and literature — as an educational tool. He believed that this field of study was designed to develop the mind, heart and aesthetic sensibilities. Another proponent of cultivating taste through classical art was Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768). In the second half of the eighteenth century, Winckelmann presented a new conception of humanity — one that was virtually regarded as a work of art in its own right — through an aesthetic lens. The neo-humanists further developed this worldview (Spranger, 1909, pp. 12-13). Winckelmann (1765, p. 1) traced the origins of the senses of pleasure and aesthetic appreciation back to ancient Greece, arguing that this understanding had spread from there to the rest of the world. According to Winckelmann, the ancient Greek ideal world corresponds to the concept of beauty in education. The physical education they valued fostered the development of beautiful figures worthy of artistic representation. Winckelmann emphasizes the educational potential of the concept of beauty. He notes that education shapes elegance step by step, drawing attention to its potential to recreate the elegance that emerged among the ancient Greeks (Winckelmann, 1765, p. 273).

The idea that Greek and Roman cultures formed the basis for other cultures and constituted a foundation for *Bildung* gained popularity in German Idealism and Classicism (Hegel, 1809/1986, p. 314). In the late eighteenth century, Goethe expressed his admiration for ancient Athens' splendor and its people's deep integration with the arts: "Are thinkers, scholars, and artists not drawn to immerse themselves in those regions during their finest hours, ... where a form of *Bildung* unfolds in a beautiful and ascending sequence, one that appears to us only as a patchwork of fleeting moments? (Goethe, 1798/1963, p. 38). By emphasizing that these people could be none other than the ancient Greeks, Goethe establishes a direct link between understanding the ancient world and education (Goethe, 1798/1963, p. 37).

Some argue that the ancient Greeks are at the root of German nationalism. Friedrich August Wolf (1759-1824) believed that ancient languages were essential to a well-rounded education (Horlacher, 2021, p. 138). Blankertz, a historian of education, describes the role of ancient languages in neo-humanism as follows:

When speaking of *neo-humanism*, one assumes the existence of an earlier form of humanism. What is designated by the term *humanism* has its origins in antiquity, just as the word itself is derived from the Latin *humanitas*. But it was only the post-antique world's return to the norm of perfected humanity—perceived as exemplary—that established *humanism* as a doctrine. The foundations for this process of transmission were already laid in Greek thought. For *paideia*—the Greek education of the human being toward his true purpose—had, from the third pre-Christian century onward, been related to the rational disposition of the human being, which finds its expression in language. Language appeared as the criterion by which humans could be distinguished from animals, Greeks from barbarians, and the learned from the uneducated. But this also meant that human culture could, in principle, be learned through language and literature (Blankertz, 1982, pp. 89-90).

Here, the intellectual background for including the ancient world and languages in curricula becomes clear. Language and literature serve as a bridge between the ancient Greek intellectual world and the modern world. They are also recognized as one of the defining characteristics that distinguish the educated from the uneducated. Blankertz (1982, p. 89) notes the emergence of a new humanist movement. This movement calls into question the Enlightenment pedagogy that supported economic development and positive attitudes toward industry and new production methods. Known historically as neo-humanism, this reformist movement manifests itself in a new approach to *Bildung*.

The fundamental difference between *neo-humanistic Bildung* and Enlightenment pedagogy is that *Bildung* involves shaping an individual's inner development in accordance with their nature, rather than directing them toward a specific goal (Paulsen, 1903, p. 660). Thus, *Bildung* emerges as a humanistic educational ideal. Thinkers of the era, such as Pestalozzi and Herder, based raising children for specific vocational pursuits on humanistic education. Schlegel (1800; cited in Beiser, 2003) summarizes this trend as follows: "The highest good, and [the source of] everything that is useful, is culture (*Bildung*).” (p. 88). The principle of intrinsic value, at the heart of humanistic education, remains present in the evolution of *Bildung*.

The neo-humanist approach to *Bildung* emerged during the Enlightenment when people were free to use their reason without religious or state interference. The discovery of the Americas, global travel, and news of different cultures reaching Europe sparked curiosity about other societies, leading to a focus on objective anthropological research. As exploration voyages increased and numerous travelogues were written, there was a growing need to examine the social characteristics, literature, customs, and languages of the encountered peoples using a scientific methodology (Rössler, 2007, pp. 3-4). During this time, the concepts of *nation* and *race* began to take on meaning, and scholars investigated the common characteristics of societies. Meanwhile, the concept of *Bildung* also emerged during this period as one of social struggle (Wehler, 1989, p. 221; cited in Mattig, 2019, p. 53). Herder directly links *Bildung* to the development of national identity.

The advancement of education in Germany was influenced by the efforts of German intellectuals to break free from French cultural dominance and establish their own national identity. This process exemplifies the political contribution of the neo-humanist concept of *Bildung* to the formation of German identity. The Germans found their distinctiveness from French civilization in the concept of *Bildung*, which they perceived as foreign. By contrasting their *Kultur* and *Bildung* with French culture, the Germans adopted the ancient Greeks as a model for their intellectual development (Tröhler, 2021, p. 265). From an educational perspective, this is reflected in the neo-humanist approach to *Bildung*'s admiration for ancient Greek education. This educational philosophy is linked to the ancient Greek languages, philosophy, and art that lie at the heart of the neo-humanist *Bildung* approach. Guided by the notion of classical perfection, neo-humanists adopted this model, enabling them to avoid French education (Vierhaus, 1974, p. 519).

The attitude of the Germans towards French civilization can be explained by the contrast between neo-humanism and Latin classical humanism. Classical humanism, with its roots in the Renaissance, interprets the ancient world primarily through the lens of Italian and French culture. However, neo-humanists prioritize Ancient Greek over Latin. This differs from the perspectives of French thinkers on the ancient world, which focus on Latin (Blankertz, 1982, p. 91). Unable to resist Rome's influence during the religious wars, particularly the Thirty Years' War, the Germans seized the opportunity to assert their identity through neo-humanism.

Another difference between the two forms of humanism is that neo-humanism does not imitate the teachings of the ancient world. While classical humanism is directly tied to ancient sources, neo-humanism uses these sources to gain a unique perspective. In neo-humanism, the ancient Greek language and culture are seen as a source of inspiration for *humanistic education* (Kanad, 1963, pp. 396-398). The following conclusion can therefore be drawn: Neo-humanist thinkers who treat the ancient world as a source of inspiration rather than a direct model develop a more objective viewpoint.

Humboldt and Neo-Humanism

First, this section examines the aspects of Humboldt's thought that align with the neo-humanist perspective. Then, it identifies the points at which Humboldt diverges from Enlightenment pedagogy. Thus, Humboldt is presented as a historical representative of *humanistic education* within the neo-humanist approach to *Bildung*.

Oelkers (2001, p. 89) considers Humboldt's concept of *self-causality* to be his most significant influence on neo-humanism. According to Humboldt, *Bildung* originates from within the spirit; therefore, external events or circumstances are not considered elements that bring about education. From an educational perspective, these elements can only act as catalysts or motivators (Humboldt, 1971, p. 87).

In *Ideenschrift*, Humboldt contrasts the concept of social organization — what we today define as civil society — with the sphere of state activity. Humboldt considers this form of organization a fundamental characteristic of human nature and believes it should govern every aspect of social life outside the state's sphere of intervention, including the economy, education, industry, agriculture, and commerce. According to Humboldt, it is of great importance that all these processes arise from within civil society because compulsory regulations divert society from an ideal educational goal (1903a, p. 115). These statements support the argument that external interventions do not bring about education. Thus, the idea that the roots of *Bildung* must spring from within the spirit is reinforced.

Humboldt argues that social formations can arise from society's self-organization. He states: "However, not every enrichment through knowledge immediately constitutes an ennoblement—even of intellectual power alone—and if such an ennoblement is truly brought about by it, this applies not so much to the entire nation as to that part of it which is part of the government" (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 114). According to Humboldt, this enrichment does not spread to the entire nation. The education of the human mind is achieved only through independent action and discovery. A similar principle exists in neo-humanism: an organic being shapes itself step by step. Neo-humanism takes a stance against the promotion of new production methods derived from the Industrial Revolution by Enlightenment pedagogy. According to Humboldt, production methods should be organized by the nation, not the state. He believed that nations should discover their own creativity as societal formations.

Humboldt explains the harmful consequences of the state interfering with citizens' happiness. He expresses this idea by combining the concept of *Bildung*, which is beneficial in and of itself, with the idea of the political community's spontaneity:

[As a result of the state's intervention in citizens' positive happiness—aimed at preserving and increasing material well-being—Ö.S.] In the kind of policy we are supposing, then, men are neglected for things, and creative powers for results. A political community, organized and governed according to this system, resembles an agglomerated mass of living but lifeless instruments of action and enjoyment, rather than a multitude of active and enjoying energies. In disregarding the spontaneity of active beings, such States seem to confine their view to the attainment of happiness and enjoyment alone. But although the calculation

would be correct in so far as the test of happiness and enjoyment is the sensations of the person enjoying them, it would still underestimate the dignity of human nature. (Humboldt, 1969, p. 35).

Humboldt does not reject the division of labor brought about by industrialization. The Prussian educational reform he spearheaded considered it necessary for adults to work in industrial sectors to replace the traditional class-based society with a property-based one. The nation's focus on discovery through creativity and civil society's pioneering role do not imply rejection of the Industrial Revolution or the era's dialectical continuity. Indeed, Humboldt states:

I admit, in conclusion, that without the great masses, as it were, with which the human race has been working in these last centuries; human progress might not have advanced with such rapid strides; but speed is not everything. The fruit would have been longer in maturing, but still it would really have ripened; and would it not have been more precious? (Humboldt, 1969, p. 40)

At the heart of Humboldt's attempt to eliminate class distinctions lies the role that *Bildung* has played in the historical process, as well as its power to dismantle social stratification. In the nineteenth century, not only did *Bildung* define the national character, but it also played a pivotal role in differentiating the bourgeoisie from the nobility and forming a distinct class consciousness (Horlacher, 2016, p. 56). During that period, it assumed a decisive role in forming the working and non-managerial classes (Schäfer, 2009, p. 92).

Gradually, the use of *Bildung* to distinguish between educated and uneducated individuals evolved into a class distinction, becoming a status marker in education. By the end of the century, people were classified not by their religious, denominational, or ethnic origins, but by their level of education. This distinction took precedence over traditional divisions such as noble versus commoner, believer versus non-believer, Jew versus Christian, and Catholic versus Protestant. This distinction is evident in encyclopedia entries from that period. An individual's educational status determined how they were viewed (Paulsen, 1903, p. 658). Prussia's defeat at the hands of Napoleon at the beginning of the century and the subsequent rise of German nationalism further solidified the social role of *Bildung* (Horlacher, 2016, p. 58).

The requirement that a career in public administration be based on *Bildung*—and more specifically, proficiency in ancient languages such as Latin and Greek—led to the emergence of an educated middle class, distinct from both the nobility and the commercial bourgeoisie, known as the *Bildung citizen* (*Bildungsbürgertum*). This development underscores the role of *Bildung* in social differentiation. The institutionalization of vocational and liberal education took a different path (Zunkel, 1992, pp. 84-85; cited in Horlacher, 2016, p. 58). The prioritization of humanistic education in neo-humanism stems from this segregating aspect of *Bildung*. The *Bildung citizen* is the educated middle class, which exhibits a distinct class consciousness. This class is grounded in a concept of *Bildung* that prioritizes studying languages such as Greek and Latin and pursuing a career. For Humboldt, reducing social divisions requires enlightening the people through *Bildung*.

Humboldt draws a clear line between ancient and modern states when it comes to the boundaries between the citizen and the state. While ancient states focused on people's abilities and *Bildung*, modern states focus on citizens' productivity and the principle of utility. For this reason, while ancient states "pursue virtue", modern states "pursue happiness" (Humboldt, 1903a). In ancient states, the concept of cultivating strong citizens imparts a powerful impetus to the spirit and character. Humboldt argues that ancient states were able to offset the harm of uniformity by exalting human potential. He explains why he admires the ancient state over the modern state in the following lines:

...This difference between the States of antiquity and those of our own times, is in general thoroughly evident. Whilst in these later centuries, the rapid strides of progress, the number and dissemination of artistic inventions, and the greatness of our works, especially attract our attention, antiquity captivates us above all by that inherent greatness which is comprised in the life of the individual, and perishes with him the bloom of fancy, the depth of spirit, the strength of will, the perfect oneness of the entire being, which alone confer true worth on human nature (Humboldt, 1969, p. 13).

In these passages, Humboldt criticizes modern states for viewing individuals through a utilitarian lens and focusing on their productivity and capacity for work. According to him, in these states, a person's property takes precedence over their existence itself. Rather than promoting the holistic development of spiritual, physical, and moral capacities, education—the source of virtue—is suppressed. For this reason, Humboldt prefers a *Bildung* program that values the human being through their existence and develops citizens' abilities rather than following the principle of utility. He emphasizes this point in the following lines, lamenting that the meaning of the individual has been lost amid prosperity and property in his own time:

Their strong consciousness of this essential worth of human nature, of its powers and their consistent development, was to them the impulse to every activity; with us these too often seem merely abstractions, in which the sense of the individual is lost, or at least in which his inner life is not so much regarded as his ease, his material comfort, his happiness. The ancients sought for happiness in virtue; the moderns have too long been endeavoring to develop the latter from the former and even he who could conceive and portray morality in its purest form, thinks himself bound to supply happiness to his ideal of human nature through the medium of a highly artificial machinery, and this rather as a reward from without, than as a good obtained by man's own exertions (Humboldt, 1969, p. 13).

Humboldt's views align with the neo-humanist admiration for the ancient world. In Humboldt's eyes, the ancient world's placement of *Bildung* at the center of its actions and its search for happiness in individual virtue are what make it so admirable. This is reflected in the neo-humanist perspective's interpretation of political institutions and admiration for ancient political structures. Humboldt associates the political achievements of the ancient world with the importance that its institutions placed on the virtue of its citizens and, consequently, on their *Bildung*. Ancient states sought to develop individuals' spiritual, physical, and moral powers into a balanced whole through *Bildung*. This ideal is precisely the goal Humboldt sought to achieve through *Bildung*: "The true end of Man, or that which is prescribed by the eternal and immutable dictates of reason, and not suggested by vague and transient desires, is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole." (Humboldt, 1969, p. 16).

As early as 1792, in the *Ideenschrift*, written during the initial phase of his intellectual life, Humboldt evaluates the ancient world through the lens of *Bildung*. He admired the idea of attaining virtue through *Bildung*. However, he does not advocate transferring ancient institutions directly to the modern era or imitating the social structure. He clarifies this distinction when criticizing ancient Greek philosophers for endorsing slavery. According to Humboldt, the philosophers turned a blind eye to the barbaric and unjust enslavement of one segment of society so that another could attain the highest power. This is an illusion because any endeavor, including physical labor, can elevate a person. He criticizes the ancient Greeks for overlooking this fact (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 118). Our ability to apply these distinctions to modern life shows that we cannot take the ancient world as a direct reference.

According to Humboldt, individuals should not be trained as qualified workers to conform to the dictates of the labor market. Instead, they should receive a humanistic education that prepares them to engage in universal human activities (Dörpinghaus, Poenitsch, & Wigger,

2009, p. 75; cited in Schmidhuber, 2013, p. 64). This humanistic education formed the basis of Humboldt's 1809 proposal to the King of Prussia to establish the modern university, which he submitted upon his appointment as minister. The proposal centered on an educational ideal of courses in Latin, Greek, mathematics, literature, and history. This ideal is rooted in Humboldt's concept of *Bildung* and Winckelmann's theory of art, both of which are grounded in ancient art (Horlacher, 2016, p. 59). The decisive role that *Bildung* played in founding the University of Berlin demonstrates that Humboldt applied his ideas to contemporary institutions and regulations during his tenure as a high-ranking government official (Liedman, 1993, p. 82). Thus, Humboldt found an opportunity to implement *Bildung* within the institutional structure of the University of Berlin.

While Enlightenment pedagogy aimed to perpetuate social classes through utility-oriented education, the educational philosophy of neo-humanism—of which Humboldt was a proponent—opposed reducing individuals to mere citizens and training them directly for the benefit of the state under the guise of *humanistic education*. This fundamental education does not aim to qualify individuals according to their innate social class or the expectations of the market (Benner, 2023a, pp. 144-146). Humboldt represents the neo-humanist *Bildung* approach in recent school reform proposals and argues that *humanistic education* should be provided to all individuals “on a single and equal basis,” rather than to a specific social class. He states, “Even the poorest people—everyone—would receive a holistic education, wherever such an education is still available at all, so that everyone could develop to their full potential” (Humboldt, 1920, p. 266). This idea reinforces the notion that education is intended for everyone, regardless of class distinctions.

This Enlightenment-based approach is rooted in the idea of human equality and emphasizes the social aspect of the theory of *Bildung*. In classical theories of *Bildung*, including neo-humanism, the relationship between individuality and sociality broadens to encompass nations, peoples, and cultures. These groups are considered unique expressions of humanity's evolution (Klafki, 2000, p. 94). Humboldt asserts that all segments of society, including nobles and commoners, should begin their education in the same school (Sorkin, 1983, p. 62). His assertion that “The school system, therefore, does not concern itself with any particular class, no single trade, nor even the educated class” (Humboldt, 1920, p. 277) demonstrates that his educational philosophy transcends class distinctions, prioritizing the nurturing of human beings over citizens.

Humboldt's Theory of *Bildung*

Humboldt is a thinker who influenced the contemporary use of the concept of *Bildung*. Examining his theory is key to understanding why the concept plays a leading role in representing the two-century-old continental European educational tradition (Sjöström & Eilks, 2020, p. 55).

According to Humboldt, *Bildung* is the development of one's abilities to reach their highest potential. As individuals embrace and internalize the world through their consciousness, they contribute to the advancement of humanity. This characterizes the ideal of humanity inherent in *Bildung*: humanity will be established through it (Fuhr, 2017). Humboldt emphasizes that individuals can only attain universal *Bildung* through the limitation of state power.

Based on his perspective, merely undergoing formal education is insufficient for the development of *Bildung*. The fundamental aim of *Bildung* is to form the concept of humanity within the individual. Because social relationships play a significant role in an individual's development, socialization is a critical component of the theory of *Bildung*. Humboldt views the social counterpart of *Bildung* as fulfilling social relationships. The fact that social

relationships are a prerequisite for *Bildung* highlights how an individual who manages to maintain a balance while preserving their uniqueness in the face of state intervention in education interacts with society, reshapes society according to the conditions of this balance, and reveals the role of *Bildung* in enlightening society. In this context, Humboldt's approach to *Bildung* aligns with an interpretation of the concept that encompasses the development not only of individual human beings, but also of the human species.

In Humboldt's theory of *Bildung*, the guarantee of individual freedom and emphasis on individual enlightenment, rather than viewing individuals merely as citizens within social relations, demonstrates the concept's understanding of universality. The idea of humanity elevated through the education of the individual also expresses this ideal. According to Rousseau, the universalization of the individual emerges when education addresses the individual's development as a whole, not merely shaping citizens or external actions. According to Humboldt, there is no understanding that aims for a uniform societal ideal or requires individuals to conform to one another. The ideal of humanity emerges in an environment where all societies are formed, diversity is embraced, and unique characteristics are celebrated, allowing every society to maintain its distinctiveness.

Another condition for the realization of *Bildung* is that individuals possess independent thought processes, can practice various ways of life within society, and thus integrate different experiences with the activities of their inner worlds. Thus far, we have addressed the two fundamental conditions of Humboldt's theory of *Bildung*: *freedom* and *a variety of situations*. In *Ideenschrift*, Humboldt states that these are inseparable and that *Bildung* can only emerge when they come together:

The true end of Man, or that which is prescribed by the eternal and immutable dictates of reason, and not suggested by vague and transient desires, is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole. Freedom is the first and indispensable condition which the possibility of such a development presupposes; but there is besides another essential-intimately connected with freedom, it is true-a variety of situations. Even the freest and self-reliant of men is hindered in his development, when set in a monotonous situation (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 106).

According to Humboldt, this world of interaction for the individual is the *human realm* (*humane Welt*). From Richter's (1971, p. 17) perspective, the experiences and interactions arising from the encounter between individuals, societies, cultures, and languages are the fundamental elements that Humboldt researched, sought to understand, and transformed into a unique form throughout his life. This world of interaction occupies a central place in his thought. For Humboldt, the fundamental condition for actions aimed at creating a whole in nature is the diversity of different cultures and their mutual interaction. Humboldt expresses this as follows:

For the mystery of nature rests solely on this interaction. Dissimilar elements combine; what is combined in turn becomes part of a larger whole, and extending to infinity, each new unity encompasses an ever richer abundance, and each new diversity serves a more beautiful unity (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 312).

The concept of mutual interaction is expressed by Humboldt in German as *Wechselwirkung*. Mutual interaction arises when the action of one individual trigger the action of another. Through mutual interaction, subjects convey a shared meaning (Lexikon zur Soziologie, 1994, pp. 308-309). Humboldt addressed this interaction from an educational-theoretical perspective. In a comparison with Fichte's concept of interaction, Humboldt's transformation of Fichte's *not-I* into the concept of the world outside of the human being holds theoretical significance. Fichte stated that the *absolute I* confronts the world as a *not-I* in order to engage

in a free interaction with the world's content. Humboldt, however, placed the *absolute I* face-to-face not with a *not-I* posited by the subject, but with the world as an absolute reality. The transformative power of the *absolute I* and the *not-I*, as articulated by Fichte, involves an interaction based on thought and action, as well as design and reflection. *Bildung* is a process in which a person experiences a self-determined state—one they create for themselves—while planning their actions and reflecting on completed actions. In Humboldt's conception of the unique interaction between human beings and the world, the world takes the place of the original self-consciousness that Fichte regarded as the sole criterion in education. This world is one that is not determined by the *absolute I*, but is experienced as a *not-I* and a resistant reality (Benner, 2023a, pp. 81-83). Here, as Humboldt articulates it, the world is not merely an entity that functions upon thought and action—or, in its simplest form, the condition of thought and action—but rather a space within which human beings realize themselves (Lüth, 1998). This interaction finds its concrete expression in the driving force of the dynamic process that Humboldt describes as the intellectual development of humanity. For this interaction to take place, humans need a world in which their thoughts and actions can function.

According to Humboldt, the ultimate purpose of our existence is to enrich the concept of humanity within our own identity through the traces we leave behind in our lives and beyond. This mission is one created through knowledge and action, which broadens the individual's understanding of humanity. To fulfill this, people must direct toward themselves the illuminating light and soothing warmth of everything they undertake in the external world, without becoming alienated from their own nature. When humanity returns to its faculties in this way, it does not lose itself in an endless cycle within the ceaseless progression of its engagement with the world; humanity's advancement through *Bildung* is thereby completed. The expansion of this understanding means defining a new characteristic regarding our knowledge of what it means to be human (Lüth, 1998).

This task can be fulfilled only through a connection capable of establishing a living, free, and reciprocal interaction between our self and the world. On this bridge between our self and the world, freedom is, above all, a power of interaction. In Humboldt's words, "This bridge is, in and of itself, the true criterion for evaluating the functioning of every branch of human knowledge" (Humboldt, 1956, p. 29). The establishment of this power of interaction is made possible by the social relationships of individuals who can transform the riches of others into their own and preserve their own uniqueness. For the process by which an individual assimilates or rejects external influences to be formative (*bildend*), individuals must act independently; this can only be achieved through freedom (Lüth, 1998, p. 53).

A variety of situations (Mannigfaltigkeit der Situationen)—which emerges alongside freedom and serves as another prerequisite for *Bildung*—is achieved by narrowing the boundaries of the state's sphere of influence. Humboldt urges rulers not to view education as a tool but to support *Bildung* and the self-determination of the people at every level. He foresees that this will only be possible with the elimination of social classes. He seeks this freedom in the diversity of life situations and in human-to-human communication that transcends the boundaries of predetermined social boundaries. This can be interpreted first as the elimination of social boundaries, followed by society's self-determination. This freedom brings with it the diversity of life situations, which is one of the conditions for *Bildung*. The diversity in individuals' life practices is a more appropriate means of determination than speculative ideals that fail to explain the conditions of social life (Miyamoto, 2021, p. 4).

According to Humboldt, political freedom cannot be realized without *a variety of situations*. Nor is it possible for people to become politically free from social hierarchies without education. Thus, it becomes clear that Humboldt viewed education and politics as complementary forces (Benner, 2023a, p. 36). Without a shift on the political axis, the freedom

and a *variety of situations* that are prerequisites for education cannot emerge. However, when the scope of the state's influence is questioned, the freedom of powers and a *variety of situations* become apparent. Provided that superiority in the Enlightenment and culture has been established, limiting the state's authority is the most appropriate reform for that era. According to Humboldt, as the degree of freedom increases, so does the quality of education; therefore, it is essential that individuals act within a context of diversity and with different opportunities, rather than within uniform and repetitive structures (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 101). Humboldt describes the role of rulers and the condition of the people as follows for such an education to be realized:

If, then, the present age really possesses this increased culture and this power and diversity of resources, the freedom which it rightly demands should unquestionably be allowed it. And so its methods of reform would be suitable to a progressive civilization such as we suppose it to be. Generally speaking, it is the drawn sword of the nation which checks the physical power of its rulers; but in our case, culture and enlightenment sway their thoughts and subdue their will, so that the actual concessions of reform seem due to them rather than to the nation. If to see a people breaking their fetters, in the full consciousness of their rights as men and citizens, is a beautiful and ennobling spectacle: it must be still more fine and uplifting to see a prince himself loosing the bonds and granting freedom to his people (Humboldt, 1969, p. 11).

Humboldt demonstrates that establishing mutual interaction with the individual's inner and outer worlds will lay the groundwork for the powerful and universal dissemination of *Bildung*. He does not seek this relationship in pure self-consciousness; he opposes the teleological determination of the self-world relationship—an understanding that defines human self-realization from the outside and interprets it solely on the basis of the world's content. Consequently, the origin and telos of the human being cannot be demonstrated in the self-self-relationship—that is, in pure self-consciousness. If the self-realization is grounded in its experience of the world, then the *educability* of the human being cannot be viewed as an abstraction drawn between the self and the world (Benner, 2023a, p. 28).

The concept of the world, which facilitates the individual's mutual interaction, derives from both unity and universality. The world mediates the mutual interaction between the individual's power of perception and their self-activity. The appearance of our activities—which seem fragmented and external—reveals itself to us in relation to our inner *Bildung*, much like a mirror that simultaneously illuminates and brings images together (Humboldt, 1956, p. 30). Our actions are reflected to us only through the connection they establish with *our inner Bildung*. Thus, our ability to bring the world's unique aspect to life within ourselves is also realized through *Bildung*. As Becker (2013) interprets it, when we look into this mirror, we gain a new perspective and a new, unique voice of our own.

From Humboldt's perspective, the process of internalizing the wealth of others and assimilating it by transforming it into one's own being corresponds to the individual's alienation from their self. Alienation, just as in the imitation of reality, is a productive process as a foundational element of the educational process. The individual must assimilate the external world without sacrificing their freedom or imitating others (Lüth, 1998, p. 52). Relating the external world to their own inner image enables the individual to enrich themselves, thereby facilitating the realization of individual *Bildung*. While attaining this enrichment, the individual will preserve their own uniqueness and establish social connections based on their inner being. Significant outcomes for *Bildung* arise when the individual “should not lose himself in this alienation, but rather reflect back into his inner being the clarifying light and the comforting warmth of everything that he undertakes outside himself.” (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 284). Alienation, as a crucial moment in development, brings situations of interaction with the external world into *Bildung*. At this point, “making the richness of

others one's own" is seen as a result of alienation. When the individual transforms the richness found in others into their own, this established interaction contributes to the individual's *Bildung*. In such an interaction, the individual does not lose their status as a subject. According to Humboldt, alienation is part of the educational process; the idea that the gains of the external world are reflected in the individual's inner being emerges as a concept unique to him. Humboldt explains the individual's alienation from themselves and their reaching out to the external world in this way in *Bildungsschrift*:

Although all these demands are limited to man's inner being, his nature drives him to reach beyond himself to the external objects, and here it is crucial that he should not lose himself in this alienation, but rather reflect back into his inner being the clarifying light and the comforting warmth of everything that he undertakes outside himself. To this end, however, he must bring the mass of objects closer to himself, impress his mind upon this matter, and create more of a resemblance between the two (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 284).

In summary, the individual must be able to embrace the richness of other individuals without losing their own uniqueness. They must also internalize the richness of the experiences gained from their social and natural environments. An individual's participation in social processes under external conditions—such as *freedom* and *a variety of situations*—gains new perspectives and integrates them with their achievements in the external world, thereby illuminating their inner world. In this way, the individual takes a step forward in an educational sense.

In Humboldt's theory of *Bildung*, the balanced and continuous development of a person's intellectual, physical, and moral faculties into a unified whole is possible only when freedom and *a variety of situations* remove the constraints on the individual's actions. The removal of these constraints is of critical importance for the individual to act freely and, consequently, for *Bildung* to become possible. For an individual's educational progress, their self-directed activities must be made possible within the condition of freedom; through these self-directed activities, the individual transforms the riches of their social environment into educational gains and fosters their own development. Humboldt clarifies the idea that a person can make the riches of others their own—a concept central to *Bildung*—by emphasizing the condition of *a variety of situations* as follows:

Even the most free and self-reliant of men is hindered in his development, when set in a monotonous situation... Every human being, then, can act with only one dominant faculty at a time; or rather, our whole nature disposes us at any given time to some single form of spontaneous activity. It would therefore seem to follow from this, that man is inevitably destined to a partial cultivation, since he only enfeebles his energies by directing them to a multiplicity of objects. But man has it in his power to avoid this one-sidedness, by attempting to unite the distinct and generally separately exercised faculties of his nature, by bringing into spontaneous cooperation, at each period of his life, the dying sparks of one activity, and those which the future will kindle, and endeavouring to increase and diversify the powers with which he works, by harmoniously combining them, instead of looking for a mere variety of objects for their separate exercise. (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 107).

The following conclusion can be drawn from these words: The collective relationships among individuals constitute an objective reality, and these relationships can transform the wealth of society into the wealth of its members. In other words, wealth tied to this reality is distributed among all members of society. This transfer occurs through social unity based on the desires and potential of society's members. However, this requires not only freedom, but also *a variety of situations*. For this diversity to emerge, individuals must combine and diversify the forces with which they interact. Diversity is a prerequisite for the formation of *Bildung* because, under uniform conditions, human beings can exhibit only limited development.

According to Becker (2013), philosophical anthropology lies at the center of Humboldt's theory of *Bildung*. According to Becker, there are three main elements through which *Bildung* can be examined from an anthropological perspective. First, *Bildung* is situated within the cultural and historical plane where the life forms of an intellectual ecosystem flourish. The second element is *self-understanding* (*Selbstverständnis*). In this dimension, a person's self-awareness is realized through active, free interaction with the world. Through our thoughts and actions, we are co-author the design of reality. *Bildung* points to a specific characteristic of the human inner world: the totality of sensory and reflective powers (Becker, 2013). Humboldt summarizes this perspective as follows:

In the human mind, however, the faculties for every kind of expression of power are interrelated, and each one develops more freely and fully when supported by the proportionate development of the others. Whatever subject one may discuss, therefore, one can relate it to human beings—specifically, to the entirety of their intellectual and moral organization... One can follow up this inquiry with an even more general one: to what extent has the human spirit thereby drawn nearer to the ultimate goal of its striving—namely, the goal of taking in the entire mass of matter presented to it by the world around it and its inner self. It presents to him, to take in with all the tools of his receptivity, to transform and appropriate with all the powers of his self-activity, and thereby to bring his self into the most universal, lively, and harmonious interaction with nature. One must always do both, as soon as one pursues a lofty practical end, and one must at least never completely neglect it when speaking of art that springs from the very depths of the human mind itself, and of a work of art that bears the stamp of great individuality (Humboldt, 1904a, p. 117).

Individuals develop by reflecting on and absorbing the surrounding world through their own active engagement. This development occurs through free interaction between the self and the world. Human beings transform the material entities they perceive in the world around them using their own means, bringing them closer to themselves. One must also ensure that the self enters into a mutually harmonious interaction with nature while pursuing a practical goal. Humboldt also links this process to the creation of an original work of art. This assimilation within the self and the free interaction between the self and nature makes the original realization of art possible.

From this perspective, specific individual entities establish a connection with an objective focus outside themselves. In doing so, human beings work on the character of their minds within the real differences brought about by inclinations and experience. This connection is established with the human being's *Bildung* (Humboldt, 1904a, p. 118). Through *Bildung*, a person attains an ideal dimension, renewing the integrity of their mind and temperament. They open new paths, becoming explorers of life and pushing the boundaries of humanity:

One now possesses, in the sum of the virtues of mind and character that humanity has demonstrated thus far, an ideal yet definable standard by which the individual can be judged; one sees a goal to strive for; one knows a path along which it is possible, in the highest sense of the word, to be a 'discoverer,' by adding something new to that sum through one's actions as a poet, thinker, or researcher—but above all as a person of action—and thereby pushing back the boundaries of humanity itself (Humboldt, 1904a, p. 118).

Humboldt presents statements that illustrate the mutual interaction between being and form, as well as its counterpart in human beings. He is also notable for his contributions to philosophical anthropology, which is central to the theory of *Bildung* (Becker, 2013). *Bildung* is embedded in a cultural context within a worldview resembling a holistic intellectual ecosystem. This phase constitutes Humboldt's anthropological approach to education. Humboldt clarifies this concept by distinguishing three elements: civilization, culture, and *Bildung*. In turn, Becker (2013) likens this categorization to Mendelssohn's distinction.

Mendelssohn also drew a distinction between the Enlightenment, culture, and *Bildung*. According to Mendelssohn, *Bildung* falls into two categories: culture, associated with practice, and the Enlightenment, associated with theory. Mendelssohn states: “*Bildung*, culture, and enlightenment are modifications of social life, effects of the hard work and efforts of human beings to improve their social condition.” He further elaborates: “The more that art and hard work have brought the social condition of a people into harmony with the vocation of a human being, the more educated this people is” (Mendelssohn, 1784/2008, pp. 4-8).

The relationship between the Enlightenment and culture is similar to the relationship between theory and practice. Culture is oriented toward the practical realm, creating value, refinement, and beauty in crafts, the arts, and social traditions. The Enlightenment, on the other hand, is oriented toward the theoretical realm. It is concerned with rational knowledge and its effects on human self-realization. Thus, *Bildung* encompasses the practical and intellectual dimensions of social formations. Humboldt offers a classification consistent with Mendelssohn’s, associating practical orientations, such as morality and traditions, with civilization and science and art with culture. He defines civilization in terms of technology, political and public order, and society’s practical forms of action. Conversely, he defines culture primarily in terms of science and art. These definitions are close to contemporary usage of these concepts (Becker, 2013).

According to Humboldt, civilization is the process by which people’s external structures and traditions are humanized, along with the internal attitudes associated with them (Humboldt, 1848, p. 22). He notes that culture adds art and science to this elevation of the social condition, pointing to the unity of civilization and culture in a people’s intellectual development. Together, civilization and culture constitute the human world. Humboldt argues that civilization and culture can be transmitted between nations. However, he believes that *Bildung* cannot be transmitted. This is because *Bildung* is a way of thinking that extends from intellectual and moral knowledge and sensibility to the senses and character. It emerges from human interaction with the world and characterizes a culture’s holistic intellectual ecosystem. According to Humboldt, as a system of thought, *Bildung* signifies more than culture; it corresponds to the cultivation of talent and capacity (Gadamer, 1960/2008, p. 14). Humboldt articulates the distinctions among civilization, culture, and *Bildung* as follows:

Civilization is the humanization of peoples in their external institutions and customs, as well as in the inner disposition that relates to them. Culture adds science and art to this refinement of the social condition. But when we use the term *Bildung* in our language, we mean something that is at once higher and more profound—namely, the disposition (*Sinnesart*) of the mind that flows harmoniously into one’s sensibility and character from the knowledge and feeling of the entirety of intellectual and moral striving (Humboldt, 1848, p. 22).

According to Humboldt, when education is conceived as *Bildung*, it signifies the balanced development of human powers and abilities. This development occurs within a great deal of freedom and ascends to a humanism in which humanity attains perfection through communion with life and achieves universal, holistic unity (Helhman, 1942, p. 192).

From this, the following conclusion can be drawn: Education directs humanity toward positivity and a holistic structure. It unites individuals in communion with life, transcending the spirit of the individual. This unity is both social and universal.

Freeing individuals from a one-dimensional understanding of education and connecting them to social processes, such as culture, in contrast to the restrictive perspective of national education, enables them to develop as universal individuals. Education shapes the individual both internally and externally by enabling them to reach their full potential.

Humboldt proposes educating individuals through a universal approach to *Bildung* to achieve a truly universal individual. To prevent individuals from receiving an education confined to a narrow national framework driven solely by teleological goals, he argues that the power of the state must be minimized in certain areas. This allows individuals' equality and freedom to flourish and ensures their inner and social development. Humboldt emphasizes that education organized directly by the state or shaped by state intervention cannot foster the development of individuals' talents and skills. Uniform structures always lead to uniform results (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 144).

These views make it clear that Humboldt opposed the one-dimensional development of individuals through education. Furthermore, when we consider education as a process through which people are formed (*Bildung*)—without limiting it to the development of a specific civic character—there is no need for state intervention. Humboldt viewed education as a human purpose in and of itself, separate from the state's sphere of influence and objectives. According to Humboldt, the eternally unchanging goal of the human mind is to bring about the highest and most balanced *Bildung* of one's faculties as a unified whole (1903a, p. 106).

Benner (2023a, p. 41) points out that Humboldt posits a third form of practical life, beyond craft and industrial forms, within the process of socialization. This form describes people acting not from an innate or profit-driven perspective but rather with an orientation that does not follow bourgeois-industrial production. Thus, rather than developing a predetermined future attributed by birth in a class-based society or the monotony imposed by the division of labor, the individual develops a *variety of situations*. According to Humboldt (1903a, p. 145), the free individual, unbound by these limitations and one-dimensional shaping, can develop more fully in all crafts and manual labor and progress more elegantly in the arts. The following conclusion can be drawn from these lines: The individual can attain only one aspect of the perfection that constitutes the character of the human species. These connections enable the individual to attain diversity, which, aside from freedom, is the most important criterion for *Bildung*.

The Relationship Between the Enlightenment and *Bildung* from Humboldt's Perspective

Understanding the intellectual foundations of the dialectical relationship between Humboldt's educational philosophy and the Enlightenment is a crucial milestone in grasping his theory. Following the process of secularization, *Bildung* takes its place in the literature as a pedagogical term; autonomy, as the rational capacity for self-determination, is linked to its liberation of reason. The individual's ability to make decisions as a moral agent, as well as the central role of creative action in realizing *Bildung*, establish the link between the liberation of thought and *Bildung*.

From a historical perspective, Mendelssohn's inclusion of the concept of *Bildung* in Enlightenment debates, alongside culture, makes examining it within the framework of Enlightenment thought particularly valuable. Due to the concepts of *Bildung* and *Kultur*, Germany's intellectual world diverged from French culture and embarked on a unique developmental process. Thus, in the nineteenth century, *Bildung* became a model through which German intellectuals interpreted the world.

When considering its connection to the German Enlightenment, one can refer to classical interpretations of *Bildung* that align with the fundamental principles of the Enlightenment, such as perfection and progress. As Klafki (2000, p. 87) emphasizes, the Enlightenment is also linked to moral self-determination, the morally constitutive aspect of human existence. In this way, *Bildung* converges with the Enlightenment's approach to humanity (Reichenbach, 2014,

p. 67). Thus, education guided by *Bildung* frees humanity from dogmatic beliefs and places it on an autonomous and critical path (Alves, 2019, p. 8). The secularization of *Bildung*—its liberation from divine origins—can be understood through this parallel with the Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment's conception of humanity can be developed through education, revealing the intrinsic human capacity to shape morality. Humboldt explicitly articulates this idea in the *Bildungsschrift*: "It is the ultimate task of our existence to achieve as much substance as possible for the concept of humanity in our person, both during the span of our life and beyond it, through the traces we leave by means of our vital activity" (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 283). However, these statements appear incompatible with an Enlightenment that contains mystical-pietistic elements. One reason for this is the deep connection between Humboldt's theory of *Bildung* and the social dimensions of the Enlightenment.

Humboldt's (1903a) statement that "at the convergence point of all particular kinds of activity is man" (p. 283) has been interpreted as a turn toward humanity and rationality. This shift enabled individuals to find an inner anchor amid the political chaos that followed the French Revolution (Lüth, 1998, p. 55). The text in which his Enlightenment views first took root is the essay *Über Religion*, written four years before *Ideenschrift*. In it, he sides with Enlightenment thinkers against Wöllner's policy of religious revival in Prussia. In this essay, Humboldt views the state as a tool that supports and facilitates education, proceeding from the premise that citizens must first be educated as human beings (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 69). *Über Religion*, the text in which Humboldt's initial views on the limits of the state's sphere of activity first emerged, defends freedom of religious belief.

According to Humboldt, all laws must be grounded in citizens' central focus on their *Bildung* as human beings. The state has no meaning beyond serving as a tool to support *Bildung* or remove obstacles arising outside the realm of social life. He frequently reiterates this principle, viewing the state as a tool for citizens to achieve their individual goals. Arguing that virtue does not require a religious foundation, Humboldt states that true virtue is independent of allegiance to authority. Thus, he demonstrates that religion is not a matter of allegiance to an authority and that virtuous human behavior is not determined by religious beliefs (Humboldt, 1903a, pp. 69-70). This emphasizes the necessity of the Enlightenment and intellectual education for this understanding.

Religion, too—insofar as it intends to inspire good deeds through specific precepts—is an external means that acts from outside. Therefore, it must always remain the legislator's most ardent endeavor to elevate the education of citizens to such a degree that they find all the motivation to advance the state's purpose solely in the idea of the benefit that the state apparatus grants them for the fulfillment of their individual aims. However, this insight requires enlightenment and a high level of intellectual development, which cannot flourish where the free spirit of inquiry is restricted by laws (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 72).

In this essay, Humboldt places great value on freedom of thought. According to Humboldt, freedom of thought is a prerequisite for the Enlightenment. In other words, progress toward the Enlightenment can only be expected when freedom of thought exists. Additionally, he notes that the Enlightenment is the most important factor in promoting morality, which reinforces his argument that religion is not the foundation of virtue.

And do we forget that freedom of thought itself—and the Enlightenment, which flourishes only under its protection—is the most effective of all means of promoting morality? While all the rest merely guard against outbursts, it acts upon inclinations and dispositions; while all the rest merely bring about a conformity of outward actions, it creates an inner harmony of will and aspiration. But when will people finally stop valuing the external consequences

of actions more highly than the inner spiritual disposition from which they flow? When will the man arise who is to legislation what Rousseau was to education—one who shifts the focus away from external, physical outcomes and back to the inner formation of the human being? (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 75)

In these lines, Humboldt emphasizes that freedom of thought is the most effective means of fostering morality. While other elements ensure the appropriateness of external actions, freedom of thought establishes an inner balance between desire and effort. Furthermore, Humboldt asserts that freedom of thought is not the privilege of a select few. The Enlightenment and freedom of thought—its fundamental prerequisite—must be accessible to all.

It is inconceivable that freedom of thought and the Enlightenment apply only to a segment of society while the vast majority, whose lives are consumed by meeting their physical needs, find them useless or even harmful. It is also inconceivable that certain discourses or restrictions on freedom of thought could impact these people. At the core of denying any individual's right to be human is something that degrades humanity.

No one is at such a low level of culture that he is incapable of attaining a higher one; and even if the more enlightened religious and philosophical ideas cannot be immediately conveyed to a large portion of the citizenry, even if one must present the truth to this class of people in a different guise than one would otherwise choose in order to appeal to their ideas, even if one is compelled to speak more to their imagination and their hearts than to their cold reason. Yet the expansion of all scientific knowledge gains through freedom and enlightenment extends even to them. The beneficial consequences of a lively, unrestricted spirit of inquiry extend to the mind and character of the entire nation, down to its very smallest members (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 76).

In this essay, Humboldt places great value on freedom of thought, viewing it as a prerequisite for the Enlightenment. In other words, progress toward the Enlightenment is possible when freedom of thought exists. Furthermore, he notes that the Enlightenment is the most important factor in promoting morality, which reinforces the argument that religion is not the foundation of virtue.

Humboldt emphasizes that freedom of thought is the most effective means of fostering morality. While other elements merely ensure the appropriateness of external actions, freedom of thought establishes an internal balance between desire and effort. Moreover, according to Humboldt, freedom of thought is not the privilege of a particular class. The Enlightenment and freedom of thought—its fundamental condition—must be accessible to all.

These lines suggest that Humboldt recognized an interdependent relationship between freedom of thought and the Enlightenment. Once freedom of thought is established, the Enlightenment can spread throughout society. Notably, Humboldt conceptualizes the right to be human as necessitating freedom of thought for every individual. Through the Enlightenment and intellectual education, the state can provide the conditions necessary for individuals to achieve their unique goals. Even if enlightened ideas do not reach every citizen directly, the momentum gained by scientific knowledge in a climate of freedom and enlightenment spreads throughout society. This progress exemplifies the Enlightenment's socialization through science.

In this context, Humboldt shares the progressive optimism of the Enlightenment. Moreover, this stance contrasts with Rousseau's negative attitude. He develops a strong conviction that every individual whose freedom of thought is unrestricted can internalize the Enlightenment under the guidance of intellectual education. The key conclusion is that Humboldt approaches

the Enlightenment on both an individual and universal level. Another noteworthy point is that these universal ideas first appeared in *Über Religion*, a text containing the seeds of political philosophy. These ideas are later revived in the *Ideenschrift*.

In the section concerning the limitation of the state's activities in religious matters, Humboldt reiterates that the Enlightenment can only be realized under the protection of freedom of thought: "Do we forget that freedom of thought itself, and the Enlightenment which can only flourish under its protection, is the most effective means of promoting security?" (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 161). In these texts, Humboldt argues primarily that the state should not interfere with citizens' religious beliefs (Beiser, 2018, p. 199). According to Humboldt, belief is subjective in nature: "The effectiveness of religion, however, depends entirely on the individual nature of one's character; it is, in the strictest sense, subjective" (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 68).

To illustrate Humboldt's relationship with the social dimensions of the Enlightenment, one may examine his travel notes, *Die Vasken*, which can be evaluated within the scope of empirical educational research. In these notes, Humboldt provides examples of local populations in England, Sweden, Germany, and Italy. He notes that these peoples, overcome by their national pride, failed to integrate with their neighbors. In contrast, Humboldt (1920) states that the Basque people "has been able to successfully transplant many of the most beneficial fruits of the European Enlightenment into the heart of their desolate lands, without, however, sacrificing their distinctiveness and their original simplicity" (Humboldt, 1920, p. 7).

In Humboldt's thought, his view of the Enlightenment as a transnational process transcending national boundaries highlights the coexistence of the Enlightenment with traditions specific to national character as a dilemma. This tension is a theoretical problem because a people's identity is bound to traditions, which are closely tied to irrational beliefs and social preconceptions. Despite this tension, Humboldt seeks to productively reconcile national identity and the Enlightenment. He aims to educate and advance national identities through *Bildung* while preserving their unique aspects. For the Enlightenment and national identity to unite, the intellectual powers of the Enlightenment must be synthesized with the sensory powers of national identity (Mattig, 2019, p. 130).

The distinction that Humboldt outlines here is similar to Mendelssohn's division of *Bildung* into the branches of the Enlightenment and culture. Mendelssohn associates the Enlightenment with rational knowledge and intellectual abilities, and he associates culture with practical aspects of life, such as folk identity, social traditions, crafts, and the arts. He argues that the synthesis of these two elements constitutes public education (Mendelssohn, 1784/2008, pp. 4-8).

From Humboldt's perspective, the Enlightenment depends on including the people in a rationalist framework, and developing the physical and sensory abilities of the so-called *educated (gebildet)* class, which extends beyond the intellectual sphere. This ensures the people's participation in rational processes alongside the integration of the intellectual class with the people, thus realizing a true Enlightenment project. Through this approach, Humboldt sought to bridge the gap between the educated and uneducated and between the aristocracy and common people, a distinction that was becoming increasingly pronounced during his time.

Humboldt observed that in the Basque Country, participation in traditional ceremonies by individuals from all segments of society brought people closer together and fostered mutual intellectual and emotional interaction. This sense of belonging across social strata reveals educated individuals' desire to convey Enlightenment principles to the people. According to Humboldt, the Basque people embody a model of *Bildung* that is free from an aristocratic

intellectual identity (Mattig, 2024, pp. 74-75). These observations reveal that Humboldt conceived of the Enlightenment as having the potential to transcend class divisions within society. Although *Bildung* is a defining element, it does not deepen class divisions or preserve the aristocratic structure. Rather, it becomes the fundamental condition for the convergence of the people and the educated class.

Humboldt observed the disappearance of class distinctions in the Basque Country and aimed to apply the broad theoretical perspective he gained there to Germany. At the time, he viewed Germany as a *cultural society*. The social dimension of the Enlightenment becomes evident in the Basque Country through the rapprochement between the educated class and the people. Popular culture and the Enlightenment are linked in a way that minimizes class differences (Giel, 1987, p. 4; Mattig, 2019, p. 263). As the gap between the educated class and the public narrows, a force for change emerges between them, making the realization of *Bildung* easier. The success of the popular Enlightenment in the Basque Country is explained by the dissolution of the class structure. Humboldt analyzes the popular culture of the Basque Country from a theoretical perspective (Zabaleta-Gorrotxategi, 2006, p. 110). The interaction between the Enlightenment and popular identity dissolves class divisions in society. Consequently, these observations are of vital importance to Humboldt's theory of education from the perspective of its social dimension.

Humboldt also supported the egalitarian approach of the Enlightenment. This can be seen in the educational reform reports and plans that were the practical extension of the theory of *Bildung*. According to Humboldt, this approach, centered on curricula, is based on his belief that all individuals are equal in terms of human dignity as moral agents and that everyone must first undergo a humanistic education within the framework of formal education.

The concrete manifestations of this approach are evident in the *Schulplan* reports, which detail Humboldt's ideas on curricula. In these reports, he addresses the issue of dividing responsibilities between *Realschule* and public schools. He takes an egalitarian stance and believes that all schools should provide a humanistic education before focusing on vocational training. He believes that these schools should be supported by the entire nation or the state, not just one social class. "Whatever is required by the demands of life or by a particular trade must be learned separately, after a humanistic education has been completed" (Humboldt, 1920, p. 276).

Humboldt's egalitarian stance in these reports is consistent with the following demands in the *Schulplan*: The sole common foundation of humanistic education is that "for the meanest day laborer and the most highly educated person must, at their core, be of the same disposition" (Humboldt, 1920, p. 278) and that "everyone, even the poorest, would receive a well-rounded humanistic education" (Humboldt, 1920, p. 266).

The *Schulplan* proposes that everyone, including the poorest individuals, should receive a holistic, *humanistic education* free from discrimination. After completing primary and secondary education, which consists of core subjects such as reading, writing, arithmetic, classical languages, history, and philosophy, students may proceed to university or a specialized school. These areas of specialization include medicine, technology, the arts, agriculture, crafts, commerce, and vocational training. Another option is to enter civilian life directly, stepping into life as a citizen.

The poorest segments of society will send their children to the cheapest or free elementary schools, while those who are less poor will send their children to higher quality, albeit more expensive, schools. Those with greater resources will attend academically focused schools where they will continue their education through the upper grades. Depending on their needs,

they may leave earlier to take additional language courses beyond the common languages. These studies will be followed by university, a private school, or a direct transition to civilian life. Ultimately, everyone—even the poorest—will receive a comprehensive humanistic education. In this way, every intellectual individuality will secure its own right and place (Humboldt, 1920, p. 266).

Benner (2023a) draws on the *Schulplan* to highlight Humboldt's egalitarian perspective. According to Benner, Humboldt advocated for an educational program that transcends the culture to which individuals feel a sense of belonging, as well as the associated preconceptions. This program is based on freedom and self-activity. It is shaped by the dialectical interaction between the self and the world, as well as the self and itself. Humanistic education is realized through both self-world and self-interactions; freedom is one of the conditions for this. This type of education is not tied to individuals' cultural or geographical backgrounds. It aims to advance the public sphere in which all individuals participate (Benner, 2023a, pp. 174-175).

These school reports, considered part of Humboldt's mature works from 1809, contain curricula that could prevent the formation of groups with distinct civic identities. Humboldt opposed curricula that advocated for the existence of secondary schools as independent institutions alongside the academic schools of the time. According to his plans, secondary schools should either complete the educational stages between elementary school and academic school or be structured as a distinct type of school for those who opt out of higher education. Thus, these schools would not serve to create a separate *citizen class* (*Bürgerklasse*). Separating citizen and academic classes negatively affects subject selection, teaching methods, and the approach to students throughout the entire educational process, from acquiring basic knowledge to completing one's education. Such a division undermines the unity of instruction, which should progress seamlessly (Humboldt, 1920, pp. 259-260). For this reason, Humboldt objects to the existence of a separate, class-based category called the *citizen class*.

The nation, independent of any cultural or ethnic identity, takes the place of the state. This is realized on an egalitarian plane through citizens' participation as individuals in the public sphere. For Humboldt, the public sphere corresponds to civil society, which he calls *the nation*. This sphere is a space of free movement that protects citizens from state intervention. In *Ideenschrift*, Humboldt presents the state as an educational institution and defines the limits of its activities in the public sphere. He discusses the harmful consequences of state regulations aimed at increasing the nation's material well-being. The primary harm of economic interventions, such as promoting agriculture, industry, trade, financial transactions, and monetary transactions, lies in the state's institutions weakening the nation's strength in this sphere. According to Humboldt, the development of the sciences, to which political institutions contribute, appears to elevate intellectual powers and, thereby, culture and character. However, not every enrichment achieved through knowledge directly signifies the elevation of intellectual power. This way, the enrichment of the entire nation cannot be achieved. The cultivation of the human mind is possible only through independent action, self-creativity, and adapting what one discovers in the external world to oneself (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 104).

In this sense, the central role of self-activity in the realization of *Bildung* highlights its connection to freedom and creative self-expression. Kant's motto of the Enlightenment is that "Nonage is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance." (Kant, 1795/2015, p. 311). In line with this motto, Humboldt states that state regulations involving coercion and pressure accustom people to external guidance rather than enabling them to discover solutions to life's problems.

The state strays from the path of teaching when it compels citizens directly through legal regulations, creates incentives through rewards and incentives, or offers coercive advice through arguments. The ideal method of teaching is undoubtedly to present citizens with all possible solutions to a problem, allowing them to carefully weigh these options and ultimately choose the most suitable education through their own free will (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 115).

The nation's active participation in the institutionalization of education and educational activities played a significant role in spreading the Enlightenment. In contrast, educational methods imposed through external coercion prevent citizens from devising original solutions to individual and social problems and do not allow them to utilize their creative potential. In this context, the state's fundamental role in the institutionalization of education is not to directly intervene and direct, but rather to prepare the ground for individuals to freely choose their own path.

Humboldt's Enlightenment-era approach must be considered in both its educational and social dimensions. He links the primacy of the human inner being — as the primary source and ultimate goal of all human activity — to freedom. Humboldt finds the historical portrait of a people's character forged by unspoiled land to be striking. He explains that the labor people invest in the land, and the harvest that results from this labor, bind them to their farm and land. Participation in this labor and the shared joy of the results create a bond of love within every family. Freedom is an indispensable condition for cultivating unspoiled, natural land—that is, for successfully pursuing endeavors in harmony with human nature. Beneficial results cannot be achieved without freedom (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 118). Humboldt notes that anything done solely under the guidance of others, without free choice, will remain alien to the individual. He echoes Kant's Enlightenment maxim that human beings must be able to use their reason without resorting to the guidance of others. Consequently, no action performed without free will stems from or is in accordance with one's nature. Actions carried out under the guidance of others alienate a person from their own nature.

Another noteworthy point is Humboldt's treatment of freedom and individuality as ends in themselves and his strong emphasis on actions arising from people's own initiative: "Everything in a person is organization. What is to flourish within a person must first be based within them" (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 114). In response to criticisms that his theory of *Bildung* is based on a naive assumption of human nature, Humboldt emphasizes the importance of limiting the scope of state activity, citing people's innate desire for self-perfection (Beiser, 2018, p. 219). According to Humboldt (1969), "Every occupation, of whatever nature, is more efficiently performed if pursued for its own sake alone, rather than for the results to which it leads" (p. 39). This idea is deeply rooted in human nature because "Now this arises simply because action is dearer to human nature than mere possession, but action only in so far as it is spontaneous" (Humboldt, 1969, p. 39). From Humboldt's perspective, individuality and autonomy are ending in themselves. They constitute criteria arising from human nature that are of primary importance when people act.

Humboldt's views on the Enlightenment are evident in his petition to the king, in which he requested the establishment of the University of Berlin. He saw founding the university as a mission to unite Enlightenment and educational circles. He took a civil-societal approach to schools and the education system, emphasizing that reforming these systems would require the nation's involvement. When institutions are viewed as the nation's own creation, they receive greater attention. The nation's role in the Enlightenment process is to actively participate in the education and moral development of the younger generation. By doing so, the nation itself will also become more enlightened and more moral. (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 143). According to Humboldt, civil society's active participation in institutionalizing education is fundamental to a nation's progress along the path of the Enlightenment. Nations and

cultures are unique manifestations of humanity's potential for development. As nations become enlightened while preserving their distinct identities, humanity evolves toward the formation of an enlightened global society. The enlightenment of nations and of all of humanity is the result of nations' active participation in their own educational processes. From Humboldt's perspective, state intervention in education should be limited to enabling its institutionalization. Civil society organizations are key to the institutionalization and modernization of education. The fact that civil society processes shape the institutionalization of education plays a pioneering role in enlightening the new generation and spreading enlightenment within the nation itself. Thus, the intellectual framework of the University of Berlin is based on a synthesis of neo-humanist goals and an enlightened worldview (Sorkin, 1983, p. 65). In short, the social dimension of *Bildung* is evident in Humboldt's educational programs, which integrate Enlightenment into neo-humanist educational theory. In line with Enlightenment thought, Humboldt's university model views education as an end, not merely as a means of specialization. The model aims to foster the development of a rich, multifaceted personality in individuals rather than produce uniform specialists. In an ideal institution, academics develop themselves through constant interaction with critically thinking students, and teaching and research go hand in hand. Only in this way can an academic institution be free, embody the human drive for *Bildung*, and promote the continuous development of humanity (Gjesdal, 2015, p. 705).

Traces of Humboldt's civic and social characteristics in his theory of *Bildung* can be seen in the structure of higher education institutions. According to Humboldt, who viewed the Enlightenment as a *popular enlightenment*, the collaborative nature of learning at the university, involving scholars and students from the public, underscores the university's role in the theoretical development of public education.

Remaining faithful to the Enlightenment motto, Humboldt turns to human reason for guidance. He asserts that the individual's true purpose is a rational process of emancipation that cannot be determined by institutions such as God, the state, or the church. "The true end of Man, or that which is prescribed by the eternal and immutable dictates of reason, and not suggested by vague and transient desires, is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole." (Humboldt, 1969, p. 16). As Çelik (2022, p. 120) emphasizes, Humboldt does not seek the motivation that will lead humanity to its ultimate purpose in religious or political authorities but rather under the direct guidance of human reason. Thus, Humboldt synthesizes the classical conception of the free individual with the Enlightenment's rational understanding of education.

As Oelkers (2004, p. 75) points out, the Enlightenment distinguishes between the irrational and rational aspects of knowledge. It develops a universal ethical framework; by introducing new forms of rationality, it establishes an educational program that is inclusive and egalitarian. The egalitarian approach stemming from Humboldt's humanist educational philosophy also points toward a universal educational program and aligns with the Enlightenment's inclusive vision of the universal human ideal.

The Relationship Between the Individual and the Universal Human

According to Humboldt, the individual can only be understood through their relationship with the universal human. This section examines this relationship within the framework of Humboldt's theory of *Bildung*, defining the universal human in the process. According to Humboldt's theory of *Bildung*, an evolution toward the ideal of humanity takes place.

The Concept of the Individual According to Humboldt

From Humboldt's perspective, the individual can only be grasped in conjunction with his understanding of humanity; how the individual is defined and what qualities he possesses become clear within this framework. In the *Bildungsschrift*, Humboldt states that, since human beings are at the center of all specific forms of action, they seek a nature that— independent of any specific purpose—merely strengthens and elevates the powers of their nature, thereby imparting value and continuity to their existence. Human existence is made possible through thinking and acting, as well as through imagining the world outside oneself and engaging with it. For this reason, humans strive to comprehend the world as fully as possible and to relate it as closely as possible to themselves (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 283).

Humboldt's placement of the human being at the center of all actions is interpreted by some commentators as an anthropocentric approach; it is argued that he endorses humanity's hegemony over the world (Konrad, 2010, p. 39). As an argument supporting this interpretation, one can point to Humboldt's assertion that a picture of human action emerges when the focus shifts to the individual in the development of human powers. This picture resembles an image reflected in a mirror that shines in relation to our inner *Bildung*. Beyond our external achievements and our relationship with the world, the individual and introspective observations are placed at the forefront (Lüth, 1998).

However, Humboldt does not merely place the human being at the center of action; he also evaluates human education and knowledge from this perspective. He constructs the idea of human existence through the educated human being; he treats education as a criterion for the human being who is at the center of all actions (Menze, 1965, p. 35). Human beings require an educational process through which they can shape their own self-determination. One of the conditions of this process is the environment that surrounds the individual. The individual undertakes the task of seeking and finding their own self-determination in harmonious collaboration with this environment.

Humboldt emphasizes that, just as pure thought requires a substance within which to shape itself to ensure its continuity, human beings also require the world outside themselves (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 283). However, humans do not reduce the world to mere matter; they view it as the product of a mental process and place it among the conditions of their own existence. They establish an experiential relationship with the world. According to Benner, it is misleading to label Humboldt's perspective as anthropocentric. For, unlike the view that places humans at the center of the universe and regards them as the masters of the world, Humboldt asserts that humans—as the sole beings tasked with seeking and finding their own self-realization—depend on the world outside themselves (Benner, 2023a, p. 79).

The image of humanity that emerges within the diversity of life forms—determined by the various compositions of the living and non-living nature surrounding humans—is more striking than the images presented by history. Human beings are constantly under the influence of this nature (Humboldt, 1971, p. 43). Lüth (1998, p. 49) interprets Humboldt's statements as supporting the claim that human beings are at the center of every type of action. However, what is emphasized here is the importance placed on the study of human beings and the determinative role of the environment surrounding them in shaping the image of humanity. The fact that humans are at the focal point of actions does not imply that they subjugate other beings; on the contrary, it empowers human existence and endows it with value, thereby providing an opportunity for humans to seek their own self-determination. Human beings are not the only beings that depend on the world outside themselves; however, according to Humboldt, they are the only beings capable of recognizing the world outside themselves and reflecting on it (Benner, 2023a, pp. 80-81).

Human self-determination cannot be explained either by adaptation to the existing order of the world or by domination over nature, as in the Enlightenment perspective. There is another argument that explains humanity's central role in all actions through an orientation toward human reason. This tendency is embedded in Humboldt's thoughts on the purpose of *Bildung*. According to him, the highest and most harmonious *form of Bildung*—through which human faculties attain wholeness—can be defined only through eternal reason (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 106). Humanity's constant striving toward perfection is tied to human reason. In short, the path to *Bildung* is a product of human rationality. Not the domination of nature, but the dominion of reason—and the attainment of *Bildung* through this rationality—is the focal point of Humboldt's argument. Moreover, Humboldt explains this orientation toward humanity and human reason as stemming from the human desire to find a point of reference within oneself following the fragmentation of the political order during the French Revolution (Lüth, 1998, p. 55). Humboldt links the political rationale to the idea that, to achieve what *Bildung* aims for from a teleological perspective, humans must take reason as their guide on the path of continuous development and choose their inner self as a haven.

The reason humans are at the center of actions is that their actions are determined by reason. However, while Humboldt sees a rational foundation in the determination of human actions, he adopts an empirical approach when it comes to *Bildung*—which is sought through interaction with the world. The idea that reason alone can achieve *Bildung* through a theoretical framework is not a notion he can accept. In developing his theory of *Bildung*, Humboldt argues that theoretical knowledge and empirical research must support one another. Unlike some Enlightenment thinkers of his time, he envisions not merely the advancement of reason, but the establishment of sensations, feelings, phenomena, and moral elements in a state of mutual relationship and balance (Mattig, 2024, pp. 72-73). On one side of the *Bildung* process lies empirical research focused on human nature; this research helps us understand an individual's developmental potential. Empirical observation of human beings is essential for an ideal to be effective (Lüth, 1998, p. 51). In conclusion, for *Bildung* to take shape, it is necessary for the individual's reason and other faculties to form a balanced whole, and for there to be empirical research that reveals the individual's developmental potential. This is because a person's attainment of *Bildung* on their own is not merely a matter of using reason as a guide, but is the result of their interaction with other subjects. For this reason, to demonstrate the individual's evolution toward the universal human, it is necessary to examine Humboldt's conception of the relationship between the individual and the universal human closely.

Humboldt's Perspective on the Relationship Between the Individual and the Universal Human

In this section, I will first take a brief look at the relationship between the individual and the universal human in classical *Bildung* theories, and then examine Humboldt's views. Klafki (2000) notes that the individual's creative self-activity occupies a central place in classical theories of *Bildung*. However, *Bildung* is not merely an individual educational movement or the individual's self-formation (*sich bilden*); it takes place within social and universal conditions. In this context, it is misleading to regard classical theories of *Bildung* as a direct reflection of subjectivity. Just as autonomy, freedom, emancipation, and creative self-activity are fundamental factors in the formation of *Bildung*, so too are humanity, being human, universality, the world, objectivity, and universality—that is, being directed toward everyone—central factors. For rationality, the ability to determine one's own destiny, and the freedom to think and act to acquire the quality of a subject, it is only possible through the acquisition of content corresponding to the objectification of cultural actions and the analysis of this content. Human *self-determination*—the actions shaped by the possibilities afforded by reason and freedom—takes on an objective form within the achievements of civilization, knowledge about

the natural and human worlds, political constitutions and actions, moral regulations, the system of norms, forms of social life, works of art, philosophy, religion, and *worldviews* (*Weltanschauung*) (Klafki, 2000, pp. 88-89).

It follows the classical theories of *Bildung*, of which Humboldt is a representative, seek human rationality not on the individual level but on the social level. When an individual's cultural actions acquire an objective content and this content is internalized and assimilated, the individual can attain the capacity to determine their own destiny along with the freedom to think and act. Klafki (2000) acknowledges that self-determination is subjective; however, for this capacity to acquire a conscious subject identity, actions must become objectified. This is made possible by the achievements of civilization and, in the broadest sense, of humanity in the social, political, moral, and aesthetic planes. The analysis of the content obtained through the objectification of cultural actions implies that, through *Bildung*, the individual can become a self-determining, free subject. The individual's self-formation occurs through mutual interaction with other individuals and with social identity in the world outside the self, and through the acquisition of objective content by their cultural actions.

All of this demonstrates that the individual's process of self-formation is never-ending, lifelong, and can take place on a universal plane. Through these processes, *Bildung* transcends affiliation with a specific social class; it becomes applicable to all members of the cultural world in which the individual lives. Thus, in classical theories of *Bildung*, this education is *Bildung for everyone*, addressing the public (Klafki, 2000, p. 89). The fundamental educational ideas that transcend class and individual differences—based on the principle that all instruction in school should be grounded in a single, uniform foundation for everyone—are outlined in Humboldt's *Schulplan*.

Humboldt states that the individual can attain universality through their relationship with the external world. In the *Bildungsschrift*, he asserts that *Bildung*, which spreads powerfully and universally, serves to ensure that virtue and wisdom reign under the protection of humanity and to elevate intrinsic value to the extent that the concept of humanity can possess a rich and valuable essence. In addition, humans are expected to leave a visible trace of their own value in the laws they create and in the inanimate nature that surrounds them. These expectations are not solely based on the individual; they push the individual beyond themselves to reach external objects. Thus, the individual reflects what they have obtained externally back into their inner being and creates a similarity between their external and internal worlds. The individual possesses the capacity to represent the same object within themselves in various forms: through the intuition of the senses, the concept of reason, and the image of the imagination. The individual must strive to comprehend nature through the power of interaction within themselves, utilizing all these tools, and must strengthen their innate power through *a variety of situations*. From Humboldt's perspective, the concept of the world is also defined in this way. The effort to comprehend nature, strengthened by *a variety of situations* inherent in inner power, points toward unity and universality; together, they determine the individual's interaction with the external world. The fact that the world encompasses all conceivable diversity demonstrates that it includes the diversity that allows objects outside us to touch our senses, as well as the autonomous existence of these objects that influences our emotions (Humboldt, 1956, pp. 29-30).

The conclusion to be drawn from Humboldt's statements is clear: For the individual to reach the universal plane, they must interact with the diversity outside themselves and with the external world, which possesses an autonomous existence, and they must be able to reflect their perceptions of this world inward. An individual who can create a similarity between their external and internal worlds comes to truly know nature by grasping the diversity of the senses. The world is precisely the object that makes this interaction possible. The world, defined by

unity and universality, enables the mutual interaction between human perceptual power and self-activity in all its power and wholeness (Humboldt, 1956, p. 30).

Humboldt's expectation for the entire humanity is that *Bildung*, wisdom, and virtue should reign under his auspices, elevating humanity's intrinsic value to the extent that the concept of humanity can possess a rich and valuable essence. Although this expectation may seem limited to the human inner world, it propels the individual beyond their own nature and toward the external world. Human beings must reflect the illuminating light of what they have attained outside themselves back onto their inner being. They must strive to comprehend nature by projecting the perfect unity and power of mutual interaction within themselves onto nature, and by utilizing their abilities to represent the objects within themselves in various ways. By bringing objects from the external world closer to themselves in this way, they can establish parallels within their inner world; in doing so, they also strengthen their innate power (Humboldt, 1956, pp. 29-30).

Humboldt's Universal Human

Since, in the context of German Classicism, *Bildung* is associated with the Enlightenment and self-determination, the claim to impart this ability to everyone can only be understood in universal terms. Central concepts such as humanity, humanization, the world, and objectivity come into play here. Therefore, to apply to every individual, *Bildung* must be oriented toward the possibilities of human progress. This demonstrates that it can exist only within an environment in which humanization has been historically objectified (Klafki, 2000, p. 92).

According to Humboldt, the subject is not lost in the process of alienation. A close examination of the process by which subjective existence becomes objectified clearly demonstrates this. The subject integrates with its sociocultural environment, and thus, *Bildung* reaches a universal level, enriching the concept of humanity.

Thus, as the subject becomes objectified, it acquires a social and universal identity. In other words, by objectifying its freedom and rationality, the subject attains a universal dimension. The subject does not lose its identity in other subjects or society. On the contrary, the subject reaches a universal dimension by taking shape within social and universal institutions, values, art, and philosophy.

According to Humboldt, the universal human must be understood in relation to his definitions of character and individuality. The ideal of humanity is a unity shaped by the diversity of individuals' characters. The unique individualities of different people interlock to form nations. Through this integration, nations move toward perfection while preserving their distinctive traits. However, they do not achieve this on their own, but rather through mutual interaction. The individual accomplishes within social unity what he or she could not achieve alone. As the concept of humanity evolves, character diversity is essential; no character is sacrificed. In fact, each character plays a role in this mutual interaction that contributes to the formation of a specific national character. These national characters then come together to establish the ideal of humanity.

Humboldt believed that the ideal of humanity is shaped by the richness of diverse cultures. In his letters to Schiller, he elaborates on this idea: "But from the entire history of humanity, one can draw a picture of the human spirit and character that does not entirely resemble any single century or any single nation, yet to which all have contributed" (Humboldt, 2017, p. 190). He viewed national character as a collective unity comprised of diverse forms. Thus, Humboldt's conception of national character does not include extreme nationalism or chauvinism; rather, it involves the peaceful interaction of nations (Mattig, 2019, pp. 104-109).

Humboldt's *Schulplan* reports provide a solid basis for examining the egalitarian elements of the neo-humanist approach to *Bildung*. Benner's interpretations of the current literature serve as a guide. He advocated for a learning program that is independent of the cultures from which individuals come. In the neo-humanist approach to *Bildung*, *humanistic education*—the precursor to vocational education—expands the public sphere so individuals can participate regardless of their cultural background while safeguarding freedom (Benner, 2023a, pp. 174-175). Thus, within the egalitarian structure that emerges from the limitations of the nation-state, independent of ethnic identity, every individual's participation in the public sphere becomes possible. In the aforementioned reports, Humboldt advocates for egalitarian education among the members of the nation (Humboldt, 1920, p. 276).

Equality is most evident in basic education, which comes before vocational education and is intended for everyone. However, Humboldt does not argue that every individual should receive an equal education throughout their life, including in the context of vocational education. In his *Ideenschrift*, written in 1791, he discusses minimizing the state's sphere of intervention and makes room for the nation to take the state's place. A critical aspect of this report is its egalitarian approach, which envisions that, in reform efforts, all children should be able to begin basic education without discrimination (Berghahn, 2022, p. 17). Indeed, Humboldt's assertion that "for the meanest day laborer and the most highly educated person must, at their core, be of the same disposition" (Humboldt, 1920, p. 278) is consistent with this approach.

The Ideal of Humanity in Humboldt's Theory of *Bildung*

As a proponent of the neo-humanist approach to *Bildung*, Humboldt's writings across various fields, particularly political theory, are united by his human-centered perspective on the concept of *Bildung*. From a teleological perspective, the purpose of his work centers on humanity. His efforts to understand humanity, both in the transition from the individual to the universal and within social processes, establish him as a modern educational theorist. In the simplest terms, his work is an attempt to create a science of humanity (Menze, 1965, p. 33). When *Bildung* is viewed as the underlying concept in his works, his interpretations of human knowledge and progress are worthy of examination. The central idea of *Ideenschrift*, an early political theory work drafted in 1792, is that the state's purpose is to establish a political order that fosters popular *Bildung* and enables them to attain moral perfection (Beiser, 2018, p. 200). Menze (1965, p. 36) builds on this idea, presenting the *Ideenschrift* as a program designed to ensure that the concept of *Bildung* plays a critical role in all areas of life.

Humboldt also addresses the concept of humanity in the *Bildungsschrift*. He notes that the ideal of humanity has an anthropological counterpart: the ultimate purpose of our existence is to enrich the concept of humanity within our personalities during and after our lifetimes. He then explains the meaning he ascribes to this ideal of humanity:

What do we demand of a nation, of an age, of entire mankind, if it is to occasion respect and admiration? We demand that *Bildung*, wisdom, and virtue, as powerfully and universally propagated as possible, should prevail under its aegis, that it augment its inner worth to such an extent that the concept of humanity, if taken from its example alone, would be of a rich and worthy substance. And the demand does not stop here. It is expected that man leave a visible impression of his worth on the constitutions he forms and even on inanimate Nature around him, indeed that he should breathe his virtue and his strength (in such might and dominance are they to permeate his being) into his progeny. For only in this way may the acquired merits be perpetuated, and without these, without the comforting thought of a certain sequence of elevation and *Bildung*, human existence would be more transient than the existence of a flower that, upon withering, has at least the certainty of leaving behind the germ of its likeness (Humboldt, 1956, p. 29).

According to these lines, and from Humboldt's perspective, the process of humanization takes on a universal dimension and represents the objective aspect of the subject. As Klafki (2000, p. 91) notes, the process of *Bildung* is understood as the interaction between the subject and its natural environment. Through integration with the external world within a sociocultural framework, the subject elevates its own *Bildung* to a universal level. The process of humanization is not only the duty of a nation, but also of humanity. It inevitably evolves into a universal identity. "to achieve as much substance as possible for the concept of humanity in our person... This can be fulfilled only by the linking of the self to the world to achieve the most general, most animated, and most unrestrained interaction" (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 283) is the starting point of this duty.

The transformation of the concept of humanity into the ideal of humanity can only occur within the flow of history. This transformation is a collective endeavor of humanity. This goal can be achieved by enhancing the capacities of individuals and of humanity. This goal represents the highest form of *Bildung*. The emergence of the idea of *Bildung* as a goal in Humboldt's thought demonstrates that his philosophy is not aimless. Organizing individuals and social formations through *Bildung* triumphs over regression and uniformity. It enables individuals to overcome the conditions that threaten humanity (Menze, 1965, p. 36). An individual's attainment of the ideal of humanity—and, consequently, of *Bildung*—starts with the belief that wisdom and virtue will spread universally, enriching the concept of humanity. Subsequently, the human quest evolves toward universality and a wisdom-filled *Bildung*:

What man needs most, therefore, is simply an object that makes possible the interplay between his receptivity and his self-activity. But if this object is to suffice to occupy his whole being in its full strength and unity, it must be the ultimate object, the world, or at least (for only this is in fact correct) be regarded as such. Man seeks unity only to escape from dissipating and confusing diversity. In order not to become lost in infinity, empty and unfruitful, he creates a single circle, visible at a glance from any point. In order to attach the image of the ultimate goal to every step forward he takes, he seeks to transform scattered knowledge and action into a closed system, mere scholarship into scholarly *Bildung*, merely restless endeavor into judicious activity (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 285).

The ideal of humanity as a shared endeavor that encompasses all cultures can only take shape within the flow of history. The goal is to attain the highest form of *Bildung*. The unification of cultures, combining their achievements to create a cumulative history and forming a world civilization, resembles the formation of the ideal of humanity (Lüth, 1988, p. 57). Here, the concept of *world* corresponds to the idea of a universal organization of distinct cultures that preserve their uniqueness. Cultures can establish this unity through mutual relations, trade, wars, or other forms of cultural exchange. Through these interactions, they share their unique diversity with other cultures (Strauss, 1997, p. 54).

According to Humboldt, when the subject integrates with the outside world and engages in living interactions, its *Bildung* is elevated to a universal dimension, enriching humanity. This, in turn, leads the subject to adopt a universal identity. Cultures evolve into the concept of humanity through this sharing. In his *Anthropologie-Schrift*, written after the *Bildungsschrift*, Humboldt reintroduces *a variety of situations* as how the ideal of humanity is achieved through *a variety of situations*, following the condition of freedom for the formation of the ideal of humanity.

For it is only through society that humanity can reach its highest peak, and it requires the union of many not merely to produce greater and more enduring works through the sheer multiplication of forces, but also, above all, to reveal its nature in its true richness and full extent through a greater diversity of aptitudes. A human being is always created for only one form, for one character, just as a class of people is. The ideal of humanity, however,

represents as many and as varied forms as are compatible with one another. Therefore, it can never appear except in the totality of individuals (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 379).

From this perspective, achieving a human ideal through cultural exchange encompasses the coming together of individuals and societies. However, this diversity must exist within a coherent framework. Individuals with different characteristics can attain the ideal of humanity by uniting through shared experiences. The idea that cultures come together in diversity form a cumulative sense of history and evolve toward a world civilization is also based on this understanding of diversity.

Humboldt's Ideas About Democracy

Taking a look at Humboldt's approach to democracy provides a basis for interpreting how his ideas can be used to develop a program for democratic citizenship education. This perspective is also illuminating for understanding the relevance of his educational views today. This is because in democratic societies, there is a reciprocal relationship between education and democracy. As Dewey emphasized in *Democracy and Education*, "the devotion of democracy to education is a familiar fact" (Dewey, 1916, p. 101). Furthermore, among the goals of education today is equipping learners with the skills for democratic life that ensure social justice. When education takes on a democratic identity, it can also prevent the reproduction of systematic oppression in society. Based on this, it can be said that just as democracy shapes education, education also advances democracy (Y. Waghid et al., 2020, p. 72).

Humboldt mentioned democracy in his early works on political philosophy; however, he did not subject it to a detailed analysis. This analysis emerges in his later works. In *Die Vasken*, a collection of travel notes dated 1802, he discusses the Basque people as a democratic society. Before delving into this work, briefly touching on how Humboldt viewed democracy in ancient states will help us gain an impression of how he perceived democracy as a form of government.

Humboldt's perspective on ancient democracies must be considered alongside his assessments of the political institutions of ancient Greece and Rome. While he acknowledges Ancient Greece as a democracy, he maintains a certain distance from it. In his view, in such democracies, "cunning rulers, backed by an uneducated mob, can establish an arbitrary system of government" (Humboldt, 1908, p. 541). Beiser (2018, p. 182) notes that Humboldt's remarks highlight the danger that democracy could degenerate into tyranny; however, he adds that this can only be interpreted within the context of the conditions of that era. Indeed, Humboldt's ideas must be evaluated considering the understanding of democracy prevalent during his own time. In today's democracies, which operate on principles such as the rule of law and the separation of powers, this danger is largely eliminated. Therefore, Humboldt's criticism of ancient Greek democracy cannot be directly applied to modern democracies.

Beiser (2018), drawing on Humboldt's remarks regarding democracies in Ancient Greece and Rome, argues that he was not an advocate of popular sovereignty or democracy. According to Beiser, Humboldt implies that certain forms of government other than democracy might better protect freedom (Beiser, 2018, p. 182). Indeed, Beiser (2018, p. 187) notes that the principles of freedom and equality defended by Humboldt refer to citizens having equal rights before the law; however, this does not mean that he advocated for absolute equality in state governance and property ownership. Humboldt's view of state administration as the domain of those who have received the best education—even if they do not come from noble or aristocratic families—should also be understood within this framework (Beiser, 2018, p. 187). He said that people who have received a free humanistic education should "a person educated in this way would then have to enter the state, and the state's constitution would, as it were, be tested against him" (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 144). This demonstrates how humanistic education can prepare people to participate in state governance. However, one cannot conclude from these

statements that he was opposed to democracy or popular sovereignty. On the contrary, traces of the idea of popular sovereignty can be found in his notion that the state's sphere of intervention should be limited, allowing the nation to take the state's place in areas such as education. Humboldt concretizes this idea when he criticizes the direct administration of national education systems by the state: "all systems of national education, governed as they are by the spirit of regulation, impose on nature a special civic form." (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 144).

Humboldt's views on democracy can also be evaluated in the context of civil rights. When it comes to these rights, he emerges as a staunch defender of freedom of expression and the press. He objects to Article 18-d of the German Confederation Act of June 8, 1815—which pertained to freedom of the press but was never enacted⁴—in an article titled *On Freedom of the Press* written in January 1816. In this essay, Humboldt calls for the complete abolition of censorship, arguing that trust should be placed in the judgment of an educated public and in the reader's common sense. He emphasizes freedom of criticism with the following words: "Even if a newspaper that frequently judges the government with unjust severity were to have a very wide readership, that is by no means a cause for concern" (Humboldt, 1904c, p. 46). Humboldt believes that freedom of the press is a legal right of citizens.

In the literature, Humboldt's declaration of freedom of the press as a constitutional right within the legal framework has established him as one of the pioneers of the rule of law (Konrad, 2010, p. 82). The existence of a free press—which supports citizens' ability to freely share their ideas, participate in social and political debates, and make decisions to exercise their right to protest—is viewed as playing a decisive role in the functioning of democracy (Die Civil Liberties Union for Europe, 2022; Die Bundesregierung, 2025). Freedom of the press is guaranteed, for example, under the heading "Freedom of Thought and the Press" in Article 5 of the German Federal Constitution. From this perspective, freedom of the press is recognized as an indispensable element of the functioning of democracy. Humboldt also addressed the values of democracy within this framework through his views on freedom of the press. His analysis in *Die Vasken* of issues facing democracy—such as political rights like the right to vote and be elected, as well as class problems tied to property ownership.

Humboldt's Observations on the Basque Country

Regardless of whether Humboldt is viewed as a typical advocate of democracy, it is clear from his travel notes in *Die Vasken* that he explicitly praised the democratic character of the constitutions in the Basque provinces. The strong awareness of ancient states—which "sought happiness in virtue"—regarding the fundamental value of human nature and its cultivation (*Bildung*) (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 104) is, as it were, reborn in the democratic character of the Basque Country. Unlike the ancient Greeks, the Basques do not recognize slavery (Humboldt, 1920, p. 6). In the Basque Country, the distribution of property does not create social distinctions, nor do the provincial laws grant privileges to any class. In Humboldt's words, "In no other country are the legal privileges of the nobility as limited as they are in Spain." (Humboldt, 1920, p. 86). He expresses the fact that the distribution of property does not play a decisive role in social life in Basque society with the following words:

⁴ The German Confederation Act of 1815, a constitutional document adopted by the German principalities to fulfill the requirements of the 1814 Treaty of Paris and safeguard internal and external security, guaranteed in Article 18 freedom of the press and protection for authors and publishers against unauthorized copying of their works (Haus der Bayerischen Geschichte, 2025).

Here, all the distinctions arise naturally—those based on a family’s seniority or juniority, the prominence of its name, the honorary positions held, and the size of its estates—and to speak of entire provinces as “noble” in this sense would indeed be ridiculous... Society is by and large more mixed, since neither does the government take these class distinctions into account when filling positions, nor does the nobility otherwise enjoy significant privileges. The clergy—in which even an archbishop is often of very humble origin—contributes for its part -) to this equality, and it makes a great difference that, unlike in northern Germany at least, where a specific title distinctly divides society into two entirely different classes, the various nuances here blend more seamlessly into one another and are less easily discernible. (Humboldt, 1920, p. 90).

Humboldt observes that, compared to Germany, the distinction between social strata in the Basque region is much less pronounced. In his notes on the provincial assemblies, he traces the traces of democracy. The absence of a social status distinction based on the property of citizens own and the fact that provincial constitutions do not grant privileges to a specific class are clear in the Vizcaya constitution as well. Humboldt expresses this as follows: “... Vizcaya has managed to preserve itself to this very day from the dominance of the cities”... No form of feudal government has found its way into this fortunate corner of Europe” (Humboldt, 1920, p. 121).

In the province of Guipúzcoa, on the other hand, people send representatives to their general assembly who defend the views of their communities, regardless of wealth. The functioning of this provincial assembly—which Humboldt describes as a pure and perfect democracy based on the region’s constitution:

A representative system is therefore out of the question here; it is a pure and perfect democracy. No one has his will represented by someone more capable; everyone decides every matter for himself, and the representative is merely the voice of the majority in each municipality. It is rare for representatives from the same locality to disagree, since they never fail to ask their constituents for their views on this or that matter upon their election (Humboldt, 1920, p. 50).

Humboldt’s characterization of this as a *perfect democracy* is based on the conditions of the time and his comparison with Germany. As can be understood from these lines, he emphasizes that the assembly in Guipúzcoa derives its power from the will of the people.

In Germany, property plays a decisive role when it comes to social classes. In the Basque Country, however, as seen in the example of Guipúzcoa, property is less of a determining factor. Nevertheless, when it comes to civil rights, property retains its significance: “Every resident of Guipúzcoa is noble by birth; anyone, regardless of wealth or occupation, may be appointed as a general deputy; however, all those who are to have the right to vote must be landowners” (Humboldt, 1920, p. 50). In terms of political rights, this distinction based on property—when evaluated within the context of the modern world—means that one cannot speak of a form of government that constitutes a modern democracy in the province of Guipúzcoa. In contrast, when describing the political structure of the province of Álava, Humboldt notes that there is equality between the nobility and the common people regarding political rights such as the right to vote and to be elected as a representative:

The nobility far outnumbers the bourgeoisie in Álava... Their privileges are of little significance; they also pay taxes, from which even the clergy are not exempt. Occasionally, a nobleman is even a tenant of a bourgeois. Nor are the latter inferior to the former in political terms. They participate equally in the election of deputies to the General Assemblies and may themselves be elected to these assemblies. However, in some

Hermindades, the election alternates between the two estates, and in others, one of the two deputies must be a commoner and the other a noble (Humboldt, 1920, p. 112).

Humboldt believed that efforts to foster a republican spirit in France had ended in failure. However, he observed that the constitutions of the Basque Country had a democratic character and recognized the nation's right to self-determination. On various occasions, he expressed that he found the Basques' democratic constitutions to be unique in the Europe of his time (Mattig, 2019, p. 237). He expressed this as follows: "...in times when oppression and violence reigned everywhere, in establishing a constitution that, while equally distant from despotism and anarchy, is thoroughly imbued with a noble spirit of freedom..." (Humboldt, 1920, p. 48). The people's exercise of their right to representation in the general assembly in this manner corresponds, as historian Agirreazkuenaga (2010, p. 149) notes, to a democratic ideal in Humboldt's eyes. His emphasis on the joint, participatory presence of the people and the enlightened nobility in the general assembly reveals his ideal of representative democracy.

Humboldt did not explicitly advocate for a representative government system within the framework of modern democracy. However, it can be said that he aligned closely with a social contract theory similar to Locke's. As will be recalled, Locke—unlike Hobbes—argued that sovereignty should remain with the people rather than being transferred to the state; in doing so, he paved the way for a representative government system based on the principles that form the foundation of liberalism (Kiwan, 2017, p. 173). The conclusion to be drawn from Humboldt's observations in his travel notes on the Basque Country is that, in this regard, he defended the people's right to representation in a national assembly and, in this respect, resembled Locke.

Humboldt attributes the Basques' possession of such a striking political privilege—despite being "this small mountain people" in the Europe of that era—to the advantages afforded by their geographical location. According to him, the Basque people formed social and commercial networks with other European nations "without, however, sacrificing its distinctiveness and its original simplicity" and succeeded in "to bring about flourishing prosperity; no one but they was able to successfully transplant many of the most beneficial fruits of the European Enlightenment right into the heart of their wastelands" (Humboldt, 1920, p. 7). Humboldt describes this geographical advantage possessed by the Basques in the very first lines of *Die Vasken*.

Hidden among the mountains, on both sides of the Western Pyrenees, lives a tribe that, over the course of many centuries, has preserved its original language, and, for the most part, its former constitution and customs, and—to borrow the apt expression of a recent writer—has eluded both the eye of the observer and the sword of the conqueror—the Basques or Biscayans. Just as the peaks of the mountains, whose forested slopes they inhabit, have emerged from the upheavals of the earth's crust, so has this small group of people survived the mighty storms that have ravaged southwestern France and Spain since the decline of Roman rule... Without intermingling with any of their neighbors, and despite all the advances in luxury and refinement around them, they have remained in a state of primitive simplicity of customs and have consistently preserved the distinctiveness of their national character—and above all, the ancient spirit of freedom and independence that Greek and Roman writers already praised in them (Humboldt, 1920, pp. 5-6).

The Basque people, thanks to the advantages of their geographical location, have preserved their unique national identity; they have made no concessions regarding their freedom and independence. In the following lines, Humboldt emphasizes that the Basques, possessing such a geographical advantage, have a free constitution and a public sphere open to all, which minimizes the division between social classes and lays the groundwork for the formation of a unique national identity (1920, p. 11). Humboldt's statements on this matter are as follows:

Without a resolute, steadfast, and vigorous national character, one therefore expects in vain to find truth, strength, and integrity even in the finest education of a nation. But the wider the gap between the people and the educated classes of the nation becomes, the rarer the emergence of national characters.... The Basques, especially the Spanish Basques, are not merely poor mountain shepherds or even oppressed serfs. They are a people engaged in agriculture, shipping, and trade, and they do not lack material prosperity, without which all moral flourishing is impossible. They have a free constitution, public deliberations largely conducted in their native language—in other words, a common interest that concerns everyone and in which everyone can take an active part (Humboldt, 1920, p. 12).

From these lines, it becomes clear that the gap between the educated class and popular culture is much narrower in the Basque Country. Humboldt attributes this to the small differences between social classes; he notes that class distinctions based on property have diminished. He observes that the nobility in the Basque Country is more widely accepted by the people than in neighboring countries. In his view, this situation lends a positive dimension to the spread of the Enlightenment on the national level. Humboldt expresses this as follows:

The wealthy—who feel a passion for their countries and nations that might seem astonishing to some foreigners—even those who have received honorary titles or held prestigious positions in Castile, choose to remain loyal to their homeland and, for this reason, live among the masses as part of a very broad community. This is because they do not distance themselves from traditions or the common language. Thus, the modern Enlightenment and education are, to a significant extent, being transmitted through the language and concepts of the local and national people. In the eyes of true Basques, the distinctions between social classes—whose differences have completely faded—become less apparent. Furthermore, every traveler should observe that the people of the Basque provinces have received a more natural education compared to their neighbors in Spain and France, and that the nobility is more beloved by the people (Humboldt, 1920, p. 13).

Humboldt observes that the nobility has drawn closer to the people and that social classes have nearly disappeared in the Basque Country. The nobility is neither alien to their traditions nor to the language of the people. He emphasizes that a people's identity can be preserved through education. Better *Bildung*—by bringing them with you into that area—is definitely one of the ways, which is now mostly ignored, of keeping the strength and character of a nation.

Humboldt links the spread of the Enlightenment within society to individuals having been educated through *Bildung*. According to him, it is through this means that the Basques have been able to maintain their national identity while sustaining their relationships with other cultures. Moreover, in this way, the differences between social classes will diminish further; the divide between the people and the *educated segment of the nation* (*gebildeten Ständen der Nation*) will disappear. Education serves not only as a means of preserving the nation's character but also plays a role in reducing class differences and spreading the Enlightenment throughout society. Humboldt combines this idea with the view that the integration of the common people and the wealthy class facilitates the spread of the Enlightenment.

The benefits of social classes living together become even more evident with the spread of the Enlightenment. Humboldt recognized that this egalitarian approach could only be achieved through *Bildung*. *Bildung* preserves the people's unique character; at the same time, it ensures that the Enlightenment extends beyond the educated class to reach the entire population. Humboldt's observations in the Basque Country can therefore be interpreted as a concrete field of application for his theory of *Bildung*.

The State as an Institution of *Bildung* in Humboldt's View

In the preface to *Ideenschrift*—written in the late eighteenth century, with some sections drafted as early as 1792, but not published in its entirety until 1851 due to censorship in Prussia—Humboldt points out that citizens' freedom is restricted by the state for two reasons: the need to enforce and safeguard the laws, and the aim of addressing the material or moral condition of society. Humboldt expresses this idea as follows: "...citizens' freedoms have always been restricted from two perspectives: first, from the perspective of the necessity to either establish or safeguard the constitution; and second, from the perspective of the need to ensure the physical or moral well-being of the nation" (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 102). One of the main reasons he advocates for limiting state activities is to expand citizens' spheres of freedom. In *Ideenschrift*, Humboldt highlights the aspects of *Bildung* that pertain to both individual and social processes. The book was written to describe the conditions for the realization of *Bildung*, which he presents as *the true end of Man*; for here, the convergence of the state's purpose with the purposes of the people living within the state is explained with *Bildung* as the focal point. Furthermore, the book is not merely a political theory but serves as a preparatory text outlining the necessary conditions for the formation of the state's *Bildung*. In this regard, it can be argued that the *Ideenschrift* serves as the foundation for Humboldt's educational philosophy.

Humboldt's statements here align with his rationale for writing the *Ideenschrift*. Furthermore, while the work explores the limits within which the state should operate, *freedom* and *a variety of situations*—which are the conditions for *Bildung*—are presented as prerequisites. Thus, it can be said that Humboldt's effort to define the state's limits embodies the conditions for an inquiry aimed at making *Bildung* possible. Humboldt explicitly states this in the work's introduction:

For the crucial examination of the limits of the state's effectiveness must—as is easy to foresee—lead to greater *freedom* of action and *a variety of situations*. However, the possibility of a higher degree of *freedom* always requires an equally high degree of *Bildung*, and the reduced need to act, as it were, in uniform, united masses requires greater strength and a more diverse wealth among the acting individuals. If, therefore, the present age possesses a superior degree of this *Bildung*, this strength, and this wealth, then one must also grant it the freedom to which it rightfully lays claim (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 101).

According to the statements in this paragraph, a parallel is drawn between the possibility of *Bildung* and the possibility of a high degree of freedom. Furthermore, among the conditions for securing such freedom is a reduction in the need for communities to act in unison as interconnected groups in a uniform and synchronized manner. In other words, if we wish to achieve a high degree of freedom, it is necessary for individuals to act independently and for them to bring their own richness to the fore. For this reason, *Bildung*'s possession of the freedom necessary for it is linked to the era's dominance over *Bildung*—that is, to the realization of *Bildung* to the desired extent. Only in this way can the limits of the state be explored.

This work—which led to Humboldt being viewed as a representative of liberalism—served as the foundation for his educational philosophy, drawing on an anthropological background. Guidelines on how to limit the state's sphere of influence within the framework of liberalism could be interpreted as an interpretation of this work. However, among the work's objectives is the concern to establish a theory of the state and to design the state's activities within this theory in a way that can be applied to any form of government to achieve social perfection. In this context, Humboldt views the state as an *institution of Bildung* (*Bildungsanstalt*). This means that the state's role is to serve as an institution that facilitates humanity's development through education (Beiser, 2018, p. 213).

Underlying the view that the state is an institution of *Bildung* is the idea that state intervention in people's own social formations is unnecessary. Humboldt examines state intervention under two distinct purposes: the first is the state's promotion of happiness; the second is intervention aimed at preventing evil stemming from nature and humanity. In this second case, the state would engage solely in the pursuit of security. It is precisely this pursuit of security and all the possible purposes of the state institution that Humboldt opposes in his work. He groups these potential tools of the state under the heading of citizens' positive well-being. Humboldt explains the state's efforts to enhance this positive well-being as follows: intervention in the country's population through state institutions; the promotion of agriculture, industry, and trade to increase the people's material well-being; and the regulation of financial transactions, imports, and exports. In summary, any state initiative aimed at increasing and protecting the nation's material well-being is addressed within this framework (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 112). Humboldt argues that not all these institutions give rise to policies based on the highest standards and in harmony with human nature, and he suggests that they may have harmful effects (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 113).

Humboldt examines these harmful effects under several headings. First, *a variety of situations*—which is a prerequisite for *Bildung*—reappears here. Humboldt views the diversity created by the coming together of individuals in society as the highest good that society provides; he rejects state intervention on the grounds that it destroys this diversity. Greater state intervention fosters uniformity not only in everything that influences but also in everything that is influenced, thereby promoting the very uniformity that Humboldt rejects. The second and more critical harmful effect of state intervention is the belief that it will weaken the nation's strength. On this point, Humboldt argues that the state's intervention in these areas under the guise of promoting public welfare narrows the role of the public sphere or civil society organizations; he maintains that this intervention leads to a weakening of the nation's strength.

Humboldt explains this second harmful effect through the conflict between the essence and form of matter: While the essence of matter is shaped by a form imposed from the outside, what is internally produced through the matter's own action will enrich it. Through this analogy, he emphasizes the importance of what the nation can achieve through its own initiatives, rather than the state intervening externally in the nation—which is the essence of society. Drawing on the fact that organization is one of the most fundamental characteristics of human nature, he states that what will flourish within the nation must have sprouted from within its own structure. In this sense, external intervention is far from contributing to the nation's development. He concretizes this idea with the following words: "In general, a person's intellect, like all his other faculties, is developed only through his own activity, his own ingenuity, or his own use of the inventions of others" (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 114). The nation will regard as its own only that which it has achieved and possesses through its own actions. Humboldt's idea parallels the nation's active role in the spread of the Enlightenment within society. According to this view, only by actively participating in the establishment of the Enlightenment and morality among the rising generation will the nation itself become enlightened and moral (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 143).

Humboldt concludes this perspective by emphasizing that the state must limit its intervention solely to regulations designed to protect against threats to itself and foreign enemies, and that it must not pursue any other goal that would restrict citizens' freedom (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 129).

Turning to the state's intervention in education, Humboldt first raises the issue of national education (*Nationalerziehung*). He opposes state intervention in this sphere on the grounds that it carries the risk of pushing society toward uniformity. He notes that, in his own time, humanity had reached a cultural stage where it could only advance through the *education of*

individuals (Ausbildung des Menschen), and that, for this reason, institutions that bring people together as uniform masses are more harmful than they were in the past (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 143).

Humboldt is a thinker who analyzes the concept of civil society within an educational context. He problematized the sphere we today call civil society through the concepts of *nation* and *national* in his time; he viewed it as a free sphere of action where people and citizens would be protected from state intervention. A constitutional monarchy with limited powers, which creates space for citizens to form social groups through free communication, provides the legal foundation for the actions and ways of life of civil society (Benner, 2023a, pp. 180-181). In such a state, citizens are no longer viewed as the lower class or subjects.

Looking at civil society from a historical perspective, it can be said that following the French Revolution, philanthropists viewed the identification of the state with the public sphere as a problem and sought ways for schools to find a more functional foundation through the public sphere. Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Caritat de Condorcet (1743-1794), one of the active participants in the Revolution, marks a turning point in the history of public education; he advocated for the school to be made independent of state control and for the people's initiative to oversee science and the arts. Condorcet, who argued that all social classes have equal rights, emphasized that education is the best system for eliminating natural inequalities. He emphasizes the importance of social bonds among individuals in society within the context of public education (Chambliss, 1996, p. 106). Thus, for Condorcet, education and science not only ensure the effective participation of all individuals in civic engagement but can also be seen as the conditions for a democratic public sphere.

Humboldt, on the other hand, keeps public education outside the sphere of state activity and sees the dynamic power of public education in the *nation*. Behind his critical approach to the identity of the public and the social lies the absolutist state's need to reform education at both the individual and collective levels (Brüggen, 2004, pp. 738-744).

For Humboldt, the conceptual analysis of civil society is grounded in the public-private dichotomy, within which individuals can create free, open spaces independent of community traditions and overarching state authority. Avoiding this dichotomy opens the door for individuals to form social clusters to which they may belong in different social environments. Looking at Humboldt's definition of the public sphere, it becomes clear that he believed this sphere was established primarily through dialogue. According to him, social order can be created as a world of public activities.

Humboldt's concept of national institutions (*Nationalanstalten*) refers to institutions established through a contract consciously formed among members of society. These institutionalized communities give rise to the nation (*nation*), which represents the unity of people bound together by contract. Within this community, individuals are expected to develop and cultivate (*weiterbilden*) their differences. The space Humboldt defines as the arena of collective action as the public sphere, where shared concerns are addressed. Since Humboldt limits state activity solely to internal and external security, other spheres of activity are left to the citizens. For this reason, national institutions aim to ensure the broadest possible social participation of actors in the individual sphere (Hellekamps, 1996, pp. 104-105). Humboldt articulates this idea in *Ideenschrift* as follows: "Individual parts of the nation—and the nation itself as a whole—must simply be granted the freedom to enter into agreements. There remains an undeniably important distinction between a national institution and a state institution" (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 131). According to Humboldt, even tasks related to preparedness and prevention against disasters such as famine and floods can be undertaken by national institutions rather than state institutions.

Humboldt identifies education as the mediating element that will enable the conflicts between civil society and the public sphere to transform civil society into an intellectual platform composed of diverse groups. These conflicts occur not only between civil society and the state but also within civil society itself, where individuals develop and consult one another through discussions about shared values. Achieving these lays the groundwork for the formation of a shared intellectual framework (*Meinungsbildung*) among members of civil society. This formation takes root in the practical spheres of life, including education and teaching (Benner, 2023a, p. 184). Thus, according to Humboldt, the intellectual unity arising from the conflict between civil society and the state necessitates mutual social interaction among individuals because it flourishes in various spheres of life. This intellectual unity occurs not only in closed communities, homogeneous political groups, or academic settings, but also in the realms of working life, ethics and customs, art, politics, and education. So, how does Humboldt explain the role education plays in this conflict? In *Ideenschrift*, the contribution of civil social interaction fostered by education to the improvement of the constitution is emphasized as follows:

From which I conclude, that the freest development of human nature, directed as little as possible to citizenship, should always be regarded as of paramount importance. He who has been thus freely developed should then attach himself to the State; and the State should test itself by his measure. Only through such a struggle could I confidently hope for a real improvement of the national constitution, and banish all fear of the harmful influence of civil institutions on human nature. For even although these were very imperfect, we could imagine how the force of human energies, struggling against the fetters, and asserting, in spite of them, its own greatness, would ultimately prevail. Still, such a result could only be expected when those energies had been allowed to unfold themselves in all their natural freedom. For what extraordinary efforts must be required to maintain and expand energies cramped by such fetters since earliest youth. Now all systems of national education, governed as they are by the spirit of regulation, impose on nature a special civic form (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 144).

From these thoughts of Humboldt, it follows that a liberal education—one less focused on the conditions of citizenship—could play a pioneering role in the formation of civil society. Underlying civil society is the idea that the roles of human being and citizen overlap. Humboldt explains this overlap by noting that the role of the citizen requires fewer specific qualities: “the fruitful relationship between man and citizen would wholly cease if the man were sacrificed to the citizen” (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 144).

Believing that state-organized education could impose a one-sided mold on citizens, Humboldt saw salvation in the freely educated individual taking a place within the government to oversee the state’s constitution and in the improvement of that constitution by civil society. According to Benner, the individual’s participation in the state through education is a struggle encouraged by education itself. This struggle, which Humboldt called for, aims at transformation through the creative self-action of individuals. The subject of this struggle is not the absolutist state or its institutions, but the individuals who are members of a nation in the making (Benner, 2023a, p. 59). Consequently, Humboldt identified the need to define the boundaries of public education and paved the way for the state’s duties to be transformed into social practice. In his view, human potential is constrained by shackles; from their earliest years, people require extraordinary efforts to preserve and develop the energy that has been bound by these shackles.

Humboldt’s Distinction Between Public Education and Private Education

Humboldt then compares public education (*öffentliche Erziehung*) with private education (*Privaterziehung*). To understand what is meant by private education here, one must examine his stance toward public education more closely. According to Benner (2023a, p. 56),

underlying this opposition is the concern not to derive the purpose of the individual from that of the state, but rather to draw a distinction between society, the nation, and the state. Furthermore, Humboldt's conception of a free humanistic education—which places less emphasis on the conditions of citizenship—supports individual and social development not according to the state's requirements, but through the idea of the highest and most balanced development of all human faculties. Accordingly, in Humboldt's theory of *Bildung*, the harmonious whole toward which the highest and most balanced development of all human faculties is directed signifies the transformation of the political determinations of individuals in traditional society into a new social determination arising from the interaction of individuals. Humboldt contrasts public education organized by the state with private education—an education not organized by the state. In this form of education, young people are educated together regardless of their social status and without making a specific profession their sole goal; family education is also part of this process (Benner, 2023a, pp. 59-60). The schools are organized by the nation or by the state on behalf of the nation. Furthermore, a general humanistic education—carried out through the initiative of the entire nation without any class distinctions—must take precedence over vocational education. These schools, to be established with the contribution of every segment of society, will also be open to every segment of society:

However, all schools that are supported not by a single social class but by the entire nation or the state must aim solely at a general education. — Whatever is required by the demands of life or by a particular profession must be acquired separately, after a general education has been completed. If the two are mixed, education becomes compromised, and one ends up with neither well-rounded individuals nor well-rounded citizens of any particular class (Humboldt, 1920, p. 276).

Humboldt also addresses this idea in *Schulplan*, a work from his mature period published in 1809. Consequently, this view can be interpreted as the product of the period during which his reformist efforts took shape and as his final position on the matter. According to him, citizens cannot be raised without this humanistic education; all members of society must undergo this education on their path to becoming citizens. Public education that views citizens not as free individuals but as subjects falls far short of fostering virtue. Achieving this principle of balance is the result of private education, not public education. In the following paragraphs, Humboldt explains how this principle of balance is formed and its critical role in the education of citizens.

The environmental conditions that Humboldt prioritizes based on the impact of education are one of the components of the mutual interaction necessary for the realization of *Bildung* and its dissemination on a universal level. According to him, a free education offered to people regardless of their civic identity ensures that industry progresses more effectively and the arts flourish more fully than under public education. It is precisely for this reason that Humboldt keeps public education outside the scope of the state's sphere of activity (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 146).

According to Humboldt, the central issue is the individual's concern with their own inner development and progress. Thought is nothing other than the mind's effort to make itself comprehensible; action, on the other hand, corresponds to the will's effort to be free and independent. Humboldt explains this situation in *Bildungsschrift* as follows:

At the convergence point of all particular kinds of activity is man, who, in the absence of a purpose with a particular direction, wishes only to strengthen and heighten the powers of his nature and secure value and permanence for his being. However, because sheer power needs an object on which it may be exercised and pure form or idea needs a material in which, expressing itself, it can last, so too does man need a world outside himself. From this springs his endeavor to expand the sphere of his knowledge and his activity, and

without himself being clearly aware of it, he is not really concerned with what he obtains from the former or what he achieves outside himself by means of the latter, but only with his inner improvement and elevation, or at least with the appeasement of the inner unrest that consumes him... (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 283).

After identifying the environmental elements necessary for mutual interaction to take place, Humboldt explains the significance of this interaction between the subject and the world from the perspective of the theory of *Bildung*. According to him, an education arising from the unity between the individual and the environmental conditions surrounding them—as he states in *Ideenschrift*—creates an environment where free people, unencumbered by state intervention, can advance in the arts, industry, and family education. Moreover, this progress is achieved through the subject's connection to the world to attain a vibrant, free, and universally valid interaction (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 283).

The subject's connection to the world corresponds to an environment that “encompasses all conceivable diversity” in its unity with the surrounding conditions. The world is an object that the human being requires; it enables the human being to take into their mind what is happening outside of themselves and to interact with it through their own active engagement. It is precisely this world that serves as the object sufficient to grasp human existence in all its power and wholeness (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 285).

Humboldt also examines these environmental conditions—necessary for the realization of *Bildung*—from an anthropological perspective; he brings to the fore the role of humanity during its development. In *Anthropologie-Schrift*, while addressing the aims and methods of comparative anthropology, he explains that humans develop in parallel with environmental conditions and describes the role these conditions play in character formation. The determinative nature of environmental conditions ensures that societies and the entire human race preserve their character over the centuries (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 389).

Humboldt views the conditions surrounding human beings as the totality of physical objects. According to him, these conditions are in a determinative relationship with the development of humanity; they facilitate the formation of higher moral phenomena in humans. Human moral nature is transmitted from generation to generation alongside physical nature. Thus, the stages of human intellectual and moral development take place within the natural continuity of nature. The fact that moral nature is part of this natural process means that it will also be transmitted to subsequent generations of humanity. It is precisely this relationship that plays a role in the *Bildung* of character when considering humanity. This development is observed both in humanity as a whole and in individual human beings. Indeed, according to Humboldt (1903a), “When considered as a species, human beings are a link in the chain found in physical nature” (p. 395).

Humboldt approaches the enrichment of the concept of humanity not merely as the enrichment of a single individual's personality, but in conjunction with enrichment on the social and universal levels. What is expected of a nation, an era, and the entire human race is not only the powerful, universal dissemination of wisdom and virtue but also the attainment of a rich and valuable content for the concept of humanity. In this way, humanity's intrinsic value is elevated. The ultimate purpose of our existence is to leave behind a concept of humanity rich in content that endures beyond our lifetimes. Only when these conditions are met can virtues be sustained. Without them, without refinement and the reassuring concept of *Bildung*—there is no difference between humans and inanimate objects (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 284). Thus, Humboldt demonstrates that *Bildung* is one of the fundamental components of being human.

The conflict between the state and civil society makes possible the establishment of a society that, like the individual, is free, vibrant, and multifaceted—one that opens the door to human actions and is oriented toward an undetermined and open future (Benner, 2023a, pp. 184-185). The review of the social order of coexistence by civil society is realized through public education—which shapes individuals according to these ideals—exercising oversight over the state’s constitution. Humboldt views the nation’s ability to exert an independent influence as a regulatory element in the drafting of state law (Brüggen, 2004, p. 743).

Thus, the progress of civil society becomes possible when the state’s legislative activity is scrutinized by individuals who have received the free, vibrant, and multifaceted education that Humboldt regarded as ideal. This education, however, can only be realized by those “whose humanity is not confined to being viewed solely as citizens” (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 143).

However, according to Benner, Humboldt remained committed to the idea of national education while engaging in a sort of reckoning with the ideas of the French Revolution. In *Ideenschrift*, he opposed public education and advocated for private education instead; however, he did not offer an institutional alternative. He would explore this institutional alternative—along with how public schools should be reformed and their curricula—in the *Schulplan* of 1809. In these plans, Humboldt distinguishes between the state and society. Furthermore, he diverges from the schools and curricula advocated by the French Revolution in that he does not sacrifice the representational issue between the individual and the citizen to the mutually affirming identity of the citizen and the individual (Benner, 2023a, p. 62). According to Hellekamps (1996), who begins with the question of how modern individuals can construct their own social and political worlds independently, Humboldt positions public spheres—where individuals participate collectively while preserving their uniqueness and shape these spheres through shared concerns—in opposition to the state; he seeks to establish a liberal basic education system based on the overlap of the roles of ‘human being’ and ‘citizen.’

What Kind of Egalitarian Approach does Humboldt Take? An Example

Based on Humboldt’s egalitarian approach in the *Schulplan*, one might conclude that individuals who participate collectively in the public sphere can be considered equal in terms of human dignity. However, this equality treats people as equal in terms of dignity but not in terms of intellectual faculties. Humboldt emphasizes that the principles he sets forth in *Ideenschrift* apply only to people who “fully exercise their mature intellectual faculties”; they do not apply to those lacking reason, such as the mentally disabled (*Verrückte*), or to people whose bodies have not yet matured (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 225).

What we have here said of minors, applies also to the treatment of idiots and madmen. The difference chiefly consists in this, that these do not require education and training, unless we apply this name to the efforts made to restore them to the use of their reason, but only care and supervision; that in their case, moreover, it is principally the injury they might do to others which is to be prevented, and that they are generally in a condition which forbids the enjoyment either of their personal liberty or goods, though it must not be forgotten, that as their return to reason is still possible, the temporary exercise of their rights is all that should be taken from them, and not those rights themselves. As my present design does not permit me to take the matter further, I shall conclude the subject with a statement of the following general principles (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 228).

According to Humboldt, the rights of individuals who have not attained mental maturity cannot be taken away, because these individuals may regain their mental faculties as a result of treatment. In such a case, their right to regain their personal *freedoms* or property that were taken from them remains intact. Humboldt states that these individuals cannot exercise their personal *freedoms* during treatment; however, once their mental faculties are restored, they

can reclaim their reserved rights. On the other hand, while he argues that these individuals should not receive formal education, he leaves the door open: if the efforts made toward their recovery are classified as education, he is in favor of them receiving such education in that sense. Beyond this, he believes that subjecting them to formal or systematic education and instruction is unnecessary. According to Benner (2023a, p. 64), these statements show that Humboldt does not support the idea that people should be considered legally incompetent throughout their lives. Legal incapacity is incompatible with the modern concept of *educability*; even if it were established that a person cannot be integrated into society or educated—whether temporarily or long-term—this label should not be applied. Furthermore, Benner concludes from these passages that Humboldt advocated for equal legal treatment of children and adults with intellectual disabilities alongside typical children. Humboldt states that the state is obligated to protect these individuals and provide for their care; however, he does not express a clear opinion on whether they are entitled to citizenship rights. Nevertheless, he states that once they have recovered, their right to regain their personal freedom and property may be recognized.

As for young children, who constitute another category of individuals who have not yet attained mental maturity, the principles of justice dictate that their welfare and care are the responsibility of their parents. Children retain their fundamental legal rights regarding their health, their lives, and their property. Their freedoms, however, may not be restricted beyond what their parents deem necessary—solely for the purposes of their education and the preservation of family relationships—and even then, only for the duration of their education. Humboldt states that parental authority must necessarily come to a complete end once children reach the age of maturity. The duty of parents is to guide their children to the point where they can choose their own life plans (Humboldt, 1903a, pp. 225-226). Thus, Humboldt acknowledges that even children who have not yet attained intellectual maturity possess legal rights.

As Benner points out, it may seem surprising that Humboldt places young children and people with intellectual disabilities in the same category—that of “those who have not attained intellectual maturity.” However, this categorization becomes clear when one considers that it is inappropriate to label anyone as legally incompetent and that everyone in this category possesses a common legal right (Benner, 2023a, p. 63). This is because Humboldt argues that, like young children, people with intellectual disabilities cannot be declared legally incompetent for their entire lives. Furthermore, the state must protect minors from external threats just as it does other citizens; this protection also applies to other individuals with impaired mental faculties—that is, people with intellectual disabilities or those who lack mental capacity. The state is responsible for their care and safety as well (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 227).

Discussion of Current Debates from the Humboldt Perspective

This section discusses criticisms of Humboldt and his theory of *Bildung* in the context of modern literature. Some of the criticisms that have been highlighted in the literature and directed at Humboldt have been examined and discussed. The primary dynamic driving Humboldt’s multi-layered intellectual world is his theory of *Bildung*. This theory explains the concept of *Bildung*—which took shape in a dialectical relationship with the Enlightenment—along with its own conditions. The fact that *Bildung* encompasses both the process and outcome of an emancipatory transformation that transcends established standards demonstrates its enduring relevance; it will always play a role in individuals’ socialization and societies’ acquisition of a universal dimension.

Nearly two centuries have passed since Humboldt’s death in 1835, and the question of how to translate the theory of *Bildung* he developed into practice is still debated in the literature on

the philosophy and science of education. Biehler (2019) examined the relationship between *Bildung* and mathematical literacy and skills, while Sjöström et al. (2017) addressed the theory's connection to scientific literacy and how it can be adapted to science education. From a perspective grounded in this literature, Humboldt's theory of *Bildung* can contribute to students' development of a critical perspective on science.

In conceptual analyses, the term *Bildung* refers to the character development necessary for democratic participation in society in a secular sense. Modern German usage of the term, *Allgemeinbildung*, also supports this idea; *Allgemeinbildung* is viewed as a means of fostering democratic citizens. Historically, education focuses on imparting the skills, attitudes, and beliefs necessary for leading a good life within a community. *Bildung*, on the other hand, is understood as the totality of endeavors connected to one's identity as a subjective participant in a social community (Ødegaard & White, 2018, pp. 74-75). Thus, contemporary interpretations of *Bildung* can be used to promote democratic citizenship.

In modern interpretations, the concept of *Bildung* has evolved into a highly significant model for democratic citizenship. It encompasses creative and critical processes that transform the relationship between the self and the world, alongside a changing social and material environment. An example of this model from the literature is Klafki, one of the educational theorists of the second half of the twentieth century. Klafki criticized classical theories of *Bildung* on the grounds that they did not adequately reflect political and social relationships. However, he developed the theory of *Bildung for all* (*Allgemeinbildung*) by transforming these theories. This new theory examines the dimensions of *social participation* (*Mitbestimmung*) and *solidarity* (*Solidarität*) within *Bildung*. In his educational philosophy, which is grounded in a democratic and critical perspective, Klafki emphasized that in a democratic society, citizens need *Bildung* to develop their capacity to determine their own destinies, take their place in a participatory society, and live in solidarity with other citizens (Koller, 2021, pp. 101-104). This theory provides space for students both to have a say in their own lives and to participate in society as responsible citizens (Sjöström & Eilks, 2020, pp. 65-66). Thus, it can be concluded that *Bildung* broadens the understanding of democratic citizenship.

Criticisms directed at Humboldt are also part of this discussion. An example from this era regarding educational reforms is Ludolph von Beckedorff's (1778-1858) objections to educational reforms. A contemporary of Humboldt who embraced a conservative approach to state governance, Beckedorff was a Prussian statesman who criticized Süvern's proposed education law (Fischer, 1953, p. 709). Humboldt advocated for the provision of a humanistic education in his reform efforts; he proposed a tiered system of school types: the elementary school (*Elementarschule*), the city school (*Stadtschule*), and the high school (*Gymnasium*). He believed that social inequalities could be eliminated through equal education. Beckedorff, however, opposed Humboldt's idea of humanistic education by arguing that people possess innate inequalities (Edelstein & Veith, 2017, p. 1209). In his view, Humboldt's plan is an ideal template focused not on the essence of the subject but solely on the school's external relationships; it reduces the state's educational purpose to uniformity and views education as the equivalent of standardized skills and abilities. In real life, however, there are natural differences such as gender, age, inclinations, and talents. In the face of the inevitability of social class and occupational differences, providing young people with an education that conceals these differences leads them to perceive these differences as a burden; the fantasy of universal equality only deepens inequality. Attempting to eliminate natural inequalities through education runs counter to the order of nature (Beckedorff, 1931/1966). Beckedorff argued that the school system must be suited to the structure of society; everyone should attend schools appropriate to their own social group. He believed that establishing rural schools for farmers, schools for the urban poor, and city schools for merchants and artisans was more appropriate than having everyone undergo a humanistic education in uniform schools. Beckedorff, who

took over the administration of the Section for Culture and Public Education at the Prussian Ministry of Culture in 1821, argued that an educational system designed according to Humboldt's ideas might be suitable for democratic republics but was absolutely incompatible with monarchical institutions (Herrlitz, Hopf, Titze, & Cloer, 2008, pp. 46-48). These factors may have contributed to the failure of Humboldt's school reforms to succeed in practice. Although his university reforms had a far-reaching impact that transcended his own era, his school reforms found resonance primarily within German cultural circles. Becketorff's critique demonstrates that Humboldt's historical role was critical for his own time but has since receded into the background of intellectual discourse.

Objections have also been raised to Humboldt's theory of *Bildung* regarding its relationship to the state's duties. His exclusion of commerce and economic enterprises from state intervention raises the question of how the economic prerequisites necessary for realizing the ideal of *Bildung* can be ensured. However, Humboldt sees no contradiction between the ideal of *Bildung* and the economic order. He argued that even those from lower economic classes, such as peasants and artisans, possess the potential to transform their trades into an art. With sufficient effort and proper guidance, they can attain *Bildung* (Humboldt, 1939, p. 54; cited in Beiser, 2018, p. 220). According to him, alongside a person's efforts directed toward fulfilling physical needs, there is also an internal purpose linked to an external goal. Those who love their work not merely as a job can develop it through flexible ingenuity and original creativity, thereby ennobling their character. Artists can emerge from among the peasants and artisans who follow this path (Humboldt, 1903a, pp. 117-118). Therefore, regardless of the economic distribution within society, every individual has the potential to attain *Bildung*—which corresponds to a balanced and noble development of their abilities—by utilizing their creativity. State intervention in the economic order is not necessary for people to attain *Bildung*. From this perspective, *Bildung* is not a spiritual ideal attainable only by a specific segment of society; anyone who fulfills the necessary conditions can produce creative works.

Beiser (2018, p. 220) draws a parallel between Humboldt's view that peasants and artisans could become artists and the *Arts and Crafts movement* that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century. Opposing the mass production and rapid industrialization brought about by industrialization, this movement aimed to revive handicrafts and artisanal work; it argued that art and creative genius could not belong exclusively to a specific segment of society. This similarity is reflected in the idea that the working class's development of aesthetic taste would enhance creativity.

Spieker and Wischmann (2022) serve as an example of contemporary critiques directed at Humboldt. These researchers argue that Humboldt held a postcolonial and Eurocentric perspective and regarded *Bildung* as an ideal accessible only to white European men. This interpretation is based on Humboldt's statements in *Anthropologie-Schrift* that "stands out quite sharply from the rest of the world" and that women "cannot come as close to discovering the truth as a man can" (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 402). In this work, Humboldt used the concept of culture as a criterion for ranking different societies; he distinguished "civilized European nations" from "uncivilized nations" (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 393). However, as Klafki (2000, p. 89) also notes, focusing solely on the male aspect of humanity is not unique to Humboldt; it is a common issue among humanist educational commentators, including classical *Bildung* theorists. Therefore, it can be said that Humboldt was following the general trend of his time.

Humboldt's use of the concept of culture as a means of classification—distinguishing *civilized nations* from *uncivilized* ones—may be viewed as a negative aspect from a multicultural perspective. However, this criticism relies largely on the *Anthropologie-Schrift*; in contrast, his observations on the Basques in *Die Vasken* demonstrate the value Humboldt attributed to different cultures. Furthermore, Humboldt (1907, p. 114), contrary to a Eurocentric

perspective, views all of humanity in his linguistic studies as a single community bound together in brotherhood; he makes no distinctions based on religion, nationality, or race, and argues that no language is superior to another. In this regard, the principle of tolerance embraced by multiculturalism—which focuses on the rights of cultural minorities—can be further expanded through Humboldt’s perspective to include tolerance for the languages, beliefs, and traditions of other cultures. Humboldt’s multi-layered approach has the potential to bring together multiculturalism—which centers on cultural minorities—and cosmopolitanism, which begins with the individual.

Miller (2019), on the other hand, defines Humboldt’s theory of *Bildung* as an intellectual perspective oriented toward fulfilling mental life. He argues that it lacks a practical counterpart and strays from a universal educational ideal because it caters to the needs of philosophers, academics, intellectuals, and artists (pp. 333, 344). In response to this criticism, it can be emphasized that Humboldt implemented educational reforms based on his empirical observations and served as a proponent of an educational system aimed at overcoming class society (Mattig, 2024, p. 71). Humboldt states that the nation progresses on the path to knowledge while preserving all individual differences; it has reached a point where science can be perceived and applied in various ways in harmony with different abilities and circumstances (Humboldt, 1920, p. 280). This weakens the claim that *Bildung* appeals only to a narrow segment of society.

Miller’s interpretation of Humboldt—that he regarded people as equal in terms of both rationality and dignity under the influence of the revolutionary Enlightenment—is also debatable. Humboldt viewed individuals as equal as moral and aesthetic subjects, but as different in terms of rationality. Indeed, he emphasizes that the principles in the *Ideenschrift* apply only to individuals capable of exercising their mature intellectual faculties (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 225). He also points out that the French Revolution’s concept of abstract equality would fail to recognize people’s individuality. He seeks an environment that does not measure people’s status as subjects according to the standards of traditional property-based society and does not confine them within class structures (Berghahn, 2022, p. 121).

As for the criticism that *Bildung* is an aesthetic form of personal development detached from everyday life, and that physical labor is considered the domain of slaves, Humboldt criticizes the Ancient Greeks for condoning slavery to create leisure time for education. In his view, any form of professional endeavor can elevate a person and give them a form befitting their dignity (Humboldt, 1903a, p. 118). Today, many people sustain their lives through physical or mental labor; Humboldt’s emphasis on this point is significant in demonstrating that *Bildung* is possible even in the modern world.

Reducing Humboldt to a one-dimensional identity means overlooking the richness of his life story. He was not merely a thinker who developed theoretical ideas; as an influential politician and diplomat of the Prussian state, he sought to apply his educational theories to curricula and reforms. As Oelkers (2001, p. 90) points out, for Humboldt, *Bildung* is not an apolitical inward-looking process; rather, it is a cultural experience that has consequences for the formation of the mind and character without state intervention.

4 Democratic Citizenship Education

Before moving on to democratic citizenship education, it is important to first take a general look at the concept of citizenship. Next, I will address the historical development of the concept. While citizenship is typically considered in conjunction with individuals' rights and responsibilities toward the state, within the context of the public sphere established between political institutions and individuals, it takes on a broader meaning.

What is Citizenship? A Look at the Past and Present

The concept of citizenship has emerged from discussions about the relationship between individuals and the state, in political and anthropological contexts. Citizenship is defined by an individual's legal status within a state, as well as their political and social position. Therefore, citizenship is primarily related to the legal status of individuals within a country. Citizens are under the protection of the state, but they also have responsibilities to the state. Regardless of citizenship status, the state is obligated to ensure the safety of all individuals under its jurisdiction.

Citizens' responsibilities toward the state include voting, paying taxes, obeying the law, and serving in the military when required. The legal rights granted to individuals, such as the right to vote and to be elected, vary depending on the state's form of government and political traditions. Citizens' rights and privileges include the freedom to express their opinions, travel, and receive an education, as well as the right to vote and be elected.

A historical analysis shows that ancient Athens and Rome laid the foundations of modern citizenship, although Athenian citizenship was limited to a select group of men who actively participated in public life and held high offices (Cabeza & Faist, 2024, p. 2). Aristotle emphasizes citizens' roles in deliberation and adjudication and regards civic participation and its virtues as central to the good life⁵, connecting political activity to a universal moral good (Balot, 2017, p. 26; Aristotle, trans. 1998, p. 7). In Rome, all free male residents had citizenship, but civic virtue (*virtus*) defined duties and only the wealthy could speak in the assembly (Kiwani, 2017, p. 172). Modern citizenship has evolved from these exclusive ancient forms into a more inclusive sociopolitical membership based on freedom and legal-political equality, unlike the ancient Greek exclusion of women, slaves, and foreigners.

The modern concept of citizenship emerged with the establishment of modern republics. The experiences of the Italian city-states, which emerged during the Renaissance based on independence and popular sovereignty, fueled anti-monarchical revolutions and paved the way for the development of modern republican structures (Pocock, 2003, pp. 545, 555). This revolutionary process pioneered the transition from subject identity to citizenship status across a broad geographical area. This transformation continues to serve as the fundamental pillar of modern republican regimes, in which governments are based on the principle of citizen self-governance (Smith, 2002, p. 107).

The liberal tradition's approach, which prioritizes reason over tradition when developing a discourse on citizenship and the relationship between the individual and the state, gained

⁵ Aristotle holds that humans are by nature social beings whose teleological purpose becomes meaningful only when they aim at a self-sufficient ultimate good within society, not in isolation (Aristotle, trans. 2015, pp. 16-17). The good life pursued through political participation requires the citizen to rise above daily necessities and escape the burden of physical labor. Arendt similarly argues that this good life is possible only when one transcends the mere instinct for survival and dependence on the biological life cycle (Arendt, 1998, p. 36).

widespread acceptance in eighteenth century French society (Kiwan, 2017, p. 173). French society played a decisive role in this context because it reflected the dominant conception of civilization at the time. Rousseau's ideals of participatory democracy and active citizenship shaped the intellectual foundation of the French Revolution (Held, 2000, p. 29). Opposing Locke and Hobbes' idea of transferring sovereignty to the state, Rousseau argued that sovereignty must remain directly with the people (Boyd, 2024, p. 182; Scott, 2024, p. 24). While Hobbes and Locke viewed laws as minimal interventions that would not restrict natural rights, Rousseau characterized laws as positive elements that contribute to individual freedom. He argued that freedom does not consist of the unlimited right to everything to which one is drawn in the state of nature but rather in obedience to the law one establishes for oneself (Rousseau, 1762/1999, p. 59). According to Rousseau, modern governance must be based on the common interests of all citizens. In this egalitarian vision, citizens share responsibility for society as an integral part of the sovereign structure (Mintz, 2023, p. 45).

According to liberals, citizenship is defined by the duties of individuals who are protected by law. These duties include responsibilities such as paying taxes, obeying the law, and serving on juries (Kartal, 2024, p. 30). The main framework of the liberal concept of citizenship is outlined in Marshall's theory. According to Marshall, citizenship is defined by the political, civil, and economic conditions that allow a person to be an active member of society. Marshall divides citizenship into three main elements that define the rights and responsibilities of citizens throughout its historical development. The first element is the civil branch, which encompasses freedom of expression, thought, belief, and property ownership. The first element consists of individual liberty rights, including freedom of expression, thought, belief, and property ownership. The civil component includes the right of every individual to defend themselves under equal conditions, or the right to justice. The political element refers to an individual's right to elect representatives to political bodies, such as parliament or local governments. In short, it signifies the authority to exercise political power. The social element encompasses individuals' right to economic security and to live with dignity according to societal standards. According to Marshall (1999, p. 8), within the framework of these rights, an individual's access to public services such as healthcare and education is a fundamental necessity. According to Marshall, citizenship encompasses not only civil and political rights, such as freedom of expression and political participation, but also the right of community members to attain the minimum income necessary to access services, including employment, health care, education, and housing.

The liberal model of governance does not expect citizens to be fully involved in civic life. In contrast, the republican model of citizenship requires active participation in the political arena and fulfillment of certain duties (Kartal, 2024, p. 30). Smith (2002, p. 107) defines the contemporary meaning of citizenship in republican terms and emphasizes the concept's dimension of participation in a representative parliamentary system. According to Smith, the fundamental meaning of citizenship today is membership in an independent republic that is governed by a parliament, presidential system, bicameral or unicameral legislature, or other representative systems and that has specific rights to political participation. This definition encompasses rights and privileges, such as political participation, as well as a moral dimension that reflects the will to ensure these rights contribute to the public good.

Smith's (2002) examination of citizenship in different categories, along with his emphasis on the people's desire to self-govern, is an important approach to understanding the development of modern republics. Similar to Smith's moral orientation, the concept of citizenship has begun to emerge in recent years and extends beyond the political sphere to encompass everyday social and cultural life. In this way, citizenship moves away from being a narrow political status to acquire a much more inclusive meaning. It also takes on a global dimension, encompassing individuals' interactions with the world beyond themselves and with others (Veugelers, 2011a,

pp. 473-474). This approach allows citizenship to be understood within the framework of a shared human identity rather than national identities. To better examine this concept of global citizenship and its relation to social and cultural life, it is necessary to clarify the social roles citizenship requires and the nature of the public sphere.

The Historical Development of Democratic Citizenship Education

To understand the historical background of democratic citizenship education, I will first examine the origins of democratic education. Discussions about its meaning and purpose began with an intense scrutiny of the curriculum within the framework of *encyklios paideia*⁶ in ancient Athens. Isocrates and the followers of the Sophists strongly advocated for public rhetoric and civic action in works that formed the foundation of democratic citizenship. In contrast, the followers of Plato and Aristotle took a cautious approach to democracy and emphasized the role of philosophy-centered studies in political formations (Culp, Drerup, & Yacek, 2023, p. 4). This distinction between the Sophists and Plato's and Aristotle's followers persists throughout Western history. While some educational thinkers align with the philosophical camp, others follow the rhetorical tradition (Kimball, 1995, pp. 17-19).

Rousseau is another milestone in this historical development. He is considered a thinker who advocated for student-centered, experiential, and discovery-based learning. He is considered in the context of fostering democratic citizens primarily because of his influence on progressive educational philosophers who developed educational theories suited to democracy. Rousseau offers an egalitarian perspective through his model of a citizen raised without regard to class distinctions (Mintz, 2023, p. 48). This egalitarianism is evident in *Émile*: "People are not born kings, lords, courtiers, or wealthy. They are all born naked and poor. They are all exposed to the miseries of life: sorrows, illnesses, needs, and every kind of suffering" (Rousseau, 1762/1979, p. 222). Furthermore, he asserts that *Émile* should be educated regardless of class distinctions: "Teach your students to love all people, even those who look down on others . . . Let him not place himself in any class, but let him find his own footing within all of them" (Rousseau, 1762/1979, p. 226).

Another significant development in the realm of democratic citizenship education during the twentieth century is the contributions of Dewey. In his work *Democracy and Education*, Dewey argues that democracy and education are interdependent (Dewey, 1916, p. 101). Here, Dewey discusses democratic citizenship education, including formal education, from his own perspective. According to Dewey, being a democratic citizen requires more than simply voting and possessing certain rights. Democracy is not just a form of government, but also a way of life that fosters education. A democratic society is also directly linked to an organized educational system.

Dewey emphasizes that children's abilities are not determined by their social origins (Dewey, 1916, p. 140). In his work, he argues that democracy is a prerequisite for education and that education is a prerequisite for democracy. The two are closely intertwined. Just as democracy is an educational practice, education must also become a democratic practice. Therefore, all educational processes, regardless of discipline, must contribute to democratic citizenship. The

⁶ Translating *encyklios paideia* as *general education* into English fails to capture its essence. *Encyclios* refers to the educational attainments required before entering life or a specific profession and corresponds to the late ancient seven liberal arts—grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy (Koller, 1955, p. 174). *Paideia*, expressed in German as *Bildung* or *Erziehung*, cannot be reduced to the English term *education*.

democratic education Dewey advocated prepares people for lifelong growth within an evolving society (Rogach-Alexander, 2023, p. 66).

In the second half of the twentieth century, citizenship education developed in connection with democracy on the political level. In Central and Eastern Europe, South Africa, and Latin America, it took shape as part of the democratization process, much like the liberalization of authoritarian regimes. The insufficient participation of young people in democratic processes has led to the idea that democracies are losing legitimacy. Consequently, civic education has evolved in response to this idea, becoming linked to democracy (Starkey, 2023, p. 63).

Through her answers to the question of why nothing is more important for democracy than citizenship education, Nussbaum examines the role of education in fostering democratic citizens. Drawing on a play she saw in India opposing the dowry system, which makes women feel less valuable than men, she shows how education can help people think critically about their social environment. Rather than passively accepting what they learn, students should question it and develop mental habits through in-depth inquiry. According to Nussbaum (2023, p. 252), democracies survive when educational policies foster the interconnected skills promoted by the humanities and the arts. This development, achieved through education, is vital for forming citizenship. Citizens must view themselves as members of a nation and a world composed of human groups that deserve respect and understanding.

In Nussbaum's model of democratic citizenship education, the first capacity that must be developed for freedom is the ability to engage in logical reasoning. This involves questioning one's traditions and living a life that does not accept any belief as authoritative simply because it was passed down through tradition. The Socratic method highlights the connection between this capacity and democratic citizenship. Democracy requires citizens who make choices based on reason rather than submitting to authority. Socratic inquiry and the critical thinking it foster are critical for raising good citizens in societies marked by ethnic and class divisions. Developing young people's capacities for negotiation and dialogue makes establishing dialogue across cultural boundaries possible. Students must learn to adopt a new attitude toward those with whom they disagree, rather than using political debate solely to their own advantage. Debate requires presenting one's own claims and taking an interest in the arguments of both sides. In this way, it becomes possible to seek peaceful solutions in an environment where individuals exchange ideas with mutual respect, rather than living in a world polarized by religious and ethnic conflicts. The Indian play opposing dowry is also about gender equality. The educational takeaway is that women should develop their critical and self-critical abilities instead of passively following tradition (Nussbaum, 2023, p. 254).

According to the second capacity approach, effective democratic citizenship requires viewing oneself not merely as a member of a specific region or group, but as a subject who embraces and is connected to all of humanity. In this way, differences that could lead to conflict among nations can open the door to agreements aimed at solving common problems. This concept aligns with the idea of transnational, multicultural education. Multicultural education makes living in a pluralistic democracy possible by fostering awareness of the histories and characteristics of various cultures. Recognizing the history of cultural, economic, religious, and gender-based differences fosters respect for the 'other', which is the foundation of dialogue.

Nussbaum suggests that in pedagogies that encourage active and experiential learning, textbooks and resource materials should not rely solely on factual knowledge; she recommends the use of artistic activities—such as creative drama or theater plays—in citizenship education. This is the third dimension of capacity development: the ability to understand another person's feelings by imagining what it is like to be in their shoes. Developing narrative-based imagination provides insights into others' experiences that are difficult to attain in everyday

life (Nussbaum, 2023, pp. 255-256). At the heart of all three capacities lies the idea of freedom: the freedom to critically examine the authority of tradition; the freedom of thought that tends to transform citizenship into global citizenship as an outcome of multicultural education; and the freedom to develop narrative-based imagination through art and to internalize the experiences of others.

The Council of Europe's Declaration on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights defines the role of education in promoting democracy and the rule of law. Education for democratic citizenship is defined as follows in accordance with the objectives of this declaration:

Education for democratic citizenship" means education, training, awareness-raising, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower them to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life, with a view to the promotion and protection of democracy and the rule of law (Council of Europe, 2021).

The relevant declaration also emphasizes that democratic citizenship education and human rights education support one another and are closely interrelated. According to the declaration, democratic citizenship education focuses on citizens' active participation in society through their democratic rights and responsibilities in political, social, cultural, economic, and societal spheres. Human rights education, on the other hand, is approached from a broader perspective; it encompasses inclusive educational activities that are more closely related to all dimensions of citizens' lives (Council of Europe, 2021). Accordingly, human rights education has a more universal character compared to democratic citizenship education. This distinction points to the restrictive nature of citizenship relative to human rights (Davies, 2011, p. 228).

Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, "Everyone has the right to a nationality" (Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2018). In contrast, the concept of citizenship can, in some cases, exhibit an exclusionary quality in the face of universal human rights. For example, 12 million people are stateless as defined by law; many more can be considered de facto stateless because the state of which they are officially citizens fails to provide them with protection (Howard-Hassmann, 2015, pp. 2-4). The Council of Europe's definition of democratic citizenship education is closer to political citizenship among the various types of citizenship and relates to participatory democratic institutions. In this sense, democratic citizenship education is education for democracy. Its aim is to cultivate democratic citizens who can sustain and manage their own lives on an individual level and who, on a societal level, participate in state governance and demonstrate a sovereign stance.

Democratic citizenship education has other objectives as well. These include ensuring that citizens possess a body of knowledge about democratic institutions, events, actions, and processes, as well as the ability to reason about them (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Losito, & Agrusti, 2016, p. 11). Developing critical thinking skills regarding injustice and political relations, evaluating and reflecting on one's own culture and the cultures of others, and engaging in dialogue-based learning processes are also among these objectives (Veugelers, 2011a, p. 480). Through democratic education, students can become stakeholders in democratic decision-making processes and help preserve the integrity of democratic processes. Defining democratic citizenship education as *education for democracy* conveys that, in practice, democracy is not merely a form of government but also an attitude toward our fellow human beings (Gutmann, 1993, p. 1; Culp, Drerup, & Yacek, 2023, p. 4). Contributing to the development of democracy is possible by promoting the values and virtues that enhance individuals' capacity for growth. In such a democracy, individuals are politically and socially equal (Jonas, 2023, p. 25).

Some argue that the crisis in democracy resulting from the decline of the public sphere stems from citizens' lack of motivation to vote and participate in political movements. This view establishes a direct cause-and-effect relationship between civic education and democratic development, assuming that cultivating better citizens is key to achieving a more advanced democracy. However, Biesta (2014) argues that this relationship can be interpreted in reverse. The crisis in democracy may be a consequence of our failure to cultivate better citizens rather than its cause. Replacing democracy with 'choice', structuring public spheres through a market-oriented lens, and abandoning the idea that democracy is a process of transformation eliminate the possibility of realizing democratic citizenship. Therefore, more and better democracy is possible only through conditions that foster the development of good citizens. In short, rather than resolving the democratic crisis by cultivating good citizens, we need a form of citizenship education that is intrinsically linked to the realization of democratic experience. Rather than investing in cultivating good citizens, we must ensure that democratic experiences are brought to life and that democratic practices provide opportunities for learning citizenship. The priority is not for citizens to learn more but to create public spaces where democratic experiences can occur (Biesta, 2014, p. 11).

Current Issues

This section will address current issues in citizenship education. Today, democratic citizenship education is the subject of intense debate centered on topics such as equal educational opportunity, cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, critical thinking, pluralistic democracy, democratic tolerance, racial and gender discrimination, human rights, populism, and neoliberalism. This section will shed light on the primary issues at the heart of these debates.

Equality of Opportunity in the Context of Democratic Citizenship Education

Education plays a foundational role in ensuring justice. In modern societies where wealth and professional status are distributed unequally, education is also a determining factor in how social benefits are shared. The distribution of opportunities that lead to a better life may be directly proportional to an individual's level of education and academic success. The type of education a person receives and the level they attain influence the position they will hold in society (Brighouse & Swift, 2014, p. 15). Therefore, questions regarding the regulatory role education plays in social equality and justice must be included in studies on the formation of conditions for equal citizenship. The question of how educational resources should be distributed, in turn, brings the issue of equality of opportunity in education to the forefront.

Since World War II, equality of opportunity has dominated educational and justice debates in Europe and the United States, where the aim of harnessing citizens' talents for the industrial workforce led to policies opening higher education to working-class youth, making equal opportunity synonymous with social advancement (Oelkers, 2017, p. 840). UNESCO's 1945 Constitution emphasized full and equal educational opportunities as a foundation for peace, with Article 1 promoting equality "without distinction as to race or sex, and without regard to any economic or social differences" (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Resmi Gazete, 1946). In the U.S., *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) accelerated these debates by highlighting discrimination against Black children and the harm of racial separation (Wong & Nicotera, 2004, pp. 122-123; The Library of Congress, 2025); equality of opportunity for low-income, female, and ethnically diverse children then became a moral imperative and was later extended to disability, language, and gender (Howe, 2014, p. 289). James Coleman's 1966 report argued that equal educational opportunity requires equalizing outcomes, not merely inputs, and helped concretize it as mobility for socially disadvantaged students (Coleman, 1968, pp. 12-19; Jacobs, 2017, p. 313; Sardoč, 2024, p. 4), while equality of opportunity and universal secondary education were central to 1960s European educational policies (Zymek, 2000, p. 106). By the

late 1980s, Arneson (1989, pp. 82, 85) defended equality of opportunity for well-being, arguing that equitable distribution ensures each person achieves the same well-being through the satisfaction of preferences within an equivalent set of options.

Equality of opportunity is a central concept in the equitable distribution of benefits in society and is regarded as a product of modern liberalism. In general terms, equality of opportunity refers to “fair competition among individuals for unequal positions in society” (Fishkin, 1984, p. 1) or a normative standard “that are relevant to the particular goods at stake in the competition and not by irrelevant considerations such as race, religion, class, gender, disability” (Jacobs, 2012, p. 10). In other words, as a principle governing the fair distribution of advantaged social positions, it serves as a key mechanism of social mobility in contemporary societies (Sardoč, 2024, p. 4). Thus, equality of opportunity emerges as an influential social ideal regarding how social positions should be distributed.

The conceptual analysis of equality of opportunity in education is conducted in the literature around various questions. The first of these is which inequalities among individuals need to be addressed. This question is directly linked to the question of which barriers to equality of opportunity need to be removed. Westen (1985) answers this question with an illustrative example: A child born in the United States can become president; however, there is no guarantee that the child will be able to overcome obstacles such as illness, natural disasters, unfair voting practices, or a constitutional crisis. To achieve equality of opportunity in education, barriers related to discrimination must first be removed: those based on skin color, ethnic or religious affiliation, gender, and sexual orientation. The second barrier consists of financial constraints that a child faces in the region or country where they receive an education. When considered within the framework of democratic citizenship education, education can be viewed as a principle of non-exclusion. The principle of non-discrimination, as a standard of democratic distribution, means that no child should be deprived of an education sufficient to enable them to participate in decision-making processes regarding opportunities for a good life (Gutmann, 1999, p. 127).

Another obstacle is the relationship between a child’s social background and educational success. Giesinger (2007, pp. 368-369) cites the educational failure of socially disadvantaged children in Germany and Switzerland as an example. However, according to him, the cause of this failure is not a lack of financial resources; rather, it is the fact that these children grow up in unfavorable environments that negatively affect the development of the skills they need to acquire in school.

Another question in the literature is what should be distributed in terms of equal opportunity. From the perspective of equal opportunity in education, this involves the distribution of resources obtained through education. Looking at the definitions of equality of opportunity in education, one definition describes situations in which individuals seeking education are not arbitrarily excluded and their competition for education is not restricted. In a broad sense, equality of opportunity in education encompasses demands for equality—including the allocation of places in higher education among specific social groups, regardless of educational qualifications, and even direct entry into a profession (Nash, 2004, p. 362). According to Giesinger’s (2007) definition, if education is considered as objectively provided educational opportunities that an individual can transform into subjective education, then having educational opportunities means being able to access specific educational opportunities that are offered. Here, subjective education refers to achieving a level of competence in a specific field. In the second definition, however, having educational opportunities is understood as gaining access to subjective educational opportunities; because educational resources serve as tools to facilitate subjective education and, in this context, emerge as the conditions for subjective education (Giesinger, 2007, p. 366). From the perspective of school systems in

liberal-democratic states, equality of opportunity in education corresponds to providing all citizens with equal educational opportunities to develop the capacities and skills necessary to attain economic and political positions in society, thereby countering the reproduction of social hierarchy (Culp & Drerup, 2024, p. 522). Hansson (2024, pp. 89, 93), on the other hand, argues that if equality of opportunity regarding a particular activity also ensures the conditions necessary to qualify for that activity, then a high degree of equality of opportunity in education will be achieved. For example, if equality of opportunity is desired for admission to higher education, it must also be ensured at the basic education levels where students can develop the conditions necessary for success.

In terms of the distribution of democratic education, educational equity finds its place in interpretations that seek to answer the question of how a democratic state should allocate its educational resources among educational institutions and children. One such interpretation is the principle of maximization, which holds that a liberal state should allocate sufficient resources to elementary education and distribute them to children in a way that maximizes the life chances of future citizens under the conditions of the present (Gutmann, 1999, pp. 128-130). According to another interpretation, known as ‘equalization’, the state should distribute educational resources in a way that raises the life chances of the least advantaged child to the level of the most advantaged child. Under this understanding, a democratic state must take steps to eliminate inequalities that would deprive children of the education necessary as a minimum requirement for participation in political processes. Children’s likelihood of attaining certain positions in society should not be significantly influenced by innate or environmental factors (Fishkin, 1984, p. 32).

Among egalitarian approaches to education, ‘strict equality’ encompasses the idea of an equal distribution of positions and ranks in professional life. It is natural for children to differ in terms of their natural talents, interests, and the efforts they make toward their futures. Innate potential and diligence can influence their careers in adulthood. However, a fair education system should not seek to eliminate these differences; rather, it should remove or reduce the unjust and arbitrary barriers to access to educational opportunities in a way that facilitates children’s ability to realize their potential (Macleod, 2010, p. 156). This approach opposes the exclusion of individuals—regardless of their ethnic group, gender, religion, or physical disabilities—from educational institutions or from education in general due to social disadvantages. Accordingly, the fact that a child is forced to attend a school with limited resources due to the family’s financial constraints does not mean that the child is deprived of equal educational opportunities. This child may not be admitted to a higher education institution because they did not receive a sufficient high school education (Howe, 2014, p. 290).

Contrary to the arguments put forward by strict equality, the distribution of social positions and incomes in life cannot occur solely within static social relationships. These conclusions highlight the weaknesses of the approach. According to White (1994), who argues that strict equality in education should be abandoned, strict equality cannot, on its own, serve as the foundation of educational policy as an educational ideal. This is because strict equality prevents educators from providing the educational conditions necessary for autonomous well-being. The goal of educators who dedicate themselves to creating a society that regards the equality of wealth, power, well-being, or other benefits as a value in and of itself is misguided. Among these educators, there are also those who, instead of taking practical steps to help those in need, seek to weaken the rich and powerful. White acknowledges that, as a universal and ethical principle, the interests of all people must be given equal consideration; however, he argues that egalitarian practices cannot be supported in educational practice (White, 1994, pp. 173, 177). The equal distribution of all positions, rather than the employment of successful

individuals with skills suited to their professions through effective social organization of the division of labor, hinders the mechanisms of social production in practice.

Given the differences in people's abilities, goals, social identities, and the conditions arising from their environments, imposing rigid equality on them will not always lead to equality (Anderson, 1999, p. 290). This approach has also been criticized because it does not include the fundamental civil rights of every individual to develop their own talents and skills in accordance with their own ideas (Calvert, 2014, p. 76; Meyer, 2014, pp. 7-8). Researchers who view the strict equality approach as reductionist, however, point out that egalitarians are pluralistic regarding values; they argue that strict equality does not simultaneously satisfy the principles of equality and utility, and therefore equal distribution cannot be the only thing that matters (Calvert, 2014, p. 76; Parfit, 2000, p. 85). Other criticisms point out that the question of how to distribute educational resources cannot be resolved by a simple notion such as the idea that everyone must receive an equally good education. Because some students come from less advantaged social backgrounds or require special education, their chances of success are lower than those of other students, even if they are provided with equal educational resources. As Brighouse and Swift (2008, p. 445) also point out, providing students with equal educational resources or spending an equivalent amount per student does not mean that equality in education has been achieved.

In place of the rigid equality approach that was abandoned because of these criticisms, horizontal and vertical equality approaches identify the circumstances under which children are deprived of equal educational opportunities. Horizontal equality envisions equality in educational inputs across educational institutions. For example, a school attended by a child living in a socioeconomically disadvantaged area whose family lacks sufficient financial resources does not provide the same resources as schools in affluent areas. This situation leads to the child being deprived of equal educational opportunities. On the other hand, if a child's individual needs—such as a disability or health issues—are not considered, that child cannot benefit from equal educational opportunities alongside other children. The solution to this problem lies in utilizing vertical equity, which involves providing different educational inputs. Adapting educational inputs according to different ethnic groups, genders, or disability statuses is the focus of vertical equity (Howe, 2014, p. 291).

Equality of opportunity in education focuses not merely on providing individuals with equal conditions or equal chances of success, but on the problem of under what circumstances the inequalities arising from the social status and positions individuals attain within the social structure might be considered acceptable. Furthermore, how education is distributed among people in a society is also a social issue. Should this distribution be left to market mechanisms? Should all members of society receive an equal education? What kind of educational approach should be adopted for those who are disadvantaged in terms of ability and skill? (Brighouse & Swift, 2014, p. 14). There are different approaches that address the distribution of educational resources through these questions.

Among the answers to these questions, inferences have been drawn regarding how to design democratic citizenship education, based on those that form a theoretical foundation. For this reason, philosophical debates on educational justice have been examined under the headings of fair equality of opportunity, luck-egalitarian equality of opportunity, the prioritarian conception of educational justice, and, finally, democratic adequacy as a conception of educational justice. Following this categorization, which is prominent in the literature on democratic citizenship education, is necessary to demonstrate the differences and connections between these approaches.

Fair Equality of Opportunity in Education

Fair equality of opportunity has emerged as a response to the problem that the equal distribution of educational resources does not necessarily lead to equal outcomes. This approach is based on John Rawls's (1921-2002) theory of justice as fairness. Underlying this is a liberal egalitarian and justice-based understanding of equality of opportunity in education: the idea of ensuring that every citizen has an equal chance through formal education. Rawls's (2001) theory of justice is a liberal egalitarian theory that establishes principles for evaluating whether the conditions of social cooperation are fair. One of these principles, fair equality of opportunity, argues that citizens with equal abilities and equal motivation to use those abilities should have an equal chance to attain the socioeconomic positions valued by society (Culp & Drerup, 2024, p. 526; Stroop, 2014, p. 115). Based on the premise that differences in social conditions affect life chances, fair equality of opportunity emphasizes that the idea of careers being open to talent alone is insufficient to ensure equality of opportunity.

The conclusion to be drawn from this approach—which acknowledges that attaining privileged social positions is appropriate for the most qualified candidates—is clear: Everyone's ability to attain these qualifications must be independent of social conditions. Institutions must be structured in such a way that the necessary qualifications are accessible to everyone, ensuring equal chances of success in the competition for advantageous positions (Mason, 2006, pp. 68, 72).

Rawls developed this theory in opposition to traditional approaches, such as the utilitarian perspective that had long dominated the field. Fair equality of opportunity in education is based on the idea that social and economic inequalities may be acceptable as long as every individual is provided with fair equality of opportunity in accessing positions, offices, or professional roles in society.

This approach not only acknowledges that individuals should not be categorized based on characteristics such as ethnic group, religion, or gender; it also envisions certain measures to address social disadvantages (Costa, 2011, p. 22). To explain how these measures might be implemented, one must examine the principles of Rawls's theory of justice. These principles can be articulated as follows, based on his works *A Theory of Justice* (revised 1999 edition) and *Justice as Fairness* (2001 edition).

- (1) Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all.. Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. (Rawls, 1999, p. 266; Rawls, 2001, pp. 42-43).

Rawls distinguishes these principles from one another in order of priority. No social or economic inequality that violates equality in basic liberties can be justified. Fair equality of opportunity, as set forth in clause (a) of the second principle, is a prerequisite. In a society where freedoms are safeguarded, social and economic inequalities depend on positions and offices being open to everyone and serving the common good (Rawls, 1999, pp. 53-54). In other words, inequalities that arise when career opportunities and social positions are open to everyone are acceptable; however, these inequalities must benefit the most disadvantaged, in accordance with Rawls's 'difference principle.'

Equitable equality of opportunity recognizes and explains situations in the competition for positions in the workplace and social status that work to the disadvantage of disadvantaged individuals. For example, families unable to cover their children's school or higher education

expenses, or citizens who cannot receive an equal education due to their ethnic background or gender, are among these disadvantaged groups. To implement fair equality of opportunity, the school system must be designed to balance educational opportunity inequalities stemming from students' socioeconomic backgrounds, rather than from differences in their abilities or motivation (Culp & Drerup, 2024, p. 526). Providing compensatory education to children from disadvantaged social backgrounds enables them to acquire the skills necessary to compete with peers who have grown up in more advantageous circumstances; this concept is incorporated into principle-based school plans (Roemer, 2000, p. 17).

In a society that embraces this approach, all individuals should have equal rights to access advantaged social positions; career opportunities should remain open to talented individuals, and equal starting conditions should be provided to everyone. Comprehensive sociopolitical measures eliminate social disadvantages and discrimination. These measures contribute to the creation of the material conditions necessary for everyone with equal motivation and ability—regardless of social inequality—to benefit from equal opportunities. Thus, the approach finds practical application in the social sphere of education for the development of a democratic culture. In practice, this means that everyone—regardless of their social background—can access education, further education, and support; for example, the support provided to individuals with disabilities (Gosepath, 2023, p. 272). Education thus makes cultural heritage accessible, enables individuals to participate more fully in social life, and instills self-confidence in them (Rawls, 1999, p. 87).

One of the main criticisms leveled against fair equality of opportunity is that this concept says nothing about educational inequalities among individuals who have different levels of motivation to utilize their abilities. Consequently, it is argued that it offers no solution regarding how educational resources should be distributed among those who do not wish to utilize their abilities. However, this criticism can be countered by arguing that fair equality of opportunity does not reproduce an aristocratic environment in which more talented and motivated individuals have greater access to educational opportunities. On the contrary, it advocates for better access to educational resources for those who are less talented and less motivated (Culp & Drerup, 2024, p. 527).

Another criticism is that this approach is insufficient for comparing levels of ability and motivation. If an age cutoff is set for comparison, individuals may have had different educational and upbringing experiences up to that age, developing their innate potential in different ways and reaching different levels of motivation. This opens the door for differences in social conditions to have a significant impact on chances of success (Mason, 2006, p. 74). Similarly, to compare levels of ability and skill, these must first be measured. However, there is an epistemological concern regarding whether ability and motivation can be reliably measured; intelligence and similar tests sometimes raise the issue of evaluating students' capacities based on their families' socioeconomic backgrounds. Moreover, these measurements may also reflect parental influence on the observed ability. The material and cultural environment into which a child is born influences their development in every case. The fact that these tests measure abilities at the time of testing rather than innate abilities highlights the difficulty of precisely determining innate abilities (Culp & Drerup, 2024, p. 528). These criticisms reveal the weaknesses of fair equality of opportunity. Another approach that advocates for neutralizing the influence of both social conditions and the luck factor is luck-egalitarian equality of opportunity.

Luck-Egalitarian Equality of Opportunity

When examining the theoretical background of luck-egalitarian equality of opportunity, it becomes evident that this approach is viewed in the literature as aligning with socialist

principles. The reason for this is that it requires the state to be excessively interventionist regarding individuals' choices and to make moral judgments (Anderson, 1999, p. 310; Barry, 2006, p. 92).

From the perspective of advocates of luck-egalitarian equality of opportunity, moral equality requires that every individual take responsibility for their own actions. At the core of this approach lies the idea that the outcomes a person intentionally chooses cannot be morally arbitrary, and that the individual can justifiably be held accountable for their choices (Calvert, 2015, p. 984). Arneson (1989) articulates this idea clearly: "it is morally fitting to hold individuals responsible for the foreseeable consequences of their voluntary choices" (p. 88). Accordingly, people should not be placed at an advantage or disadvantage due to good or bad luck (Tan, 2008, p. 665). Therefore, this approach is sensitive to a person's preferences and choices but insensitive to luck. It is unfair for a person to be placed at a greater disadvantage than others due to bad luck—that is, circumstances beyond their control, without their own choice, voluntary responsibility, or avoidable error (Barry, 2006, p. 90; Gosepath, 2023, p. 273; Knight, 2013, p. 924). Acceptable inequalities are solely the result of choices a person makes freely and for which they can be held accountable.

When applied to the field of education, this approach calls for the establishment of a system that neutralizes the effects of chance on the distribution of educational opportunities. Thus, a child should be independent not only of their social circumstances—as in the case of fair equality of opportunity—but also of being in a better or worse position due to the influence of chance. Differences in educational advantages can be considered legitimate only to the extent that children can be held accountable for their own choices or learning efforts. In short, an individual can be held accountable only for their own choices (Calvert, 2014, pp. 74-75). However, there are situations in which individuals cannot be held accountable for their choices; refugee children are a striking example in this regard. Stojanov (2018, p. 36) addresses the task of allocating educational resources to refugees within the framework of luck-egalitarian equality of opportunity, considering both voluntary and forced migrants. However, as immature individuals, children cannot be held responsible for choosing to migrate from their home countries under any circumstances. In this regard, luck-egalitarian equality of opportunity must regard any inequality in the allocation of educational resources to refugee children as unjust, and educational resources to address these children's disadvantages must be provided in all cases.

Nevertheless, the difficulty of definitively determining a student's level of ability and motivation toward academic achievement poses a significant challenge luck-egalitarian equality of opportunity, just as it does in fair equality of opportunity in education. Furthermore, it is unclear how this approach defines the concept of 'luck.' As Culp and Drerup (2024, p. 529) emphasize, the varying levels of motivation that students bring from their families or social backgrounds can also be viewed as a matter of chance. Students' genetic makeup, temperament, and the recognition they receive in their social environment—in short, the respect a child receives in society—can encourage them to exert greater effort and demonstrate high motivation (Brighouse & Swift, 2014, p. 7). If there are natural and social factors behind a student's motivation and the choices they make—factors for which the student is not responsible—and if these factors can be considered a matter of chance, the resulting inequalities in educational opportunities may be deemed unjust.

This approach may also be subject to criticism regarding at what developmental stage or age students can assume responsibility for their own choices. It is unclear how an approach that holds children or adolescents—who have not yet fully developed the capacity for responsible action—accountable for their choices can produce educational success. As researchers such as Anderson (2004, p. 101) and Satz (2007, p. 630) have pointed out, students may not yet have

become autonomous agents capable of fully assuming moral responsibility. This suggests that attributing responsibility to them for academic success or failure may be problematic. However, this criticism does not imply that the importance of schooling for the development of responsibility should be denied. Brighouse and Swift (2003) articulate this point clearly: “one central aim of education is to prepare children so that they can use the liberties they will be accorded as adults rationally to frame, revise, and pursue their conception of their good.” (p. 365). On the other hand, if students cannot be held accountable for their own choices at an early age, such a conception of educational opportunity based on choice becomes contentious. From this perspective, the question of whether equality of opportunity in education is the best ideal to guide educational policy also becomes open to debate (Culp & Drerup, 2024, p. 535).

Calvert (2015, p. 983), an advocate of luck-egalitarian equality of opportunity, notes that the ideal of equality can be conceived alongside the principle of treating people equally. According to him, equality in education should be grounded in social justice and the belief that every child deserves a fair chance in life. Calvert argues that this approach is not based on a meritocratic foundation; rather, it is promising because it has the potential to refute neoliberal discourses by emphasizing choice and responsibility.

Examining luck-egalitarian equality of opportunity within the context of democratic citizenship education, however, presents certain challenges. The idea that an individual can be held accountable for their choices only when they are based on their own volitional responsibility—and that it does not account for the luck factor stemming from family or social environment—makes it more likely that democratic values will be acquired individually rather than collectively. This is because it seems highly unlikely to completely eliminate the luck factor within social groups. Nevertheless, one can refer to Calvert (2015) to establish a connection between this approach and democratic citizenship education. Calvert argues that, thanks to its potential to refute neoliberal discourses, this approach to equality of opportunity benefits the social structure by cultivating citizens through education and contributes to democratic institutions (Calvert, 2015, p. 983). Furthermore, the approach is consistent with the broader goals of social justice; it also involves the redistribution of resources to reduce inequalities stemming from factors beyond individual control. In this way, it can support the development of democratic citizenship values. When considered in an educational context, the connection between luck-egalitarian equality of opportunity and democratic citizenship education can be established within this framework.

Prioritarian Educational Justice

Prioritarian educational justice generalizes the concern for the least well-off found in Rawls’s difference principle. As recalled, the difference principle states that socioeconomic inequalities can be justified only to the extent that they provide the greatest benefit to the most disadvantaged. Prioritarian educational justice, however, extends this concern to the field of education; in doing so, it challenges the notion of fair equality of opportunity and proposes an educational alternative to Rawls’s difference principle (Gosepath, 2023, p. 274).

Schouten’s 2012 article stands out as a key example of this approach in education. In this article, Schouten examines the meritocratic principle and highlights the points where prioritarian educational justice diverges from it. The meritocratic principle considers it unjust for some students to be at a disadvantage simply because they were born into a disadvantaged social class. Therefore, to balance the achievement gaps between social groups, he argues that resources must be allocated disproportionately to disadvantaged students. Schouten (2012, p. 473) further contends that educators bear responsibility when disadvantages arising from natural circumstances affect academic achievement and hinder an individual’s ability to lead a good life. He explains his reasoning as follows: “poor academic achievement resulting from

natural causes can impair a student's life prospects just as much as poor academic achievement resulting from social causes" (Schouten, 2012, p. 476). According to her, fair equality of opportunity must be complemented by a principle that also takes into account the disadvantages arising from natural differences in ability among people (Schouten, 2012, p. 476). In his recent work, Schouten (2023) defines prioritizing educational justice as follows:

But I think that any social sector that wants to promote egalitarian justice - and that must work against failures in other institutions, and that faces dire tradeoffs between egalitarian justice and other values - has good reason to adopt a prioritarian approach. Education is a social sector that must promote egalitarian justice broadly; educational justice is indispensable for social justice. Here, in sum, is how I think we should understand its role: Education is just when it equalizes students' prospects for leading good lives (Schouten, 2023, p. 196).

The implications of this understanding for school education are clear: Reforms must be designed to give significant priority to the development prospects of those who are more disadvantaged. Decision-making bodies and policies in the field of education must prioritize the circumstances of students from the most disadvantaged segments of society.

In terms of theoretical foundations, it should be noted that this approach does not involve equalizing educational opportunities—in a way that could be categorized as either liberal-egalitarian or socialist—nor does it aim to improve educational opportunities for those in disadvantaged situations. In this approach to equality of opportunity, the primary goal is to focus on initiatives aimed at improving the life expectancy of the most disadvantaged students before addressing their educational opportunities. One of the examples Schouten provides to illustrate his principles is the focus on improving students' capacity to manage personal relationships. These capacities are more important than developing strong reading skills, which can improve educational opportunities but affect life expectancy only indirectly and to a limited extent (Schouten, 2012, p. 479). Another example is the need for school administrators to allocate more funding for students with cognitive disabilities (Schouten, 2012, p. 482).

Prioritarian educational justice involves distributing educational resources to the most disadvantaged and enhancing their well-being not only during their school years but throughout their lives. However, this theory has faced some criticism. Harel Ben-Shahar (2016, p. 88) agrees with Schouten's argument that efforts to teach life skills—which will enable a student with a cognitive disability to achieve independence—will yield greater benefits than focusing solely on academic development. At the same time, he points out the danger that allowing teachers to do this routinely could exclude the student from academically focused curricula, thereby limiting the life choices they might have in the future compared to other children.

The difficulty of eliminating a situation where those who are most successful in education derive the greatest benefit from their positions in the workforce also opens the door to another criticism (Culp & Drerup, 2024, p. 541). While Schouten notes that academic success cannot be viewed as the sole means of ensuring students lead good lives, he also acknowledges that it is the most commonly used tool for achieving this goal (Schouten, 2012, p. 487). Therefore, it seems inevitable within the current political order that those who achieve academic success will be more successful in the workforce and gain greater social or financial opportunities. On the other hand, prioritarian educational justice emphasizes that academic outcomes may not be the most effective investment for every student; for children with inherent disadvantages—such as those with special needs—fostering their communication skills or social participation may provide greater benefits in helping them achieve a good life. Consequently, one of the positive aspects of prioritarian educational justice is that it prioritizes supporting the most

disadvantaged without reducing the well-being of those who are better off (Harel Ben-Shahar, 2016, p. 88).

Parfit (2000), one of the key figures in the theoretical foundation of this principle, states that the prioritizing approach does not require a reduction in the well-being of those who are better off unless it benefits the most disadvantaged. Parfit also suggests focusing on improving the circumstances of society's weaker and poorer members, while advancing the idea that the more dire the situation of the most disadvantaged, the more urgently it must be addressed.

The downside of this approach, however, is that in today's societies, inequalities in academic achievement lead to unequal life expectancies (Gosepath, 2023, p. 274). How, then, should unequal academic performance stemming from natural differences be interpreted? Schouten's answer is that justice does not require reducing the impact of natural talent on academic performance. From a justice perspective, the real problem lies in the fact that society rewards academic success in terms of economic and welfare prospects, while students with less natural talent face more challenging living conditions compared to their more talented peers. Therefore, according to Schouten (2012), "We can understand our prioritarian obligation to naturally disadvantaged students as an obligation to benefit them generally, where that benefit may take the form of a direct investment in their future prospects that bypasses the mechanism of improved academic outcomes" (p. 479).

Schouten supports this claim with an example: Narrowly defined academic outcomes are not attainable for every student, and these outcomes may not always constitute effective investments in students' life prospects. For example, it is not possible for a student with Down syndrome to achieve academic success through traditional educational methods; however, educators can teach the student skills that will enable them to reach a higher level of independence by helping them navigate life skills and personal relationships. Educational gains do not always have to result in academic outcomes. Drawing on this example, it can be argued that the benefits derived do not always have to be viewed as academic outcomes but, from a broader perspective, may be directed toward improving life prospects (Schouten, 2012, p. 478).

When applied to inequalities stemming from class, race, and gender as a comprehensive theory of justice, prioritarian educational justice can be viewed as a problematic principle in terms of educating democratic citizens. This is because Schouten's examples of supporting children who are disadvantaged in terms of natural talents—focusing on their life prospects rather than academic achievement—expose these students to the risk of being labeled. Classifying individuals as unsuitable for certain types of education or professions and redirecting them toward other paths for their own good has led to numerous inequalities in the past. One might counter this criticism as follows: With this example, Schouten (2012) is arguing that sacrificing life prospects to improve academic performance (p. 478) is not consistent with a prioritized conception of educational justice. Although the example he provides could be interpreted as labeling a student, it is intended to demonstrate that, in the case of a student with special needs—who is less likely to benefit from an academically focused education—life expectations should be prioritized, or that life expectations should be shown to be a precursor to academic success. Therefore, allocating additional resources to students with special needs to help them achieve good life prospects can lead to proper guidance rather than limiting them in their future lives.

Schouten, who outlines the framework of this approach in education, has not linked this approach to democratic citizenship education in his 2015 and 2023 studies or in subsequent research. Consequently, the following assessments can be made by drawing inferences regarding the connection between priority-based educational justice and democratic

citizenship education: Democratic citizenship education and prioritarian educational justice both emphasize the importance of equality and inclusivity. Prioritarian educational justice advocates giving priority to the education of the least advantaged so they can achieve good living conditions, while ensuring that all students have the opportunity to fully participate in democratic processes, regardless of their socioeconomic background. In terms of political rights, it can be said that prioritarian educational justice is consistent with the right to political education. Ensuring that the least advantaged students receive an adequate education supports their ability to fulfill their democratic rights and responsibilities.

If I examine the pros and cons of educational equity from a broad perspective that encompasses all approaches to educational equity, it becomes clear that while educational equity primarily envisions a competition for job positions and higher education, it simultaneously legitimizes the resulting inequalities. Let's first address the negative aspect: An overly competitive society can lead to negative dynamics within the education system. In terms of a culture of democratic participation, this trend may lead parents to prefer investing in subjects—such as math and science—that will help their children stand out in the job market or facilitate their entry into higher education, rather than demanding elements of democratic citizenship education, such as the importance of voting and respect for the rule of law. In other words, parents may shy away from investing in services that would help their children live in a society where they can participate in a culture of democratic participation; instead, they demand that priority be given to subjects and skills that are more highly rewarded in the labor market (Halliday, 2015, p. 158). The positive aspect of educational equity, however, is that in a non-competitive society, the educational advantages of some children—such as their talents, motivation, and family background—can be utilized for the benefit of everyone, or at the very least, allow those with advantages to realize their potential without harming others.

The rise of issues such as equipping students with the skills necessary to compete in the global market has led to the loss of popularity of equality in education or its being viewed as a myth. The shift toward treating education as an investment in human capital implies that the ideal of equality in education has lost its relevance. Equality in education has been viewed as a utopian ideal because universal and free access to education has proven insufficient to eliminate class differences. This situation suggests that equality should be completely abandoned as an educational ideal. Equality of educational opportunities has been regarded as a flawed goal that serves to perpetuate the myth of equality in an unequal society (Calvert, 2015, p. 983; Nash, 2004, p. 361).

In contrast to equality of opportunity in education, advocates of educational adequacy view ensuring that everyone has access to an adequate education as an alternative to the ideal of equality of opportunity (Anderson, 2007; Giesinger, 2011; Liu, 2006; Satz, 2007). Educational adequacy is concerned not with the equal distribution of educational resources, but with the availability of these resources at an adequate level. Satz (2007, p. 630), an advocate of the democratic adequacy as a conception of educational justice, criticizes the idea that achieving equality of opportunity in education would lead to a social aristocracy composed of those with the greatest innate talents. However, while democratic adequacy as a conception of educational justice is an alternative to equality of opportunity, it should not be viewed as its opposite. Reich (2013) and Culp (2019) believe that equality of opportunity in education and democratic adequacy as a conception of educational justice are interconnected. According to Reich (2013), while democratic adequacy as a conception of educational justice sets goals in the civic sphere, approaches to equality of opportunity primarily define a guiding ideal in the socioeconomic sphere.

On the one hand, schooling seeks to provide a democratically adequate education that fosters political relationships of equal citizenship centered on civic goals. On the other hand, schooling

facilitates the acquisition of skills valued in professional fields, thereby enabling students to gain respect in society and the workplace. Furthermore, democratic adequacy as a conception of educational justice does not view the purpose of education as offering students a range of options from which to choose. As demonstrated in the critique of luck-egalitarian equality of opportunity, it is flawed to view students as agents held responsible for their choices. Rather than presenting students with a range of options and viewing them as agents responsible for their choices, the school system focuses on ensuring that students develop the attitudes, knowledge, and skills that are important from a democratic perspective (Culp & Drerup, 2024, p. 539).

Broadly speaking, the foundation of the adequate education approach lies in the idea of a threshold value that everyone must reach. democratic adequacy as a conception of educational justice, as Gutmann (1999) puts it, is based on the idea that “inequalities in the distribution of educational goods can be justified if, but only if, they do not deprive any child of the ability to participate effectively in the democratic process” (p. 136). In other words, it concerns the competence necessary for participation in political processes. Prioritarian conception of educational justice generalizes the concern for the least advantage found in Rawls’s difference principle. The difference principle states that socioeconomic inequalities can be justified only to the extent that they provide the greatest benefit to those who are worst off. Prioritarian conception of educational justice, however, extends this concern to the realm of education; in doing so, it challenges the notion of fair equality of opportunity and proposes an educational alternative to Rawls’s difference principle (Gosepath, 2023, p. 274).

Schouten’s 2012 article stands out as a key example of this approach in education. In this article, Schouten examines the meritocratic principle and clarifies the points where prioritarian conception of educational justice diverges from it. The meritocratic principle considers it unjust for some students to be at a disadvantage simply because they were born into a disadvantaged social class. Therefore, to balance the achievement gaps between social groups, he argues that resources must be allocated disproportionately to disadvantaged students. Schouten (2012, p. 473) further contends that educators bear responsibility when disadvantages arising from natural circumstances affect academic achievement and hinder an individual’s ability to lead a good life. He explains his reasoning as follows: “poor academic performance due to natural causes, ...caused by poor academic performance due to social causes” (Schouten, 2012, p. 476). According to her, fair equality of opportunity in education must be complemented by a principle that also considers the disadvantages arising from natural differences in ability among people (Schouten, 2012, p. 476).

In his recent study, Schouten (2023) defines prioritarian conception of educational justice as follows: The fact that reforms are designed to give significant priority to the developmental expectations of the most disadvantaged points to the application of this perspective in school education. Accordingly, decision-making bodies and policies in the field of education require that priority be given to the circumstances of students belonging to the most disadvantaged members of society.

In terms of theoretical foundations, it should be noted that this approach does not involve equalizing educational opportunities—in a way that could be categorized as either liberal egalitarianism or socialism—nor does it focus on improving educational opportunities for those in disadvantaged circumstances. In this approach to equality of opportunity, the primary goal is initiatives aimed at improving the life expectancies of the most disadvantaged students before addressing their educational opportunities. One of the examples Schouten provides to illustrate these principles is a focus on improving students’ capacity to manage personal relationships. These capacities are more important than developing strong reading skills, which can improve educational opportunities but affect life expectancy only indirectly and to

a limited extent (Schouten, 2012, p. 479). Another example is the need for school administrators to allocate more funding for students with cognitive disabilities (Schouten, 2012, p. 482).

Prioritarian conception of educational justice involves distributing educational resources to the most disadvantaged and enhancing their well-being not only during their school years but throughout their lives. However, this theory has faced some criticism. Harel Ben-Shahar (2016, p. 88) agrees with Schouten's argument that efforts to teach life skills—which will enable a student with a cognitive disability to achieve independence—will yield greater benefits than focusing solely on academic development. At the same time, he points out the danger that allowing teachers to do this routinely could exclude the student from academically focused curricula, thereby limiting the life choices they might have in the future compared to other children.

The difficulty of eliminating a situation where those who are most successful in education derive the greatest benefit from their positions in the workforce also opens the door to another criticism (Culp & Drerup, 2024, p. 541). While Schouten notes that academic success cannot be viewed as the sole means of ensuring students lead good lives, he also acknowledges that it is the most used tool for achieving this goal (Schouten, 2012, p. 487). Therefore, it seems inevitable within the current political order that those who achieve academic success will be more successful in the workforce and gain greater social or financial opportunities. On the other hand, prioritarian conception of educational justice emphasizes that academic outcomes may not be the most effective investment for every student; for children with inherent disadvantages—such as those with special needs—fostering their communication skills or social participation may provide greater benefits in helping them achieve a good life. Consequently, one of the positive aspects of prioritarian conception of educational justice is that it prioritizes supporting the most disadvantaged without reducing the well-being of those who are better off (Harel Ben-Shahar, 2016, p. 88).

Parfit (2000), one of the key figures in the theoretical foundation of this principle, states that the prioritarian conception does not require a reduction in the well-being of those who are better off unless it benefits the most disadvantaged. Parfit also suggests focusing on improving the circumstances of society's weaker and poorer members, while advancing the idea that the more dire the situation of the most disadvantaged, the more urgently it must be addressed.

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Democratic Adequacy as a Conception of Educational Justice

This section examines the concept of democratic competence, which focuses on the education of democratic citizens rather than educational competence in the general sense. Let us first consider the concept of competence in education in the general sense: When children surpass an appropriate competence threshold to achieve specific goals, it is considered acceptable for some children to receive a higher-quality education than others (Ladd & Loeb, 2013, p. 38). In other words, inequalities above the threshold do not pose a moral problem (Anderson, 2004, p. 106; Liu, 2006, p. 345). From a normative perspective, educational competence concerns the acquisition of the skills necessary for individuals in a society composed of free and equal citizens to make autonomous decisions in their private lives and to negotiate with others on social issues. In this definition, education undertakes to impart the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions appropriate for fostering this competence (De-Los-Santos-Menéndez, 2022, p. 789). In contrast, democratic adequacy as a conception of educational justice focuses on the

organization of citizens' education in a democratic society. In this regard, it is directly linked to the challenges of democratic citizenship education.

To grasp the conceptual foundations of democratic adequacy as a conception of educational justice, it is necessary to determine the criteria upon which this competence is based. This approach finds expression in Dewey's defense of democratically competent education, which historically views democracy not merely as a formal system of government but as a way of life. Dewey (1916) states that democracy, as a form of social life, cannot be spontaneously reproduced through democratic political institutions alone; rather, spheres of social life—such as family life, schools, and workplaces—must be shaped by the principles of democratic organization. Schools must put democratic culture into practice and thereby contribute to the reproduction of a democratic society. In this regard, Dewey's approach aligns with the normative counterpart of education that is sufficient from a democratic perspective: schooling must contribute to the social reproduction of a democratic society (Culp & Drerup, 2024, p. 539). In line with this, Gutmann (1999) states, "For democratic education to support conscious social reproduction, all educable children must be educated" (p. 45).

To examine more closely the intellectual roots of democratic adequacy as a conception of educational justice, it is instructive to look at Anderson's (2007) conception of democratic equality. According to Anderson, the distribution of educational resources is aimed not so much at establishing a form of distributive equality as at ensuring that people participate as equals in political and moral relationships. When people can participate equally in these relationships, they can be treated as democratic equals.

A strong example from the literature supporting democratic competence as educational justice comes from Liu (2006). Liu considers competence in education alongside equal citizenship. According to him, educational adequacy is the minimum level of knowledge and competence necessary for citizenship to fulfill political and public duties—such as voting, being represented, and participating in social responsibilities—and to meaningfully exercise civil liberties (p. 345). Similarly, Satz (2007, p. 625) notes that educational competence encompasses equal citizenship in a democratic society. The nature and content of educational competence can be derived from the conditions necessary for full membership in a democratic society composed of equal citizens. In this context, education is an indispensable foundation for the exercise of political rights (Satz, 2007, p. 635). Citizenship requires a certain threshold of knowledge and competence to exercise rights and freedoms such as freedom of expression and thought, freedom of conscience, the right to represent and be represented, the right to vote, and participation in politics and the economy. When citizens are treated as equals, they are not placed at a disadvantage in accessing social and economic rights—in addition to their political and civil rights—regardless of their ethnic or social origins.

Anderson (2007), another key proponent of democratic adequacy as a conception of educational justice, argues that in a democratic society, those in positions of responsibility and leadership must be selected not only to serve themselves but also to serve all segments of society effectively (p. 596). According to him, rather than focusing on what a good education should do for the individuals receiving it, the emphasis should be on what those who are better educated must do for everyone. When elites possess sensitivity and the capacity to serve effectively, they develop an awareness of people's problems. For this, it is essential that they possess the ability to engage in respectful interaction (Anderson, 2007, p. 607).

So, how should the threshold for democratic participation be determined in a modern society? According to Gutmann (1999, p. 136), the threshold for democratic participation legitimizes inequalities in the distribution of educational resources only to the extent that all children possess the ability to participate effectively in the democratic process. democratic adequacy as

a conception of educational justice, requires that democratic institutions allocate sufficient resources to education that will equip all children with the skills necessary to participate in democratic processes (Gutmann, 1999, p. 136). In other words, the threshold for democratic participation refers to possessing the ability to participate effectively in democratic processes.

The education provided up to this threshold meets the knowledge and skill needs related to the capacity for democratic deliberation, enabling individuals to participate effectively in political processes and have a say in their own lives (Howe, 1989, pp. 329-330). A citizen who reaches this threshold can, for example, develop debating skills by participating in political discussions. Satz (2007, p. 636) defines the threshold value as the level of knowledge and competence necessary to exercise rights and freedoms—such as freedom of expression and thought, freedom of conscience, the right to vote and be elected, and participation in politics and the economy—required for equal citizenship in a democratic society. Anderson (2007, p. 620), on the other hand, explains the threshold value in terms of the opportunities to function equally in society: to assume a respectable role in the division of labor, to participate in democratic debates, to appear before society without shame, and to possess equal moral standing to assert rights against others. Giesinger (2007), on the other hand, proposes a moral-political threshold of competence centered on the idea of a good life: “The education system should enable every child to lead a fulfilling life in society, which means living an autonomous life while participating in the social, political, economic, and cultural life of society” (Giesinger, 2007, p. 377).

This approach has certain advantages from a citizenship perspective compared to equality of opportunity in education. Democratic competence places the responsibility on the state to ensure that all citizens attain a certain level of education through its educational policies and can guarantee specific standards and educational resources. Furthermore, because it prioritizes the democratic goals of education, it creates conditions conducive to the integration of different social classes and ethnic groups into society. Structuring schools in a way that segregates social classes based on their economic infrastructure undermines the principle of equality among individuals, which is a fundamental tenet of democracy. Privileged groups who hold social and political positions must develop democratic attitudes—such as tolerance and empathy—to understand the problems faced by those with fewer privileges. These attitudes, which are developed separately from academic competencies, facilitate interaction among students from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. According to Anderson (2007, p. 607), fostering these attitudes and establishing respectful interaction protects the educated class from harboring prejudices against other groups in a democratic society and helps them gain awareness.

Giesinger (2025, pp. 32-33), on the other hand, highlights another positive aspect of democratic competence: This approach takes into account both natural and social disadvantages. In this regard, it also aligns with a prioritized educational justice that addresses natural disadvantages.

Of course, this approach is not without its critics. One criticism is that it fails to provide a roadmap for the stage following the acquisition of the attitudes and skills that will enable children to develop a democratic perspective in a democratic society. As Gosepath (2023, p. 277) points out, the persistence of inequalities above a certain threshold and the granting of privileges to the well-educated are surprising to those with an egalitarian perspective. Criticisms have also been raised that Anderson’s argument regarding the elite-educated class would fail when viewed from the perspective of economic status. Accordingly, it cannot be expected that individuals who have attained leadership positions in society through a good education will use the privileges granted to them to pave the way for disadvantaged groups. If the ruling-class interests held by those in leadership positions persist, the goal of democratic

adequacy cannot be achieved. Finally, it has been noted that democratic adequacy as a conception of educational justice, will deviate from its own purpose if it ignores the tension between hierarchy and democratic values (Kissel, 2021, pp. 2, 14).

Cosmopolitanism in the Context of Democratic Citizenship Education

Cosmopolitanism refers to a perspective that goes beyond narrow geographical or cultural boundaries and centers directly on the intrinsic value of human existence. In this regard, it focuses on the individual who feels a sense of commitment to all of humanity (Warf, 2020, p. 419). The concept, which has a deep historical background, intersects with many disciplines such as political theory, culture, sociology, education, and philosophy. This richness makes it difficult to confine the concept within limited definitions. Indeed, as researchers continue to discuss the historical development of cosmopolitanism, its ontological and epistemological foundations, and its social impacts, this leads to the constant updating of definitions (Murray, 2025, pp. 2-3). As Papastephanou (2017, p. 1) aptly notes, attempting to define cosmopolitanism by confining it to a narrow scope is a non-cosmopolitan endeavor that contradicts the very nature of the concept. Nevertheless, to clarify the concept's ambiguity, it is worthwhile to address its various manifestations in the literature.

There are also definitions that address cosmopolitanism from its political and social dimensions. Delanty (2019, p. 2) equates cosmopolitanism with being open to humanity. Accordingly, cosmopolitanism refers to individuals being open to different cultural environments. In its broadest sense, it concerns the expansion of the moral and political horizons of people, societies, organizations, and institutions. In a political context, it clarifies the cultural, legal, and ethical foundations of the political order. This perspective does not view political communities and nation-states as the sole legitimate entities. Cosmopolitanism emphasizes an interest in what people have in common; it evaluates individuals independently of their ethnic, religious, and national identities, based on their equal moral status. However, it does not deny the political, historical, and sociological significance of these identities; it merely argues that these identities should not overshadow people's commonalities—that is, the feelings and needs stemming from their membership in the same species (Held, 2005, p. 10; 2010, p. x).

From a political perspective, cosmopolitanism is grounded in its moral dimension as follows: In the wake of the two great catastrophes of the twentieth century—World War I and World War II—as nation-states turned inward with protectionist tendencies, the importance of universal principles, human rights, and the rule of law was emphasized in response to the threats posed to humanity by Nazism, Fascism, and Stalinism. The shared view of the countries involved in this process is that an individual's moral worth and freedom cannot be limited by belonging to a specific community; rather, every individual possesses an irreducible moral status. Underlying this view is the following principle of cosmopolitanism: Differences based on ethnicity, nationality, or gender cannot serve as a decisive boundary in meeting basic human needs or in determining rights and responsibilities. Consequently, all people deserve equal moral respect and consideration (Held, 2011, p. 164). Considering this description, cosmopolitanism transcends cultural, political, and religious boundaries and is shaped around the concepts of justice and virtue. According to this moral perspective, people view themselves as stakeholders in a single moral world; it argues that responsibilities apply universally to all of humanity (Hansen, 2010, p. 154). Cosmopolitanism, which establishes a moral framework to define universally shared principles and norms, considers practices, rules, and institutions that do not include everyone to be unjust (Pogge, 1994, pp. 85-88).

In addition to the social, political, and moral definitions of cosmopolitanism, a cultural definition can also be offered. Cultural cosmopolitanism describes the lifestyle of a globally

conscious individual, a cultured world citizen, or a person with multinational citizenship or multiple identities (Strand, 2010, p. 231). This dimension combines a commitment to the values of one's local culture with a commitment to the values of intercultural borrowing and exchange (Hansen, 2010, p. 154). A cosmopolitan is someone who appreciates the diversity of cultures. Papastephanou (2016) summarizes this perspective as follows: "The cosmopolitan might be not the one who feels stranger everywhere and nowhere but the one whose ethico-politically heightened consciousness turns all the world into home" (p. 127). In more inclusive terms, cosmopolitanism portrays humanity as a universal brotherhood. The rational unity within this universal brotherhood stems from everyone sharing a certain capacity for reason; moral unity stems from everyone being a member of a single moral community; and social unity stems from everyone being equally vulnerable to the same political problems and developing collective solutions (David & Pietro, 2017).

When we speak of cosmopolitanism in education, we refer to an approach that emphasizes the importance of fostering a global perspective among students. As spaces where cultural and social reproduction take place, schools play a critical role in the dissemination of cosmopolitanism. Educators convey a vision of a good society suited to modern life to their students in schools and strive to ensure that this vision is realized (Sobe, 2019, p. 267). Cosmopolitanism in schools is expected to foster comprehensive ways of thinking, provide knowledge about the world, and prepare students to live, work, and protect the world beyond national borders (Papastephanou, 2020, p. 2).

In the context of democratic citizenship education, cosmopolitanism can be viewed as a system in which citizens communicate with one another on a global level and integrate democratic values to become active participants in the world. This approach points to the idea of a shared humanity that all people share as individual beings. As a democratic and inclusive process, cosmopolitan education fosters the adoption of a shared sense of humanity and considers that we cannot exclude others in moral debates such as how one ought to live (Hayden, 2017, pp. 248-254).

Cosmopolitanism first appeared in ancient Greek philosophy and has a 2,500-year history, extending beyond the more recent phenomenon of globalization (Delanty, 2019, p. 2). In the Stoic view, it rests on moral obligations that radiate from oneself and one's immediate surroundings to the region, society, and ultimately the entire world, emphasizing a shared humanity that transcends divergent cultural traditions and political structures (Warf, 2020). The Stoics defined the cosmopolitan as situated in the cosmos, where humanity lives in harmony, rather than in the traditional polis, and held that humans inhabit two worlds simultaneously: the local world of birth and the universal world common to all humanity (Albrecht, 2010, p. 1307; Held, 2010, p. 40).

The second major version of cosmopolitanism emerged in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, when the term *world citizen* (*Weltbürger*) came to describe the cosmopolitan individual living in a politically borderless state of humanity (Appiah, 2006, p. xv). Kant, a leading modern cosmopolitan thinker, sought a social order founded on perpetual peace, in which individuals form a universal state of humanity and treat one another as ends rather than exploiting one another for their own interests (Starkey, 2023, p. 65); this vision has been likened to a world federation of world citizens (Stråth, 2019, p. 72). In *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay*, written during the French Revolution, Kant defines participation in another country's society as a cosmopolitan right, enabling acceptance, dialogue, and a constitution of world citizenship alongside legal regulations (Kant, 1795/2015, pp. 342-343). Some modern cosmopolitanisms build on this Kantian idea of a shared humanity while safeguarding the freedoms of states (Kant, 1795/2015, pp. 340-341).

Another example from the twentieth century is Dewey. A cosmopolitan perspective is clear in his definition of democracy. Dewey conceives of democracy as a common and shared experience; he views it as more than a form of government—he sees it as a way of life. Democracy requires that every individual participating in a common endeavor relate their own actions to those of others and take others’ actions into account to give purpose and direction to their own actions. Furthermore, this process involves the removal of barriers—such as race, class, and national identity—that prevent people from fully grasping the meaning of their own activities (Dewey, 1916, p. 101). Individualistic cosmopolitanism also takes shape in Dewey’s historical distinction as follows: The primary aim of education is the unlimited development (*growth*) of the individual’s abilities. In this development, the individual becomes a member not of the state’s political, economic, and cultural objectives, but of a universal community that encompasses all people. Among the historical representatives of “the ideal of culture as complete development of personality” (Dewey, 1916, p. 110) cited by Dewey is the neo-humanist *Bildung* approach, which includes Humboldt. The other branch of this distinction emphasizes the role of education in the establishment of the nation-state. The eighteenth century Enlightenment embraced the idea of viewing the individual as an organ for the progress of society; however, individualistic cosmopolitanism lacked the institutional organization necessary for this idea to be realized. Consequently, from the perspective of the followers of this pedagogical movement, education became a private sphere of interaction between student and educator, independent of institutional arrangements. In the nineteenth century, advocating for public schools became an inevitable necessity to implement the idea of democratic education.

In Europe, publicly supported education became a tool for transforming individuals into citizens, and cosmopolitanism gave way to nationalism. After Napoleon’s conquests, German states developed public education systems to cultivate citizens who would defend the nation-state; since the seventeenth century, state-controlled schools have served civil order and national stability before universal peace (Sobe, 2019, p. 268). In many European countries, curricula and textbooks reinforced national identities and privileged those sharing the same traditions, experiences, and language (Sant, 2023, p. 96). After World War II, this nationalist emphasis weakened: citizenship curricula shifted from national imagery to human rights rather than patriotism (Ramirez, Suárez, & Meyer, 2006, pp. 35-36), and world history and different nations’ cultures replaced purely national historical narratives (Soysal & Schissler, 2005, p. 5), with some studies revealing a cosmopolitan turn toward social diversity (Bromley, 2009). Nevertheless, even in the 21st century, patriotism has been instilled to foster national loyalty, and public debates in the UK over nationhood and shared culture have made it necessary for democratic citizenship education to address these tensions (Golmohamad, 2009, pp. 467-468).

The 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a concrete example of the adoption of cosmopolitan principles at the international level. The Declaration establishes the principle that everyone deserves equal respect, regardless of the country where they were born or raised. Thus, the egalitarian principle of cosmopolitanism has come to be seen as a universal reference point for human rights. According to this principle, humanity constitutes a single moral sphere in which every individual is deemed worthy of equal respect and consideration. An individual’s status stems not from belonging to the same religion, nation, or ethnic group, but from the fact of being human (Smith, 2017). The Declaration also states—as a reflection of cosmopolitan legal thought—that all people possess equal and inalienable rights; are recognized as the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace; and are identified as the source of political authority and the subjects of international law (Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2018).

In the 21st century, cosmopolitanism in education is approached as a moral framework that involves educators being open to new ideas, fostering mutual understanding through dialogue, and developing awareness in their relationships with others. During this period, Nussbaum advocates for a cosmopolitan education grounded in Stoic philosophy and Kant's cosmopolitanism, emphasizing universal moral obligations toward all of humanity. Nussbaum offers curriculum proposals grounded in the humanities to cultivate cosmopolitan citizens who transcend mere patriotism. In this way, normative cosmopolitanism transforms the idea of loyalty to humanity into concrete educational visions (Sobe, 2019, p. 270). However, in her recent work, Nussbaum has criticized classical cosmopolitanism, arguing that it is, on its own, vague and unworkable as an ethical doctrine (Nussbaum, 2019, pp. 209, 218). For this reason, Nussbaum's early views on cosmopolitanism are mentioned here solely as a historical example, as they diverge from the classical approach.

Another example of the intellectual background of cosmopolitan citizenship education is Habermas. Reference can be made here to Habermas's ethics of discourse, which is compatible with modern liberal democracy. According to the ethics of discourse, decisions affecting the interests of every individual must be made with the participation of all those concerned and must be accepted by them. When this ethical principle is not limited to a specific culture, it becomes a universal ethic applicable to all cultures and all times (Habermas, 2020, pp. 18-19). Habermas's understanding of discourse ethics presents the normative principles of universalization that underpin liberal democratic institutions.

Another formulation suggesting that a cosmopolitan approach can shed light on the economic, military, and political challenges brought about by globalization was developed by Held (2010). Cosmopolitanism offers a framework based on negotiation and the rule of law—without succumbing to the West's imperial ambitions—to address threats that affect the entire world, such as ecological disasters and global financial crises. Held explains the principles underpinning modern cosmopolitanism as follows: First is the principle of individual moral equality, which recognizes that every individual possesses an irreducible moral status. Second is the principle of mutual recognition, which requires that every individual's equal moral status be acknowledged by all. Third is the impartial consideration of every individual's claims. When these principles are not implemented, some people are denied access to resources and cannot realize their potential (Held, 2010, pp. 47-48). Held's principles align with interpretations of modern cosmopolitanism based on earlier works, such as those by Pogge (1994): All individuals possess morally equal status as an irreducible right.

Globalization plays a critical role in the historical development of cosmopolitanism. Interest in cosmopolitanism within the philosophy of education has been shaped by the aim of responding to the challenges posed by globalization in the field of education. Rizvi (2009) defines cosmopolitanism in this period as “a set of principles with which to interpret and respond to the contemporary conditions of globalization” (p. 253). One of the effects of globalization on education in the 21st century is that international organizations such as the The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) have begun to view education as a tool for developing human capital for the knowledge economy (Spring, 2015, p. 2). The OECD approaches education primarily in economic terms; it views its fundamental purpose as training qualified personnel for the labor market. Large-scale assessment tests such as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) contribute to the shaping of educational culture in an increasingly homogenized world. The results of these tests compel nation-states to restructure their education policies to avoid falling behind in global competition (Schumann, 2018, p. 823).

One of the central arguments of cosmopolitanism within the framework of democratic citizenship education is the idea of global citizenship. The German term *Weltbürger*, one of the key concepts of the Enlightenment, forms the foundation of the idea of global citizenship. *Global citizenship education* (GCE) should ensure the recognition and understanding of relationships established with the multifaceted world, including the local community. This education supports the vision of a universal human community—one that fosters unity while preserving diversity—which is indispensable for sustainable development and justice. Therefore, democratic citizenship education should focus on developing a shared commitment to this universal human community (Golmohamad, 2009, p. 468).

There are various reasons for addressing cosmopolitanism within the framework of democratic citizenship education. One of these is that cosmopolitanism can be broadly defined and examined in mutual interaction with democracy. Held (2010, p. 84) seeks to establish a connection between the principles of cosmopolitanism and the advancement of democracy in a globalizing world. When viewed as a fundamental element of democratic public life that is not bound by the borders of nation-states, cosmopolitanism forms the basis for defining the nature of the liberal democratic order. Held demonstrates how cosmopolitanism can offer a response to the challenges posed by globalization (Held, 2010; 2011). According to him, cosmopolitanism forms the political foundation and political philosophy of life in the global age. To increase the influence of cosmopolitan institutions, democratic institutions and civil society organizations must campaign for a democratic and egalitarian world order.

In his study examining the role of education in fostering global citizenship, Golmohamad (2009) argues that a cosmopolitan approach would strengthen liberal values. Recalling that some liberals emphasize a ‘shared destiny’ in their definitions of citizenship, he argues that this concept can also be applied to global citizenship. As justification, he points to the principle that in a universal human state, all citizens are recognized as equal in terms of fundamental rights and opportunities. When this equality is embraced, individuals around the world can be viewed as global citizens sharing a common destiny. Strengthening liberal democracies in this direction through democratic citizenship education leads to the strengthening of liberal values as well. The role of democratic citizenship education gains meaning through efforts to develop a civic culture that transcends national borders. An education that assumes this role can be characterized as a truly cosmopolitan democratic citizenship education.

A democratic citizenship education program designed on this basis views citizens as both political and moral individuals; it enables them to play a role in national and international transformation. Global citizens, who see themselves as members of a single global community, respect the rights and differences of others. The education of democratic citizens requires a critical evaluation of the concepts of patriotism, nationalism, and national citizenship in a changing world. Citizens can thus make sense of their relationships and roles not only at the national and local levels but also at the international level. It is helpful to recall the points where cosmopolitanism diverges from patriotism. This distinction also highlights the tension between patriotism and cosmopolitanism. Patriotism refers to a person’s attachment to the land where they live—most often in their own country. Cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, focuses on the inclusivity of our shared human nature. While patriotism sets boundaries on the scope of responsibility, cosmopolitanism expands that scope by showing active concern for all of humanity; it becomes a discourse of boundless inclusivity (Papastephanou, 2016, p. 132).

When patriotism and cosmopolitanism are pitted against one another, the role of education must be questioned: Does education serve the establishment of the nation-state, or does it serve an ideal of universal humanity within individual diversity? The contemporary implication of this distinction lies in the question of whether citizens and non-citizens in a country are equal in terms of democratic education. For example, while immigrants with long-

term legal status may be viewed as future citizens, the situation remains contentious for undocumented immigrants or asylum seekers. Both perspectives endorse an equitable approach to educational resources for native and immigrant children, regardless of citizenship status. However, restricting those with an uncertain future from benefiting from these rights and being prepared for active citizenship can only be defended from a statist-nationalist perspective. According to cosmopolitan educational frameworks, it is unjust to place less value on migrant children's beliefs, worldviews, and experiences (Rönnström & Roth, 2023). This is because educational justice cannot be limited to the equitable distribution of educational resources alone. Justice also entails recognizing individuals and accepting them as people of dignity. Honneth (1995, pp. 133-134) notes in his *theory of recognition* that treating a person in a manner befitting human dignity means viewing them as a responsible subject and showing them respect. This respect takes on a pedagogical dimension in the context of universal rights; it also includes the right of young people not to face discrimination based on differences such as gender or ethnic origin (Stojanov, 2010, p. 165). The demand for justice is not about individuals possessing certain goods, but rather concerns how they are treated within the interpersonal relationships and structures involved in the production and distribution of those goods (Forst, 2014, pp. 8, 13). Unequal treatment of migrant children constitutes injustice from this perspective.

Some studies argue that placing democratic negotiation processes at the center of education can resolve the issue of covert assimilation. To this end, educational practices must consider forms of oppression such as covert marginalization and exclusion. For negotiation to be successful, respect for differences must be demonstrated, and these differences must be at the core of individuals' recognition of one another as moral beings. Negotiation conducted from a cosmopolitan perspective can advance education by challenging its hegemonic and exclusionary discourse. Justice in education is also linked to the inequalities students face based on their citizenship status. This injustice arises when the beliefs, experiences, and potential knowledge of immigrant children are undervalued, or when these experiences are not incorporated into classroom activities (Stojanov, 2018, pp. 42-43). This injustice contradicts a modern interpretation of cosmopolitanism—an understanding grounded in every individual's right to freely participate in the global community of discourse. At the root of this understanding lies Kant's association of cosmopolitanism with public reason. Accordingly, individuals are morally equal; their equal moral worth is recognized by all, and everyone's claims are evaluated impartially in public deliberation (Held, 2010, p. 15). No individual deserves to be deprived of the right to enter the public sphere or to have their views excluded from consideration based on their ethnic and cultural background.

According to the statist-nationalist view, the fundamental role of school education is to prepare children for citizenship limited to that country's founding traditions, values, and customs. Citizenship is viewed not so much as a legal status but as an allegiance to a cultural and ethnic entity known as the 'nation'; public education seeks to integrate an ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous population into a single nation (Hofmann, 2018, p. 1502). Being a citizen requires the individual to assimilate into the majority culture. This limitation in education has transformed education into a tool for states to instill shared national values in children. Many states use education to steer children and youth toward a common religion, language, and national values. For example, states use national history or geography curricula to instill a sense of the national community's superiority in the minds of citizens (Bonikowski, 2016, p. 433).

However, the primary issue with this view is whether a state truly rests on a dominant national culture. Even the most organized human communities in history are multilingual and multicultural; the model of a shared past, culture, and language is often nothing more than an ideal. Many Western countries, such as Belgium and Switzerland, have multinational

structures that include national minorities seeking to preserve themselves as distinct communities alongside the majority culture (Crowder & Levey, 2019, pp. 237-238). Contrary to expectations that globalization would dissolve ethnic and national identities, it supports multiculturalism; it allows minorities to live with distinct identities (Kymlicka, 1995, pp. 26, 36, 39, 41). In a multicultural society, the meaning of a dominant national culture is unclear; this invalidates the assumption that the state is based on a dominant culture. Furthermore, when the concept of citizenship extends beyond the national level to regional and global levels, a nation-centered definition becomes reductive (Veugelers, 2011b, p. 209).

The second problem with the state-nationalist perspective is that an education system based on this understanding cannot provide a democratic education. One reason for this is that national education systems do not incorporate moral universalism and sociocultural diversity, and therefore cannot provide a truly democratic education. Furthermore, in these systems, students are discriminated against based on their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This discrimination violates the norms of empathy, respect, and social standing that are vital for democratic education. In this sense, Germany cannot be considered successful in implementing educational justice. Some studies conducted in Germany show that students with a migrant background are subjected to segregating policies in education. Even if these students perform well in school, their rates of meeting the criteria for transition to higher education are lower (Diehl, Friedrich, & Hall, 2009). Furthermore, the rates of transition to vocational education among immigrant students are low, while their rates of dropping out after high school are high (Tjaden, 2017, p. 108). The UK serves as an example of how a state-nationalist perspective is reflected in the curriculum. Citizenship education, introduced into the UK curriculum in 2003, has been criticized for being based on national institutions and for lacking sufficient cosmopolitanism. Citizenship education has ignored the diversity of student identities and focused on British identity. This national approach has led to immigrant children being viewed as a problem and devalued (Osler & Starkey, 2018, p. 36). These examples demonstrate that national education systems fall short in providing a democratic education.

So, under what conditions is the exclusion of disadvantaged students from marginalized families not reproduced? To answer this question, I will examine a cosmopolitan approach to educational practices. This approach recognizes the diversity of individuals and seeks to understand how social, political, and economic structures have reproduced inequalities from the past to the present (Stornaiuolo & Nichols, 2019). To prevent the exclusion of children from marginalized families, conditions of personal respect, empathy, and social respect must be established. When these elements are institutionally implemented, educational justice is achieved (Stojanov, 2018, pp. 42-43). An educator's acceptance of a student's right to hold a different religious belief is an example of the respect that should be shown. Empathy, on the other hand, involves the educator recognizing the potential of students' beliefs, ideals, and experiences to enrich society's value horizon. Democratic education requires that equal empathy, respect, and social standing be shown not only to children who are citizens of that country but to all children enrolled in school. Democratic education involves the equal sharing of all students' perspectives and experiences, regardless of their ethnic, social, or cultural backgrounds. In this regard, it encompasses not only educational justice but also global educational justice (Stojanov, 2023, pp. 290-292).

Having addressed the cosmopolitan approach, I can now examine the cosmopolitan understanding of education as opposed to the state-nationalist perspective. This form of education goes beyond the notion that recognizes human dignity only for citizens within national borders. It also respects the dignity of asylum seekers or refugees whose future citizenship in that country remains uncertain. A cosmopolitan educational design does not limit education to norms of national loyalty and integration (Rönnsström & Roth, 2023, p. 734). In contrast to nationalist citizenship education based on national institutions, citizenship

education grounded in human rights and cosmopolitan values regards diversity as an asset in a democratic society; it values students from minority or immigrant backgrounds (Starkey, 2023, p. 69).

One of the tasks of democratic education is to emphasize diversity and equality as impartial, universal qualities to ensure pluralistic participation in democratic processes. An education that enables people from different cultural backgrounds to engage in peaceful dialogue can serve as a model for democratic, pluralistic citizenship education (Bosio & Waghid, 2023, p. 292). In classroom discussions, every student should be encouraged to express their own worldview and beliefs. An education that is pluralistic and inclusive—and does not rely on a homogeneous dominant culture—enables students to recognize others' perspectives and participate in public debates. This, in turn, fosters participation in democratic decision-making processes (Leach, Collet-Sabé, Bardolet, Gil, & Clarke, 2024). Furthermore, the ability of citizenship education to convey the shared values of a just and peaceful democratic society depends on its not being based on a single nation-state or dominant culture (Osler & Starkey, 2018, p. 37).

The ethical-political dimension is another example of fostering democratic citizenship through cosmopolitan education. As defined by Papastephanou (2016), this dimension requires individuals to adopt a critical approach to their own values, beliefs, and worldview and to focus on the 'other' beyond their own self. In other words, the individual transitions from their own perspective to a social and collective perspective. In this sense, cosmopolitanism refers not only to transcending international borders but also to transcending the boundaries of our own selves. This social-collective perspective, which the individual reaches by going beyond their own self, emphasizes social justice. The ethical-political dimension added by Papastephanou requires individuals to be sensitive to this social justice; that is, it implies that individuals bear an ethical responsibility toward unjust practices that affect all of humanity. Ethical-political cosmopolitanism must consider the plight of all humanity, including war victims (Papastephanou, 2017). This demonstrates that the ideals of cosmopolitanism can be directly linked to the ideal of education (Y. Waghid et al., 2020, p. 90). Therefore, educational achievements are also a prerequisite for protecting humanity and bearing responsibility toward humanity from a cosmopolitan perspective.

If democratic citizens become aware of local injustices through pedagogical practices focused on social or environmental issues, they can also recognize the injustices suffered by humanity. So how can students achieve this awareness at the international level? This requires intellectual pedagogical interventions that support the transition from the self to the other. When students participate in practices focused on social issues, they can develop sensitivity to their future impacts. It is important to demonstrate the connection between people and the planet's limited resources. Such research can lead people to recognize injustice and take responsibility. If individuals respond to injustice by taking responsibility at the local level, they can encourage the struggle for justice for all of humanity (Papastephanou, 2020, p. 5).

After addressing the points where cosmopolitanism diverges from globalization, I can also examine *Global Citizenship Education* in the context of democratic citizenship education. GCE is a cosmopolitan educational concept that was first incorporated into school curricula in North America and the UK in the mid-1990s and was later included in the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the curricula of many countries. This education enables students to become active advocates for social justice, gender equality, and inclusive, tolerant, safe, and sustainable societies (UNESCO, 2025). It also encourages students to recognize the connection between cosmopolitanism, human rights, and diversity, as well as their impact on the world (Ghosn-Chelala, 2020). In terms of competencies, GCE can be defined as the acquisition of specific knowledge, skills, and understandings known as global or intercultural competencies.

The global competencies to be developed through CCE include cognitive skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills regarding issues such as ecological problems, conflicts related to world peace, and economic crises (Sant, Davies, Pashby, & Shultz, 2018, p. 22).

To highlight the positive aspects of cosmopolitan democratic citizenship education, I will first examine how cosmopolitanism differs from globalization. Held (2010, p. 29) defines globalization as the expansion, intensification, and acceleration of worldwide interdependence, addressing its commercial, social, and political dimensions. Globalization involves efforts toward market integration and standardization that marginalize the concepts of respect for the individual and justice emphasized by cosmopolitanism. Furthermore, it serves to reinforce existing patterns of sovereignty; consequently, it may weaken the self-determination and local democratic practices advocated by cosmopolitanism. Murray (2025) highlights the points of divergence by comparing the spheres of activity, core elements, and intended educational outcomes of the two concepts. According to this analysis, cosmopolitanism aims to establish an ethic in the cultural and political spheres and begins with the individual. Its means involve public debates such as negotiations; one of its intended educational outcomes is active local and global citizenship. The primary sphere of activity for globalization, however, is the economy, multinational collaborations, and supply chains. Its means are vocational schooling within the framework of formal education; one of its intended educational outcomes is for individuals to be able to use their competitors in financial markets to their own advantage (Murray, 2025, pp. 5, 7). Cosmopolitan citizenship education equips young people with political engagement skills; when these skills are applied, the likelihood of building a more peaceful world increase. This type of citizenship education can provide a framework for transmitting the fundamental values upon which just and peaceful democratic societies can be built (Osler & Starkey, 2018, p. 37). Therefore, cosmopolitan democratic citizenship education is more advantageous than globalization-focused education in instilling democratic core values in students.

Sant, Davies, Pashby, and Shultz (2018, pp. 200-204) examine the advantages and disadvantages of GCE's classroom applications. One such application is the integration of global citizenship into various subject areas. For example, through collaboration among subject teachers, an integrated world history course can help students develop a sense of global belonging. Integrating GCE into history classes is a good example of this: When history is framed through global narratives, it can become an ongoing story that illustrates the existence of a peaceful, just, and democratic world. As actors in this narrative, students decide what a peaceful, just, and democratic world means and how it can be achieved (Sant, González-Monfort, Santisteban Fernández, Pagès Blanch, & Oller Freixa, 2015, p. 356). Such an integrated history class also contributes to the development of peaceful dialogue and empathy. For example, the conflicting historical narratives of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples have been addressed in a shared textbook, presenting the same event to students from both sides alongside the other people's narrative. The goal is to prevent young people from merely embracing their own narrative and to ensure they also take the other people's narrative seriously. In this way, young people can acquire the necessary tools to understand and respect the other people (Adwan, Bar-On, & Naveh, 2012, pp. ix-xi). The adoption of peace and global values can be accelerated through this method.

Certain obstacles to leveraging cosmopolitanism within the context of democratic citizenship highlight the approach's shortcomings. Benhabib (2002) illustrates the fragility of the state-centered international order through cases where refugees are not accepted. Mexican migrants who die of dehydration in the deserts along the U.S.-Mexico border, guided by human traffickers, serve as an example of this. This tension between the norms and practices of liberal-democratic states leads to situations that violate the 1951 *Geneva Convention on Refugees*. These states face a tension between, on the one hand, their commitment to universal human

rights and, on the other, their right to border control. Consequently, as seen in the rejection of refugee and asylum claims, the applicability of Kant's principle of universal hospitality in today's world is debatable. This principle falls short in explaining the challenges faced by groups such as refugees and asylum seekers and the appropriate treatment they deserve (Benhabib, 2002).

One of the drawbacks of GCE is the risk that its importance may diminish because, as an interdisciplinary theme, it offers voluntary and non-graded activities. Furthermore, if classroom projects are left to unprepared specialists, there is a risk of falling into stereotypes and condescending attitudes. In many countries, the limited time allocated to ECC and the shortage of qualified educators also make it difficult to implement as a course (Sant et al., 2018, pp. 203-204).

One of the criticisms of cosmopolitanism in democratic citizenship education comes from ethnic nationalist and authoritarian regimes. Cosmopolitanism, which is grounded in liberal democracy, becomes a target of criticism from these circles because it challenges the discourses of the state and ethnic nationalism. These regimes reject the legitimacy of cosmopolitan perspectives based on commitments to protect, respect, and fulfill all human rights (Starkey, 2023, p. 71).

Among the criticisms directed at cosmopolitanism, those leveled against the GCE hold a significant place. For example, it is assumed that the GCE is a privileged initiative for advantaged students who can cross national borders; when integrated into the curriculum, it may exacerbate existing inequalities. This gap, stemming from limited access to education for immigrants and refugees, could widen even further (Yemini, 2023).

When *Global Citizenship Education* is linked to economic objectives as well as global competencies, it also aims to cultivate a qualified workforce capable of working with people from all over the world. Thus, global citizenship can be understood as an outcome of the educational process. However, some criticisms have been raised against this framework. According to these criticisms, students who do not receive *Global Citizenship Education* are not considered global citizens. This distinction may exclude certain individuals by determining who can and cannot be a global citizen. Citizenship should not be a status acquired at the end of a specific process, but rather a practice through which individuals identify with shared local and international issues. Becoming a citizen is a participatory transformation in which students make sense of their places and roles in society, going beyond the acquisition of predetermined values (Biesta & Lawy, 2006, pp. 72-73). For this reason, citizenship education should be a space where the meaning of democratic citizenship is questioned, rather than one that imposes a predefined notion of 'good citizenship.' This inquiry provides the foundation for a deep understanding of democratic citizenship (Biesta & Lawy, 2006, p. 76).

Another criticism leveled against GCE is that it imposes the West's definition of global citizenship on other societies to maintain Western hegemony (Akkari & Maleq, 2020, p. 209). Postcolonial scholars criticize universal principles and forms of knowledge that are applied to all local communities. According to this view, there are no universal principles or forms of knowledge that fit every local context. Eurocentric forms of education are being imposed on other societies, either implicitly or explicitly, as part of the process of imperialism. Through schools, Western values and culture are spreading to the extent that they are eroding local cultures (Sant et al., 2018, p. 58). According to particularist interpretations, GCE can be viewed as an attempt to homogenize local populations according to the same principles and values. The main reason for this is the ambiguity of the concept of 'global citizenship' within GCE. Global citizenship refers to a form of citizenship that perceives itself as global but is, in fact, local (Mannion, Biesta, Prisley, & Ross, 2011, p. 451).

Cosmopolitanism is associated by many educational approaches with challenging fixed cultural boundaries. In this sense, cosmopolitanism is seen as the celebration of diversity and the sanctification of transcending global boundaries. Papastephanou (2016, pp. 2, 81) criticizes the definition of cosmopolitanism linked to political boundaries. According to him, the boundaries that cosmopolitans must truly transcend are internal boundaries, and these are preserved through education. Internal boundaries consist of the values and perspectives rooted in a person's background. These boundaries, which take root at an early age through education, cannot be shaken by exposure to lifestyles in different countries. This perspective challenges the approach that reduces cosmopolitanism to world travel that transcends borders (Y. Waghid et al., 2020, p. 87). According to Papastephanou (2016), although cosmopolitanism is often associated with global mobility, a more critical and other-oriented form of cosmopolitanism is also possible through education. While globalization in education focuses on global policies that facilitate structural transformations in school systems, cosmopolitanism in education aims to cultivate critical, reflective, and resilient individuals (Papastephanou, 2016, p. 81).

Multiculturalism in the Context of Democratic Citizenship Education

Multiculturalism is a concept that can be analyzed from many perspectives. The primary reason it is viewed as a variable term is the ambiguity in the definition of the concept of culture. According to one definition, culture is what elevates a person's value as a moral agent; art, music, and literature can be counted among the elements that enhance this value. Another definition in the social sciences views culture as everything transmitted in human society not biologically, but socially (Scott, 2014, p. 260). From an anthropological perspective, the world can be understood as the sum of distinct cultures, each valuable. Humans are considered products of the culture in which they live; therefore, differences among people are based on culture rather than ethnic origin or race (Barnard & Spencer, 2002, p. 206). This final definition makes culture the most distinctive element distinguishing communities from one another; it emphasizes that multiculturalism cannot be viewed merely as the sum of national or ethnic differences⁷.

When multiculturalism is defined as a societal model in which national minorities or ethnic groups⁸ coexist, it refers to a usage that also encompasses marginalized groups: youth, lesbians, people with disabilities, women facing discrimination, etc. (LeVan, 2024, p. 9). Kymlicka (1995) explains the rationale for this as follows: Like ethnic groups, these groups have been marginalized and pushed to the sidelines because of their differences; therefore, there are similarities between their demands for justice and those of ethnic groups. He emphasizes that his theory of minority rights is part of an effort to build an inclusive democracy that encompasses these groups as well (Kymlicka, 1995, pp. 49-50).

Since multiculturalism is addressed in this book within the framework of democratic citizenship education, its political and social dimensions will be highlighted. As a political model, multiculturalism is used to protect cultural pluralism corresponding to national and ethnic diversity and to preserve the characteristics and distinctiveness of minority groups. In

⁷ Kymlicka (1995, p. 49) uses the term *culture* synonymously with *nation* or *people*. According to him, a state composed of different nations or ethnic communities is multicultural.

⁸ According to Kymlicka, national minorities are groups that seek to preserve themselves as distinct communities alongside the majority culture and demand forms of self-governance to ensure their continued existence. In contrast, ethnic groups are immigrant groups that do not demand self-governance but seek revisions to existing laws to ensure greater respect for their cultural identities (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 38).

this respect, it is linked to a political movement focused on identity politics (Johansson, 2024, p. 76).

Within a political and social framework, multiculturalism is understood as the recognition of the identities of different cultural communities that exhibit diversity within society and the respect for their cultural differences. This definition encompasses various forms of cultural pluralism (Libretti, 2010, p. 1; McDonough, 2008, pp. 341-342). When considering multicultural societies that encompass two or more cultural communities, many countries around the world consider themselves multicultural. If a nation is defined as a historical community linked to a people or culture that shares a common language and culture, then Western democracies are multinational because they encompass multiple nations. Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and Native Americans in the United States are examples of national minorities in multinational states (Kymlicka, 1995, pp. 39, 41).

In countries that view themselves as multicultural—such as the United States, Australia, Canada, Israel, the UK, and Germany—multiculturalism has become a political and ideological concept due to the refusal of established immigrants and indigenous minority groups to assimilate. In the case of Germany, the resistance of groups who arrived from Turkey and other countries under the *guest worker* (*Gastarbeiter*) status to abandon their cultural identities led to multiculturalism becoming a national agenda (Parekh, 2006, pp. 4-5). In this regard, a prerequisite for multiculturalism is the public recognition of the cultural diversity and cultural rights of communities belonging to different cultures (Crowder & Levey, 2019, p. 237). As an earlier example, the exploitation and discrimination faced by indigenous peoples—such as the Aboriginal peoples of Australia and Canada, the Māori of New Zealand, and the Inuit of Greenland—at the hands of white European colonizers led to the marginalization of these communities in political, economic, and social life for many years. The demand for the recognition of the rights of these minority groups has accelerated discussions on multiculturalism. Colombo (2015) notes that multiculturalism in Europe must include immigrants and that cultural diversity cannot be limited solely to immigrants. According to him, for multiculturalism to truly take root in a society, immigrants must be granted the right to be part of the society in which they live without being forced to identify with the dominant cultural group, and colonialist and assimilationist patterns must be overcome (Colombo, 2015, p. 4). A similar condition can be argued not only for immigrants who have arrived more recently but also for national and ethnic minority groups already living in that country (Eisenberg, 2025, p. 2; Johansson, 2024, p. 76).

Multiculturalism has always been used as a unifying concept; it has not fostered division among segments of society. Rather, it points to a structure that ensures the fair integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities into society and respects minorities' desire to preserve their cultural diversity (Rattansi, 2011a, p. 7). This perspective emphasizes that questions regarding multiculturalism should focus on addressing inequalities between minorities and the mainstream culture while appreciating cultural diversity. Studies argue that the established culture is a joint creation of the ethnocultural majority and ethnic minorities also support this view. According to this perspective, the established culture is a dynamic and ever-changing formation that has evolved over centuries; rather than threatening the national culture, migration has been co-created by previous generations of immigrants and ethnic minorities. The cultural majority does not clash with minorities to defend their own culture; nor do minorities attempt to open a battlefield by challenging this culture. Instead, cultural diversity is viewed as a collective achievement. Thanks to this approach, minorities are respected, common ground is established for reforming established practices, and diversity is celebrated (Levey, 2025).

Multicultural political theories are rooted in liberal values; as seen in the examples of Canada and Australia, many national multiculturalism policies are shaped by liberal-democratic values. Therefore, multiculturalism is not cultural relativism⁹; it is a universalist doctrine that acknowledges the legitimacy of cultural diversity. It is defended by liberal thinkers who advocate for universal human rights and individual freedom (Crowder & Levey, 2019, pp. 237, 239).

In pre-modern societies, there was no multicultural structure in the modern sense; minority groups were confined to the geographical and social spaces allocated to them by the dominant culture. Christian and Jewish communities in the Ottoman Empire did not possess full citizenship rights (Barkey & Gavriliş, 2016, pp. 25-27). In contemporary societies, however, minority communities do not lead isolated lives but instead establish complex networks of interaction with one another and with the broader society. With the spread of liberal and democratic ideas, these communities have demanded equal political rights (Parekh, 2006, p. 7).

The struggles of indigenous peoples and immigrant minorities gained particular momentum after World War II; multiculturalism has also progressed in parallel with the history of efforts for human equality from that war to the present day. A significant turning point of this period was the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The adoption of the Declaration marked the beginning of a period of principled, universal, and egalitarian consensus in opposition to the claims of ethnic and racial superiority during World War II—such as those of Nazi Germany (Rattansi, 2011b, p. 14).

Multiculturalism has developed as a public policy arising from the quest to better honor liberal-democratic values and citizenship in liberal democracies. Therefore, when addressing arguments in the context of democratic citizenship education, one must draw upon theories and interpretations grounded in liberal-democratic values. One reason multiculturalism plays a critical role in citizenship education in liberal democracies is that it fosters awareness of social diversity (Culp, 2025, p. 3).

Although greater recognition of social diversity primarily influenced educational theorists in the 1990s, the roots of this transformation extend back to the civil rights movements of the 1960s. In the 1940s and 1950s, most Western social scientists and ethnic groups viewed assimilation as both inevitable and desirable in ethnic relations. With the exception of some separatist movements, national policymakers and ethnic group leaders had adopted cultural assimilation and integration as their primary goals. However, the rise of ethnic protest movements in the 1960s and 1970s revealed the profound limitations of this assimilationist and liberal perspective in explaining ethnic issues in modern democratic societies (Banks, 2009b, p. 11). The civil rights movements and student protests of those years paved the way for a left-liberal cultural transformation that brought about social and political changes. This transformation challenged not only gender and racial hierarchies but also conservative views on sexual orientation and family structures that were perceived as homogenizing (Reed, 2019, pp. 40-42). Ethnic groups demanded that the curriculum and textbooks be revised to reflect their own cultures and histories, and that cultural and ethnic diversity be increased in school

⁹ Cultural relativism holds that ways of thinking in different cultures are incomparable and that no objective criteria exist for evaluating the validity of thought and behavior within a culture (Güçlü et al., 2003, p. 863). Yet it conflicts with liberal-democratic multiculturalism because, by tying moral justification to a cultural perspective, it renders cultures immune to criticism even when they advocate sexism, racism, or imperialism. This contradicts multiculturalism's fundamental principle of respect for diversity (Crowder & Levey, 2019, p. 239).

administrations. One of the goals of the civil rights movement initiated by African Americans in the United States was the elimination of racial discrimination in educational institutions and across all sectors of society (Banks, 2016, pp. 3-4). Consequently, multicultural education aimed to address the neglected educational needs of students other than white students (Nieto & Bode, 2018, p. 37).

The success of the civil rights movement inspired other marginalized groups, such as the women's rights movement, to take action to end discrimination. This movement is one of the most significant social reform movements of the twentieth century. The movement's leaders demanded an end to gender discrimination in educational institutions. Feminists, meanwhile, pointed out that the curriculum and textbooks were male-dominated and called for an end to institutionalized sexism in education and for greater emphasis on women's active roles in American history—such as their roles in industrialization and the labor movement (Trecker, 1973, pp. 279-280). In the political sphere, after the initial stages of multicultural education gained traction in the United States, countries such as the UK, Canada (in 1971), and Australia (in 1978) also developed multicultural policies (Banks, 2009b, p. 13). Following the ethnic revival movements of the 1960s and 1970s, leaders and citizens in these countries began to view their nations as multicultural democracies (Banks, 2014b, p. 380).

Toward the end of the twentieth century, assimilationist citizenship education policies—which encouraged members of minority cultures to conform to the majority culture—gradually lost their relevance. Before the changes of the 1960s and 1970s, the goal was to raise citizens who honored national heroes and glorified national history. However, in the 2000s, the fact that people felt a sense of belonging to more than one nation at the same time or lived in different countries made it necessary to change the perspective on citizenship (Banks, 2014b, p. 380). With the abandonment of assimilationist citizenship education, multiculturalism—considered a key component of liberal citizenship education—began to emphasize the benefits of recognizing equal political status for different religions and cultures in democratic life (Macedo, 2000, p. 220).

In terms of incorporating multicultural education content into curricula, over the past half-century, content related to ethnic diversity has increased in elementary and high schools—for example, in social studies textbooks (Banks, 2014a, p. 13). There have also been developments in teacher preparation programs that have increased content focused on multicultural education. In the U.S., teachers have taken courses on multicultural education during their university education; the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has established standards for multicultural education. These standards include enabling teachers to use examples from their own cultures when teaching new concepts. One reason for targeting such a skill is that classrooms in the U.S. are becoming increasingly culturally and racially diverse (NCATE, 2008, p. 36).

When examining definitions that lay the groundwork for discussing multiculturalism in the context of democratic citizenship education, it becomes clear that the concept primarily focuses on understanding the social and cultural dimensions of the world. The importance of a multicultural vision in citizenship education lies in ensuring that students strike a delicate balance among cultural, national, regional, and global identities so that they can become effective citizens in a global society (Banks, 2014b, p. 379). Building on the finding that culturally diverse students in the U.S. perform at lower levels than students from the dominant culture, Pang, Stein, Gomez, Matas, and Shimogori (2011, p. 560) outline a care-centered framework aimed at bridging the achievement gaps between the dominant culture and culturally diverse students. Supported by cultural education practices and teaching strategies and aimed at reducing biases, this approach is based on understanding the sociocultural

context of learning; multicultural education is also situated within this approach in a human-centered and culture-centered framework (Pang, 2001, p. 53).

In general, multicultural education supports the development of intercultural empathy and tolerance while respecting cultural diversity, and facilitates the establishment of shared social identities across cultures (Levinson, 2010). Linked to equal learning opportunities, multicultural education envisions equal access to learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their social class, culture, or race (Banks, 2014a, p. 1). As a transformative reform movement in formal education, multicultural education does not stop at curriculum changes; it aims to transform schools and educational institutions in a way that includes structural reforms (Banks, 2009a, p. 1; 2016, p. 3). From the perspective of textbooks and curriculum, programs designed to address the needs and demands of diverse groups can be considered part of multicultural education practices. Educators use the term *multicultural education* to encompass instructional programs and practices that benefit not only ethnic groups but also marginalized groups such as women, low-income groups, people with disabilities, and LGBT individuals. Designing the curriculum with this understanding of diversity indicates that multicultural education is, by definition, inclusive (Nieto & Bode, 2018, pp. 37-38).

Goodin (2006) outlines two liberal interpretations of multiculturalism. In the first of these, the multilingual multiculturalism model, the dominant culture of the majority broadens its range of options as it borrows from minority cultures (Goodin, 2006, p. 289). The multilingual perspective both recognizes and affirms cultures; Swiss society, where minority cultures and various languages coexist, can be cited as an example. Goodin draws on Waldron's description of cosmopolitanism to explain multilingual multiculturalism. According to Waldron (1995, p. 94), a cosmopolitan rejects the idea of distinguishing oneself by one's geography, ancestry, citizenship, or language. The definition that a person living in San Francisco who is of Irish descent, learns Spanish, eats Chinese food, listens to Verdi arias sung by a Maori princess, and practices Buddhist meditation techniques is not considered to have compromised their identity (Waldron, 1995, p. 94). This person is "a creator of modernity, conscious, even proud, of living in a mixed-up world and having a mixed-up self" (Waldron, 2000, p. 228). For this reason, multilingual multiculturalism can be associated with cosmopolitanism as much as with liberalism, which values cultural pluralism. This is because one lives in an inclusive culture that values diversity by borrowing from cultures without actually living within them (Crowder & Levey, 2019, p. 239): Eating Chinese food does not make one Chinese, and practicing Buddhist meditation techniques does not make anyone a Buddhist (Goodin, 2006, p. 293).

In the literature on liberal multiculturalism, alongside the understanding that minority cultures contribute to the majority culture—as in the case of multilingual multiculturalism—*protective multiculturalism*, in which minorities assert their rights against the majority, is also advocated. The aim of this approach is not to broaden the range of options available to the majority culture, but to protect minority cultures from the majority's assimilationist interventions. Accordingly, the majority is obligated to accept demands that will enhance the well-being of minority members (Jones, 2016, p. 232).

In his groundbreaking work on cultural minorities and minority rights, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (1995), Kymlicka examines the concept of *protective multiculturalism*¹⁰ alongside its historical development. Many education and

¹⁰ It cannot be said that Kymlicka used this term directly. Goodin (2006) introduced the concept of *protective multiculturalism* into the academic literature. Goodin (2006, p. 289) traces the origins of this approach to Macpherson's (1977, p. 22) model of *protective democracy*, which is based on the idea that liberal democracy is necessary to protect the governed from government oppression.

political theorists have drawn on Kymlicka's arguments to advocate for multicultural education that will lay the groundwork for democratic citizenship in liberal societies. Kymlicka considers belonging to a cultural group necessary for citizens to learn and adopt a specific value system. Therefore, a multicultural education designed based on his theory can ensure the continuity and protection of various cultural groups (Culp, 2025, pp. 1, 6).

Believing that minority issues cannot be resolved through traditional human rights doctrines, Kymlicka develops a theory of minority rights. According to him, solutions regarding minority rights must be provided to all people without reference to ethnic group membership. In a multicultural state, minority rights cannot be protected by human rights principles alone. An inclusive theory of justice must encompass both universal rights granted to all individuals without regard to ethnic group distinctions and special statuses for minority cultures (Kymlicka, 1995, pp. 28, 32). In recent years, nation-states have tended to create an exclusionary national identity based on a 'we' concept rooted in the cultural majority. According to minority rights theory, the solution to this trend is to provide minorities with a protective shield consisting of compensatory rights (Modood, 2025, p. 4).

Members of communities of culture sharing common institutions and practices communicate through a shared language of customs and traditions (Dworkin, 1985, p. 231). According to Kymlicka, minority groups and immigrants have the right, from a liberal perspective, to acquire such a culture of sociality. However, many minority groups have been deprived of this right. Throughout history, immigrants and national minorities have faced discrimination in the form of racism, ethnic centralism, cultural imperialism, and ghettoization. Kymlicka (1995, pp. 164-165) justifies *protective multiculturalism* precisely within this framework.

According to Kymlicka, a system that operates solely for the benefit of the majority should not be established. If appropriate conditions are provided for marginalized and discriminated against cultures, the opportunity to benefit from their richness arises. Indigenous cultures can, when the necessary preconditions are met, adopt the positive aspects of the modern world and, drawing on their cultural traditions, evolve into vibrant and distinctive cultures (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 163). Whether the definition and interpretation of rights in decision-making processes based on group differences are fair depends on whether the interests and perspectives of minorities are heard and considered (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 207). In summary, the aim of the liberal theory of minority rights is to establish fair conditions for the integration of immigrants and to ensure that national minorities can preserve themselves as distinct communities (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 305).

There is a polarization between those who support the diversity of minorities and immigrants and those who believe that this support has gone too far and that national identities have been pushed into the background in the name of diversity. Current public and academic debates reveal a fundamental incompatibility and tension between multiculturalism and nationalism (Chin, 2021, p. 113). In the West—for example, in the Netherlands—populist nationalism opposes diversity, multiculturalism, and the existence of ethnic, religious, and racial minorities (de Waal, 2025). In contrast, most cosmopolitans and human rights advocates view sentiments such as patriotism, national identity, national interest, or national pride as a threat to ethnic minorities when it comes to the state's treatment of non-citizens.

It is argued that multiculturalism contributes to this polarization. Modood (2025) focuses on how this polarization can be addressed and mitigated, proposing multicultural nationalism as a solution. Modood considered a leading authority on multiculturalism debates in the UK, derives multiculturalism in his work *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* from an ethic of political citizenship that includes elements such as rights, representation, and the rule of law. Accordingly, in liberal democracies, no state is culturally neutral; every state supports a specific

language, a religious calendar related to national holidays, and religious instruction in schools. The language or religion taught in schools is generally that of the majority population. From a multicultural perspective, however, it is possible to expand a value belonging to the majority—such as the national language, for example, the historical and current value of English for the UK—to include minorities as well. In this way, the cultural majority's dominance in shaping the national culture, symbols, and institutions is not used in a way that excludes minorities. Modood (2025) identifies the distinctive goal of multicultural nationalism as enabling members of sociocultural, ethnic-racial, and ethnic-religious groups to preserve and embrace the identities that are important to them as citizens. According to a report by the Commission on Multi-Ethnic Britain (CMEB), no one can be denied Britishness on the grounds of their ethnic group or religion; for example, Islam should be viewed as part of the UK (CMEB, 2000). One of the contributions of multiculturalism to reducing polarization is the inclusive national identity advocated by Modood. Multiculturalism should correspond to an inclusive national identity that recognizes minority identities, accommodates the ethnic-racial and ethnic-religious needs of minorities, and shapes the public sphere and the symbols of national identity so that everyone can feel a sense of belonging (CMEB, 2000). Multicultural democratic nation-states must find ways to help students develop a balanced and thoughtful attachment to their own cultural communities (Banks, 2014a, p. 30).

Multicultural education is also of critical importance in ensuring cultural democracy, which includes students' right to express their cultural identities and use their native languages. Cultural democracy refers to students' right to express their own cultural identities and use their native languages in schools (Banks, 2014a, p. 30). This form of education aims to reverse the negative consequences of assimilationist education—namely, students losing their own cultures and becoming alienated from society. These negative consequences include many students losing their first cultures, languages, and ethnic identities (Wong Fillmore, 2005).

Communication established when people with different cultural backgrounds come together is based on the acceptance of differences, mutual understanding, tolerance, and the ability to embrace one another. The implementation of multicultural education is linked in the literature to the acquisition of certain competencies for intercultural education (Kesidou, 2019, pp. 148–149). Intercultural education emerged—particularly in Europe with the rise of migration and cultural pluralism—from the need to ensure both children's and young people's access to formal education and their integration into society, as well as to shape policies regarding their future lives within a democratic and pluralistic society. It is an educational approach with a clearly defined theoretical framework that can be applied to curricula in light of its principles.

Banks (2014b, p. 384) points out that traditional curricula implemented in countries such as Canada, the Netherlands, and France focus on fostering a sense of nationalism in students and assimilating them into the dominant mainstream culture. Multicultural education practices, on the other hand, are curricula designed to help students strike a delicate balance among their cultural, national, and global identities. Banks defines five dimensions of multicultural education that can serve as a foundation for these practices.

The first of these dimensions is content integration. In this dimension, teachers use examples and information from different cultures and groups to explain the fundamental concepts, principles, generalizations, and theories within their subject areas (Banks, 2014b, p. 385). The second dimension is the construction of knowledge. The construction of knowledge explains how social and cultural assumptions, frames of reference, and biases shape knowledge. Knowledge is not objective or neutral; it reflects ideologies and human interests. This is the central thesis of multicultural and critical theorists; an example of this is how slavery has been studied in academic research in the United States. Multicultural scholars argue that knowledge reflects the social and cultural positions of people in society; the knowledge holder is

recognized only when their position—defined by variables such as gender, class, and the like—is embraced (Tetreault, 2016). The third dimension focuses on reducing prejudice by identifying children's attitudes stemming from their ethnic characteristics and proposing strategies to help them develop democratic attitudes and values (Banks, 2014b, p. 386). The fourth dimension is the pedagogy of equity. This pedagogy emerges when teachers use techniques and methods that facilitate the academic success of students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The cultural difference paradigm, which dominates equity pedagogy, rejects the idea that marginalized students have a cultural deficiency—unlike the cultural deprivation paradigm, which attributes the failure of minority students to cultural deficiencies (Banks, 2014b, p. 387). The fifth dimension is an empowering school culture and social structure. This concept refers to the restructuring of school organization to provide equity and cultural empowerment to students from diverse ethnic, racial, linguistic, and socioeconomic groups. This restructuring requires reforming institutionalized factors such as grouping practices, labeling, and staff expectations (Banks, 2014b, p. 388). All five of these dimensions must be implemented so that schools can support students in developing their cultural, national, regional, and global identities and becoming active citizens (Banks, 2014b, p. 388).

The theoretical principles of intercultural education—another model linked to multicultural education—include social competencies such as empathy, tolerance, and solidarity. The model's four fundamental practical principles can be listed as follows: (a) The inclusion of students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds in mainstream schools largely prevents the exclusion of minority groups. (b) The school curriculum must be revised to include minority cultures (Marburger, 1991; cited in Kesidou, 2019, p. 151); otherwise, mixed-class settings may promote cultural homogenization. (c) Teaching materials should not contain bias, stereotypes, or hostile perceptions; they should highlight commonalities among people rather than cultural differences (Xochellis & Toloudi, 2001; cited in Kesidou, 2019, p. 151). (d) Having students from diverse cultural backgrounds work on collaborative projects in subjects such as history, art, and literature enhances intercultural interaction and contributes to emotional development. Intercultural education also equips individuals with intercultural dialogue skills. Peaceful cooperation, multidimensional understanding, and a spirit of interaction can only emerge under these conditions (Nieke, 2008, pp. 73-87). There is also an example of this in practice in the literature: Learning outcomes in schools should refer not only to the world of Greeks but also to the world of immigrant children in Greece (Hodolidou, 2018, pp. 161-164). In this form of anti-racist education, discussions regarding xenophobia can be held in the classroom (Nieke, 2008, p. 82).

Looking at the positive aspects of multicultural education, it can support students in developing cosmopolitan attitudes and becoming global citizens, with the aim of fostering democratic citizenship and promoting social justice (Banks, 2009b, p. 13). Its contribution to equality in education is another advantage. Multicultural education aims to ensure that students have equal opportunities focused on academic achievement, regardless of their ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, or linguistic backgrounds. To achieve this goal, variables such as the school curriculum, staff, and culture are continuously updated (Banks, 2009b, pp. 13-14). For example, in Australia, policies have been adopted to ensure equal participation for immigrant students (Inglis, 2009, p. 118).

Multicultural education also plays a role in fostering a sense of global citizenship. Through multicultural education, students both maintain their commitment to their own community cultures and acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to function effectively within other ethnic cultures (Banks, 2009b, p. 28). Multicultural education enables citizens to become sensitive to the value of different groups in democratic decision-making processes. Thus, multicultural education and citizenship support the formation of a liberal social image

of a democratic politics composed of unique individuals who view one another as equals. According to Culp's (2025) conception of transnational democratic citizenship, democratic decision-making processes beyond the nation-state include both individuals and communities; thus, different social groups are valued (Culp, 2025, p. 13). At the institutional level, the European Union (EU) serves as an example: within the EU, there are both citizens of member states and citizens of the Union; the European Parliament, which represents the individual interests of EU citizens, coexists with the Council of the European Union, which represents the collective interests of member states (Seubert, 2021, p. 80).

However, multicultural education is also noted in the literature for some of its negative aspects. One of these is the risk of devolving into cultural essentialism. This occurs when culture is presented as an immutable phenomenon defined by ethnic group. Such an approach homogenizes groups and, by glorifying cultural differences, may reinforce racist discourse (May, 2009, p. 37).

Another negative aspect is that multicultural education policies in some countries conflict with the nation-state's dominant ideology, leading to limited progress. For example, Japanese schools adhere to a traditional educational philosophy designed to raise Japanese citizens; this has led schools to pursue assimilationist policies under the guise of multicultural education. Progress in reforms addressing language needs has remained limited for immigrant students; many foreign students have struggled to adapt to the school system (Hirasawa, 2009, p. 164).

Anderson (2010) addresses the main criticisms of multicultural citizenship education. He argues that multicultural education weakens equality and solidarity among citizens by emphasizing differences. According to him, this form of education will increase social division and lead to biases specific to cultural groups and the unequal distribution of sociocultural capital (Anderson, 2010, pp. 1-4). For this reason, Anderson proposes an integrationist approach to citizenship education that emphasizes intergroup cooperation and communication. The integrationist approach emphasizes the equal interaction of different groups in educational and public contexts; it highlights the importance of integration, intergroup cooperation, and communication for democracy; and it underscores the shared norms and goals of democratic politics for a common civic identity. Culp (2025), however, counters Anderson's critique by arguing that this approach harbors an implicit nationalist perspective. According to Culp, Anderson overlooks the potential of multicultural education in the formation of transnational democratic citizenship and the construction of transnational democracy. From this perspective, citizenship education should not be limited to raising individuals who live autonomously and in solidarity within the borders of the nation-state; it should aim to create citizens capable of engaging in transnational dialogue and establishing global solidarity with citizens of other states.

Consistent with this, citizenship education should aim not only to foster a political consciousness appropriate for national democracy but also to awaken a transnational democratic consciousness that enables citizens of different states to collaborate both within and beyond borders (Curren & Metzger, 2017). For example, in citizenship classes in schools, it should be conveyed in various ways that citizens' political identities are not defined solely by the internal affairs of the state; rather, states and citizens "not only has expansive economic interconnections, which date back to various periods of colonial expansion, but is also in need of democratic transformation" (Culp, 2025, p. 11).

Another criticism directed at multicultural education is that it is a program aimed at marginalized groups such as African Americans, Latinos, the poor, and women (Glazer, 1997, pp. 22-33, p. 77). This criticism can be countered by arguing that multicultural education is a reform movement aimed at imparting the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to find

one's place in a culturally and ethnically diverse world. Improving the educational outcomes of students who are marginalized due to social, cultural, and racial differences is a founding principle of multicultural education (Nieto, 2012, pp. 3453-3455).

Another criticism of multicultural education comes from Chavez (2010). Chavez argues that multiethnic programs in public schools constitute a form of brainwashing that leads to racial discrimination; he maintains that schools should focus on reinforcing national identity. He argues that teachers should teach only American history rather than ethnic studies, and that students should first and foremost be supported in developing their American identities. The central concern in this critique is the view that multicultural education content fragments the American national narrative. Banks (2008, pp. 129-132), however, counters this criticism by presenting the concepts of cultural identity, national identity, and global identity as interconnected. The work of theorists such as Ladson-Billings (2004, cited in Banks, 2014a, p. 18) demonstrates that it is difficult for students from diverse cultural backgrounds to develop a strong sense of belonging to their country unless that country acknowledges and reflects their ethnic cultures, past experiences, and values. This counterargument highlights that national identity can only be established through the recognition and inclusion of cultural diversity.

Among the criticisms directed at multiculturalism in recent years is the notion that it fails to preserve the dynamic interaction between different identities by confining people to ethnic silos. The source of these reactions lies in concerns regarding terrorist attacks, the rise of militant Islamism, and the integration of new waves of immigrants into Europe. Multiculturalism has been accused of contributing to these problems (Crowder & Levey, 2019, p. 244). For this reason, interculturalism has been proposed as a more dynamic model capable of addressing patterns of diversity and hybrid identities (Cantle, 2012, p. 32). Meer, Modood, and Zappata-Barrero (2016, pp. 7, 18), however, note that multiculturalism views culture not as a static legacy but as a dynamic entity shaped within modern political discourse; this serves as a rebuttal to the aforementioned criticism. They also emphasize that liberal multiculturalism approaches aim to promote interaction, dialogue, and negotiation in the public sphere (Meer et al., 2016, pp. 19-20).

Finally, distinctions can be drawn between multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. Multiculturalism focuses on the rights of cultural minorities and examines them in terms of fair treatment; cosmopolitans, on the other hand, focus on fundamental human rights and embrace them as part of global justice and global citizenship (Jones, 2016, p. 231). Murray (2025) examines the points where the two concepts diverge, particularly in terms of moral relativism. According to him, multiculturalism may fail to account for conflicts within cultures because it treats cultures as homogeneous and static. Even if discrimination or even violence occurs within a particular society or culture, multiculturalism may accept the moral relativity of cultural practices. Such moral relativity, however, has no place in cosmopolitanism. One reason for this is that, unlike multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism takes the individual as its starting point rather than an ethnic group or citizen. Among the educational outcomes sought in multiculturalism are tolerance toward other cultures and minorities, and the creation of compliant and standardized cultural minorities within a large nation-state. In cosmopolitanism, however, the goal is openness to being shaped through interactions with others and active, participatory local and global citizenship (Murray, 2025, pp. 6-8).

5 A Reinterpretation of Democratic Citizenship Education

This chapter explains how Humboldt's theory of *Bildung* can be used to educate democratic citizens. It also talks about how to combine this approach with the current challenges of democratic citizenship education. Next, the conclusions reached within the framework of the book's central questions are listed, along with general assessments of their contribution to the discourse. Discussions demonstrate that Humboldt's theory provides different views on democratic citizenship education, both theoretically and practically.

The first question is about the nature of Humboldt's theory of *Bildung* and how the universal human is formed within this theory. To answer this question, I looked at the history and meaning of the word *Bildung* and compared it to other classical theories of *Bildung*. The neo-humanist interpretation of *Bildung* was examined, and the steps in the formation of the ideal of humanity were explained by looking at the relationship between Humboldt's theory and the Enlightenment.

Etymologically, *Bildung* broke away from its mystical connotations beginning in the eighteenth century; as it became secularized, it evolved into a pedagogical term describing the holistic development of a person's emotional, spiritual, and moral dimensions. The concept began to be associated not only with formal education but also with adult education, public education, public enlightenment, cultural enrichment, and the formation of the universal human being. The fact that the use of *Bildung* as a pedagogical term coincided with secularization demonstrates that it is a key concept in the relationship between education and the Enlightenment.

Humboldt is a representative of the neo-humanist approach to *Bildung* that emerged during the Enlightenment, a period in which individuals became independent of absolute state authority and religious interference. He viewed the state as an institution of *Bildung* that provides the conditions enabling popular *Bildung*; in this way, he placed *Bildung* at the center of his political theory. He also applied this theoretical foundation to the Prussian educational reforms. Unlike other thinkers, Humboldt placed the dynamic process of *Bildung*—the lifelong task of self-understanding inherent in human existence—at the center of all his work. Thanks to the dialectical relationship between *Bildung* and the Enlightenment, individuals from diverse backgrounds form enlightened societies while preserving their uniqueness; these societies, in turn, evolve toward the ideal of humanity. This demonstrates that Humboldt examined not only the philosophical background of *Bildung* but also its social and universal dimensions. Since *Bildung* points to the process and outcome of the individual's universalization, it can be concluded that, in Humboldt's view, it can be seen as a cosmopolitan ideal.

In opposition to the Enlightenment pedagogy—which represented a property-based class society—Humboldt advocates for a humanistic education to be provided to all segments of the population before vocational training. While Enlightenment pedagogy reduces people to citizens and aims to educate them directly for the benefit of the state, the motto of humanistic education is a single, fundamental curriculum accessible to everyone, regardless of social class. Humboldt's demand that everyone—regardless of whether they were noble or commoner—begin their education at the same school reflects his socially egalitarian perspective, which transcended class divisions in his time. He reinforced this perspective in his 1802 travel notes on the Basque Country, *Die Vasken*, by speaking highly of the Basques' socially egalitarian characteristics.

Humboldt's defense of humanistic education in the face of Enlightenment pedagogy also corresponds to a historical distinction. Dewey draws a distinction between individual-

cosmopolitanism—which views the individual as a member of a universal society—and a state-centric, nationalist conception of education. Within this distinction, Humboldt can be placed on the individual-cosmopolitan side, which views education as the unlimited development of the individual’s abilities rather than establishing the nation-state.

The foundations of Humboldt’s theory of *Bildung* are essential for interpreting democratic citizenship education. His definition of *Bildung*—as the balanced development of all an individual’s faculties to their highest potential—starts from individuality. However, the formation of the concept of humanity within the individual and the unfolding and development of the potential richness of the universal also refer to the individual’s universal and social roles. For Humboldt, *Bildung* is about the progress of the whole human species, not just one person. *Bildung* has two inseparable conditions: *freedom* and *a variety of situations*. Furthermore, the individual must experience a world of interaction composed of the external world—such as different societies, cultures, and languages. According to Humboldt, mutual interaction takes place through a vibrant and free exchange between the self and the world. The connection established between the individual’s inner and outer worlds through this interaction enables *Bildung* to spread on a universal plane. Through this mutual interaction, the individual embraces the richness gained from other individuals and the external world without losing their uniqueness. When this assimilation is accompanied by the conditions of *freedom* and *a variety of situations*, it enables the individual to participate in social processes and gain new perspectives. In this way, their inner world is illuminated, and they progress educationally. When viewed as *Bildung*, education is the balanced development of human capabilities and skills, leading to a humanism that attains perfection and achieves a universal and holistic unity. To achieve this universality through education, rather than aiming for a teleological education confined to narrow national boundaries, the state’s power must be kept to a minimum; this opens the door to both the inner and social development of individuals by fostering their equality and freedom. Limiting the state’s authority so that education becomes a national endeavor is also the dynamic force behind the spread of the Enlightenment among the people. Education imposed from the outside does not provide citizens with an environment where they can use their creativity to find solutions to social problems. When these assessments are considered together, one arrives at the conclusion that Humboldt argued *Bildung* could be realized through civil societal formations. This civil society consists of enlightened masses who have transcended class divisions.

For Humboldt, the dialectical relationship between *Bildung* and the Enlightenment lies in the preservation of national identities through *Bildung*—in other words, the convergence of the emotional forces of popular identity with the intellectual forces of the Enlightenment. The parallels he drew in his *Die Vasken* notes between the Basques and their social character led him to view the Enlightenment as possessing a potential that transcends social class divisions. For Humboldt, the Enlightenment can only be realized through the integration of the intellectual class with the people. From his perspective, *Bildung* also plays a critical role in social equality. Although class differences are pronounced in Europe, the Basques—whom he viewed as the closest example to the *Bildung* model he envisioned—exhibit the inclusive social structure envisaged by the Enlightenment.

Other interconnected questions address the challenges of contemporary democratic citizenship education and explore how an understanding of this education can be derived from Humboldt’s theory of *Bildung*. Additionally, these questions examine how a perspective on these challenges can be developed considering Humboldt’s views. To answer these questions, I have examined the concepts of equality of opportunity, cosmopolitanism, and multiculturalism within the context of democratic citizenship education.

Among the approaches to equality of opportunity examined, strict equality envisions the equal distribution of all positions and offices regardless of students' social backgrounds, innate potential, and sociocultural circumstances. Strict equality can be considered within the framework of Humboldt's theory of *Bildung* only in terms of basic educational achievements. In the *Schulplan*, the equal provision to every student at school subjects prescribed for humanistic education—such as reading, writing, arithmetic, ancient languages, history, and philosophy—as well as fields of study in universities and specialized schools, including medicine, technology, art, agriculture, crafts, and commerce, corresponds to strict equality. However, since Humboldt did not advocate for lifelong vocational education following basic education for all, strict equality cannot be fully realized through humanistic education.

Fair equality of opportunity in education means that people with similar abilities and motivation have an equal chance of achieving advantageous social positions, regardless of their background. In the context of democratic citizenship education, this approach creates an environment in which all individuals can participate in a democratic society. Since Humboldt's theory does not categorize people by ethnicity or other characteristics, one could argue that he advocated for equal treatment regardless of social disadvantages. However, due to Humboldt's failure to take a clear stance on gender discrimination and his focus on educating boys in the *Schulplan*, it is debatable whether equal opportunities can be granted to everyone in attaining social positions. This undermines the principle that social positions and offices should be open to everyone. Furthermore, although Humboldt advocates for an approach to basic education that minimizes economic and social class differences, he does not propose any concrete measures to reduce social disparities.

Luck-egalitarian equality of opportunity in education, which neutralizes the effects of chance on the distribution of educational opportunities, emphasizes that every individual can be held accountable for the consequences of their own choices. A connection can be drawn between this approach and Humboldt's view that individuals must have the freedom to make their own life choices. However, Humboldt does not take a clear stance on neutralizing the influence of chance. He did not advocate for individuals' voluntary choices in the context of educational preferences; on the contrary, he proposed a standardized educational model. In the context of democratic citizenship, he examined values such as political rights, the right to representation, and the right to vote at the societal level, devoting very little attention to individual gains. Therefore, Humboldt did not consider luck-egalitarian equality of opportunity in education, in which citizens are held accountable for their individual choices, applicable.

Prioritarian conception of educational justice, on the other hand, seeks to transcend the limitations of formal education by prioritizing the well-being of disadvantaged individuals and the improvement of their social life expectations. If one of the goals of formal education is seen as providing the foundation for students to lead a good life—beyond the acquisition of knowledge and skills—Humboldt's theory can play a pioneering role in an educational justice that aims to achieve a good life throughout one's lifetime, from a neo-humanist perspective. In other words, by setting out with the motto that *Bildung* is the supreme good and the source of all that is beneficial, and as beneficial in and of itself, a new perspective on prioritarian conception of educational justice can be introduced. Through this approach—which focuses on low academic achievement stemming from natural causes, and on improving the life prospects of the most disadvantaged students—the following connections can be drawn between Humboldt's theory of *Bildung* and the ideal of a good life: Prioritarian conception of educational justice is based on the premise that the ultimate goal of education is not so much the acquisition of knowledge as it is ensuring that students lead good lives. Through Humboldt's theory, citizens who develop a critical consciousness regarding democratic rights may see their life prospects improve. Humboldt argues that individuals with intellectual disabilities and those who have not yet reached physical maturity may one day acquire

intellectual capacities through treatment; he maintains that these individuals retain the right to regain their personal freedoms or property; and he opposes their being legally incapacitated. Thus, he subjects these individuals to the same legal treatment as adults and emphasizes that they require care and supervision. This idea can be interpreted as the need for educational initiatives that enable these individuals to regain their freedom and reclaim their personal rights—and thereby find their place in society—before aiming for academic achievement. In this sense, it can add a new dimension to the view, emphasized in prioritarian conception of educational justice, that those who are naturally disadvantaged will benefit more from acquiring life skills than from academic development. According to Humboldt, these individuals can achieve a good life through the protection of their legal and individual rights via education; in this way, the naturally disadvantaged are also integrated into society. However, his defense of humanistic education shows that Humboldt is closer to democratic adequacy as a conception of educational justice than to being an advocate for equality of opportunity in the sense of equalizing educational inputs.

Democratic adequacy as a conception of educational justice concerns the acquisition of democratic values by citizens in a democratic society to a certain level of proficiency. Thanks to this approach, citizens can possess a minimum level of competence when it comes to voting, participating in politics, or exercising their rights and freedoms. Education should be designed to provide all children with the skills necessary to participate in democratic processes. A connection can be drawn between this approach and Humboldt's views. Humboldt described the province of Álava in the Basque Country as a pure and perfect democracy; he noted that in the province of Guipúzcoa, the nobility and the common people enjoyed the same political rights. His emphasis on the joint participation of the common people and the nobility in the general assembly demonstrates his positive view of representative democracy. In the Basque Country, which he praised for its active citizenship, free constitution, and public sphere open to everyone's participation—he saw the potential for the realization of his theory of *Bildung*. Based on this, Humboldt's theory offers a perspective on the acquisition of the skills necessary for every individual to actively participate in democratic processes. Looking at his thoughts on civil society, the greatest possible overlap between the roles of *human being* and *citizen* can be achieved through education organized by civil society rather than by the state. From this, I conclude that Humboldt does not ascribe a dominant identity to the citizen. This type of education stands in contrast to state-organized education, which molds citizens into a single, uniform mold. According to Humboldt, individuals who have been freely educated in institutions organized by civil society join the state and work to improve the constitution. Thus, education organized by a democratic civil society can ensure that individuals possess the ability to actively participate in democratic processes at a certain threshold level—as envisioned by democratic sufficiency—which constitutes educational justice. From this, a model of educational justice that meets the requirements of democratic adequacy can be developed within the framework of Humboldt's views on civil society. However, a shortcoming of Humboldt's model is that it does not address the development of democratic attitudes such as empathy and tolerance.

Humboldt's theory is also related to a cosmopolitan perspective. The rationale for this lies in his vision that every individual should receive a humanistic education, regardless of ethnic group, nationality, or social status. The universal human formed through Humboldt's theory of *Bildung* corresponds to the *world citizen* at the intellectual foundations of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism's vision of inclusive universal brotherhood is manifested in the universal human being formed through *Bildung* in Humboldt's theory. Moral unity—one of the elements of this universal brotherhood, meaning that everyone is a member of a single moral community—refers to Humboldt's idea that people, as equal moral agents, should achieve a universal unity.

Humboldt's opposition to the restriction of state activity to education and to the upbringing of social groups within narrow national boundaries demonstrates that he held a cosmopolitan perspective rather than a statist-nationalist one. From this perspective, the conditions for the development of the universal human being—who is constantly enlightened through *Bildung*—are established. While the individual is raised along cosmopolitan and Enlightenment-oriented lines through the balanced development of their abilities, societies come together while preserving their unique characters and rise to a humanism that attains perfection. This process is dynamic and never-ending. The described process of *Bildung* draws its dynamic power from the nation—which Humboldt equated with civil society during his time. Thus, educational institutions can become platforms where citizens not only acquire academic knowledge but also propose solutions to social problems.

Within the framework of democratic citizenship education, Humboldt's theory is also related to *global citizenship education*. The fact that this education encompasses the local community to which one belongs and is a vision rooted in the principles of the universal state of humanity—which defines the processes of progress in relationships with the multifaceted world—aligns with the diversity of conditions and the self-world interaction that constitute the prerequisites for *Bildung*'s attainment of universal unity.

Humboldt's ideal of humanity—formed by the coming together of diverse cultures while preserving the uniqueness of national identity—may correspond to Kant's universal state of humanity. This is because, in his observations of the Basques, Humboldt envisioned the possession of political rights on both the individual and social levels through an egalitarian perspective. His view of the state as an institution of *Bildung* leads him to assess the feasibility of *Bildung* within the structure of the state. Furthermore, his status as the historical representative of the individual-cosmopolitan perspective in contrast to the statist-nationalist view demonstrates that a universal state of humanity can be derived from his ideas. One reason for this is that, similar to Humboldt, Kant's conception of a state of humanity involves citizens viewing one another as ends in themselves and not exploiting one another for their own gain. Since neo-humanist *Bildung* opposes utility-oriented knowledge with knowledge that is valuable in and of itself, Kant's view aligns with neo-humanist *Bildung*.

In Humboldt's theory, the idea that individuals and society can rise to a universal humanism while preserving their unique characters along Enlightenment lines represents an idealistic perspective. This idealistic perspective recalls the emergence of cosmopolitanism in education during the modern era. The incorporation of cosmopolitan elements into citizenship education curricula and initiatives to cultivate universal world citizens following the world wars can be interpreted within this framework. Humboldt's humanism can propel these initiatives forward; individuals and societies that develop through *Bildung* can lead the way toward universal formations grounded in equality, respect, and peace.

The cosmopolitan dimension of Humboldt's theory lies in his view that one of the conditions of *Bildung* is the mutual interaction between the self and the world. Cosmopolitanism is seen as a relational ideal that addresses questions about how to cope with the new realities of life and how humans can become intertwined with the world. In this regard, the mutual interaction within *Bildung* corresponds to individuals' attainment of cosmopolitan gains. Furthermore, from Humboldt's perspective, one can examine the ethical-political dimension of cosmopolitanism—which involves individuals gaining the ability to critically examine their own values, beliefs, and worldviews, thereby moving beyond their personal perspective to embrace a social and collective one. This dimension can be expanded to include individuals' ability to critically examine their own worldviews through the interaction between the self and the world, and to achieve cosmopolitan gains by combining this with a critical approach to life's problems. This is because, through the free interaction between the self and the world, the

individual develops by reflecting and assimilating the surrounding world into themselves through their own active engagement. Consequently, Humboldt's theory can ensure that all citizens of a country bear responsibility toward humanity. The broadened perspective gained through *Bildung* can contribute to fostering a sense of moral responsibility toward regions devastated by war or where human rights violations occur. A democratic education system based on Humboldt's theory can help cultivate citizens who are environmentally conscious and capable of generating solutions to the planet's problems.

However, the idea that the beliefs, worldviews, and experiences of immigrant children—one of the elements of cosmopolitan education—should be regarded as equal to those of the established culture, and that they should be prepared for active citizenship through an equal democratic education, is not a view that finds support from Humboldt's perspective. Although Humboldt embraced the equality of languages and cultures and made no distinction among national identities, he did not offer a clear stance on the status of foreigners and immigrants within a country. Therefore, his perspective cannot contribute to an inclusive cosmopolitan education that envisions the upbringing of immigrants within the context of democratic citizenship education.

The conclusion to be drawn from Humboldt's theory regarding multicultural education can be derived from his idea that universality can be achieved while preserving the distinctiveness of various societies. In this respect, it aligns closely with *protective multiculturalism* in the literature on liberal multiculturalism. Since, in Humboldt's theory, the formation of a universal humanity is achieved by preserving the distinctiveness of all cultures, attempts by the majority culture to homogenize others are not possible. In *protective multiculturalism*, the principle that citizens can form a societal model by coming together with various cultures without severing ties to their own culture is a feasible principle from Humboldt's perspective. This is because, in Humboldt's theory, individuals' cultural actions must acquire an objective content, and these actions encompass both the achievements of humanity and the creations of human nature. If culture is defined to include elements such as art, music, and literature, the creations of human nature can find a place within cultural identities. The fact that individuals possess worldviews regarding their own cultures and, while preserving them, form a societal model alongside other cultures are consistent with a political model in which different ethnic groups are integrated into an inclusive democracy. In this model, cultural pluralism is preserved; value is placed on the fair integration of ethnic minorities and immigrants into society. In this regard, Humboldt's theory can be invoked to establish a balance between those who advocate for the diversity of minorities and immigrants and those who emphasize national identity. This theory envisions individuals receiving a humanistic education within the framework of the principle of moral equality; this is also an element of social justice. Humboldt advocated for the preservation of the unique aspects of national identities by highlighting how distinct cultural characteristics serve to unify society. He praised the coming together of people from all segments of society in traditional ceremonies in the Basque Country and valued the unity between educated intellectuals and the public. An educational model developed from Humboldt's theory could provide a solution for the formation of an inclusive national identity that embraces diversity, one in which citizens from different cultural groups can feel a sense of belonging.

When interpreted from Humboldt's perspective, critical thinking first allows for inferences within the context of critical *global citizenship education*. Students' critical engagement with their personal attitudes toward their own culture and their stance against oppressive global structures can be evaluated in conjunction with the inquisitive outlook they gain through the theory of *Bildung*. Neo-humanist *Bildung* supports students in gaining a critical perspective through the Enlightenment and developing a critical stance against oppressive global

structures, as it contributes to the enlightenment of both the individual and society through *humanistic education*, independent of labels such as race, national identity, and gender.

Given that the principles of separation of powers or the rule of law had not yet fully taken root during Humboldt's time, the theoretical and reformist dimensions of his theory remain limited in interpreting certain issues not addressed under the contemporary problems. The conditions of that era bear little resemblance to a problem that has emerged in our time, such as neoliberalism. Therefore, while some interpretations can be made based on Humboldt's work, a comprehensive discussion on this topic cannot be conducted. The following limited conclusions can be drawn:

To draw conclusions regarding democratic citizenship education in an era dominated by neoliberalism, it is necessary to address Humboldt's intellectual life and influence. While there are many turning points in Humboldt's intellectual life, the most widely discussed in the literature are his role in Prussian educational reforms and his advocacy for university reform. The University of Berlin model, which forms the basis of academic institutions in Europe and the United States, has been characterized as the German *Bildung University* and has served as the standard for institutions of higher education. However, partly due to the idealized portrayal of Humboldt, his actual influence on educational practices has remained limited. The fact that formal education systems and universities today are structured according to profit-and-loss-oriented, competitive market conditions under neoliberal policies has limited the long-term impact of Humboldt's university model. This limitation also narrows the interpretive scope of Humboldt's model within a democratic citizenship education dominated by neoliberal policies.

From Humboldt's perspective, the formation of the universal human being progresses not so much as a product of individual effort but through sociocultural development and the collective effort of humanity. Within this development, individuals must enrich one another with what they have created; in this way, humanity can attain a rich and valuable essence. Humboldt's idea that all national characters evolve toward a human ideal while preserving their unique identities could lay the foundations for the principle of world citizenship, much like Kant's cosmopolitan world federation. Humboldt's human ideal points to a cultural diversity in which cultures, preserved in their unique forms, find their place. This cultural diversity corresponds to a *variety of situations* that are among the conditions for the realization of *Bildung*. From the perspective of a multicultural state structure, Humboldt's ideal of humanity corresponds to the coexistence of different minority or ethnic groups without their assimilation into a homogeneous dominant culture. This perspective aligns with the fundamental arguments of both cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism.

The growth of educational research demonstrates that education requires not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the application of new knowledge as a method and its critical evaluation. Education can no longer be achieved through the conditioning of behavioral patterns or guidance toward specific actions. If the formation of character in an individual who has acquired an Enlightenment-based identity occurs alongside the development of a critical consciousness capable of evaluating both the self and society, then we can speak of pedagogical development. In this way, the door is opened for the individual to become a universal being while preserving their uniqueness. Education's role in facilitating this transformation can be achieved through Humboldt's theory of *Bildung*.

A reinterpretation of Humboldt's theory of *Bildung* centered on democratic citizenship will be effective in helping students examine their own lives, develop the democratic skills necessary to become responsible citizens, and gain a critical perspective to generate solutions to the challenges facing democracy and social problems. Thanks to Humboldt's perspective, citizens

can engage in a continuous pursuit of progress as cosmopolitan individuals who have acquired critical thinking skills and are aware of their ethical and political responsibilities.

Finally, a reinterpretation of Humboldt's theory will contribute to the development of democratic citizens who not only reflect on their own lives but also make creative contributions to solving social problems. This interpretation can support the formation of a human profile that has internalized the principles of tolerance, empathy, and respect toward cultural differences. For humanistic education to take place not only through subject-world interaction but also through subject-subject interaction—and for freedom to be one of the fundamental conditions of this process—it is necessary to reinterpret the concept of freedom at the heart of Humboldt's theory within a social context. In summary, individuals educated as free persons through *Bildung* will be citizens who are more aware, tolerant, capable of empathy, and who view themselves as members of all humanity, compared to citizens raised for the sake of uniform national interests.

This study seeks to answer the question of how Humboldt's theory of *Bildung*—which can be applied to encompass all societies and cultural structures without being limited to a Eurocentric perspective—can be integrated into democratic citizenship education. Although traces of the political concerns of the era in which Humboldt lived can be found in his views and educational reforms, it is anticipated that the universal understanding he offered will convey a vision of education that fosters democratic culture to future generations.

In light of this book's findings and conclusions, several recommendations are offered for schools, higher education institutions, teachers, and future researchers.

Humboldt's theory of *Bildung*, along with the theory of *Bildung for all* based on it and its newer versions, forms the foundation of curricula in German schools. Courses are offered in this field in academia, and studies are conducted on the practical applications of these theories. As demonstrated in this book, *Bildung* theories are not compatible with state-nationalist curricula. Therefore, the extent to which these theories can be incorporated into democratic citizenship programs built on inclusive multiculturalism can be addressed as a separate research topic. Building on this, the applicability of *Bildung* and *Bildung for all* in democratic citizenship courses can be examined. How democratic citizenship courses can benefit from the critical thinking elements these theories bring can also be explored within the framework of the same research.

Evaluating the model of a democratic society from Humboldt's perspective can help students develop an ethical-political cosmopolitan sense of citizenship and acquire a critical outlook. In this context, qualitative research can be conducted on how Humboldt's understanding of democracy and modern theories of *Bildung* can be integrated into curricula.

In formal education, the 'intrinsic value' principle of *Bildung* can be used in subject areas to develop abstract reasoning skills and enhance academic achievement. For example, in the field of mathematics, researchers from other disciplines could examine how the theory of *Bildung* is applied in the development of mathematical skills and in engineering applications, or study its practical models; they could then integrate the findings of this examination into their own work. In this way, students can be helped to directly recognize the negative aspects of a competitive professional life and to acquire a culture of democratic citizenship for their future lives.

In contrast to an education system that aims to prepare the workforce for a competitive market within the context of neoliberal policies, research can be conducted on how to develop democratic citizenship course content that fosters citizens who take on ethical and political

responsibilities and adopt a solution-oriented and critical approach to current global issues from the perspective of Humboldt's theory of *Bildung*.

Developing a holistic view of the human being through the lens of Humboldt's theory of *Bildung* and incorporating the ideal of universal humanity as a subject in democratic citizenship courses—while producing curriculum content aligned with this ideal—could be effective in helping students develop positive attitudes toward democratic culture, a cosmopolitan outlook, and a multicultural perspective.

6 Humboldt's Intellectual Life

The chapter reviews Humboldt's intellectual life. His biography will look at the big issues he dealt with and the ways he went about dealing with them. The main points of this story are his growth as an intellectual, his roles as a statesman, his travels, and his contributions to the Enlightenment. Instead of just listing the dates, the subheadings have been chosen to show how his thinking evolved. Next, I'll look at how Humboldt's ideas have influenced education. I'll go through his works in more detail later in the book, so I won't cover them in this introduction.

Humboldt was born on 22 June 1767 in Berlin. His dad was Alexander Georg (1720-1779), a Prussian officer and personal aide to a princess. His mum was Marie Elisabeth (1741-1796). Humboldt often stayed at his family's castle in Tegel, Berlin. His mum, Marie Elisabeth, came from a rich Huguenot family. She had inherited Tegel Castle from her ex, Ernst Freiherr von Hollwede (Berghahn, 2022, p. 3).

His family placed great importance on raising their sons in the spirit of the Enlightenment from an early age. Thanks to their financial means, they were able to educate their children at home with the help of private tutors. Historians find the childhoods of Alexander¹¹ and Wilhelm particularly fascinating when examining the history of education during the Enlightenment. These two brothers did not go to school, but they were educated at the castle by important people of that time. It is important to note that even the rich and powerful of the time considered it a special opportunity to receive this kind of education from experts in different fields (Wiedemann, 2012, p. 40).

One of these teachers was called Campe. He taught Wilhelm how to read and write. Campe was an important person in the German Enlightenment movement. He had a big effect on Humboldt's ideas about education later on. When he was just 22 years old, Humboldt visited Paris with Campe at the start of the French Revolution in 1789. Campe defined "the balanced education of all the powers and talents of human nature" (Campe, 1779, p. 20). Humboldt later came up with a different idea. The Humboldt brothers studied with several important people, including Christian Wilhelm Dohm (1751-1820), who taught them statistics and economics; Ernst Ferdinand Klein (1744-1810), who taught them natural law; and Johann Jakob Engel (1741-1802), who taught them philosophy (Maurer, 2016, p. 15). Some of these people were members of the *Berlinische Mittwochsgesellschaft*, where Enlightenment debates took place in Berlin. The brothers also wrote articles for the society's magazine, the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*. The brothers grew up in an intellectual environment, which had a big effect on their role in German intellectual life.

The family wanted to give their children the best education possible so that they could get good jobs in the government. But the two brothers' lives went in different directions. During the process of rebuilding Prussia after the Napoleonic occupation, Wilhelm had several important jobs, including ministerial and diplomatic roles. He was also financially independent, so he could sometimes stop working for the government to focus on studying and travelling.

¹¹ Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), who was two years younger than his brother Wilhelm, was a naturalist and explorer. He is renowned for contributing to the advancement of anthropological knowledge in eighteenth century Europe by discovering new geographical regions (A. Wulf, 2017, pp. 28-29). His significance lies in articulating a new understanding of modernity, grounded in a process he termed *world consciousness* (*Weltbewußtsein*). This process aimed to grasp complexity and relational structures through multipolar, mutual interaction. His work and sociopolitical activities also reflected his deep conviction regarding the defining importance of *Bildung* (Ette, 2016, pp. 370-371).

Alexander, however, became a world-famous nature expert after working for the government for a short time.

Humboldt's journey into the world of ideas can be divided into three periods. These periods are based on the most important events in his life. From 1787 to 1797, he worked as an independent researcher. From 1797 to 1809, he settled in Paris with his family and got more involved in politics. The third period of his life started in 1809, when he started working as a diplomat in Vienna, and ended in 1835, when he died.

The First Period (1787-1797)

In the fall of 1787, Humboldt went to Frankfurt to study law. He stopped studying at the University of Frankfurt, though, and instead went to Heyne's lectures at the University of Göttingen. At the time, Göttingen was seen as more modern and international. Heyne was a very important thinker. He helped make classical studies more modern. Heyne also connected these studies to other fields, such as history, anthropology and aesthetics. Heyne had a wide-ranging view of ancient culture. He studied language and culture together. This inspired Humboldt's admiration of ancient Greece (Kurig, 2019, p. 66).

During this time, Humboldt met people from different social groups in cities such as Darmstadt, Marburg, Mainz, and Bonn. In his essay *Über Religion (On Religion)*, he talks about the relationship between the Enlightenment and religion. He was against the strict censorship laws of Johann Christoph von Wöllner, the Prussian Minister of Justice at the time. In the essay, Humboldt says that people should be free to think what they want. He agrees with the ideas of the Enlightenment thinkers that Wöllner's policies tried to stop. Frederick William II became king in 1786, and it was then that the process of limiting people's freedom to practice their religion or have their own beliefs began. Frederick William II's way of thinking was very different to that of Frederick the Great, the 'Enlightened King' who Kant had praised, after Frederick the Great had ruled for 46 years. The new king was against the Enlightenment in Prussia. He supported policies that brought back traditional religious beliefs, which were different from the ideas of the Enlightenment. In 1788, he introduced a new law that favored Protestantism to restore Protestant Christianity to its original beliefs (Ökten, 2016, p. 93). Humboldt thought these changes were important because the new king rejected the ideas of the Enlightenment, as well as other beliefs, such as deism and naturalism. The law about censorship, which was created under this policy, meant that all publications in the country needed to be approved. This law affected the works of Humboldt and Kant. Writing that went against the general principles of religion and moral-civil order was prohibited (Beiser, 2018, p. 85; Ökten, 2016, p. 90). Humboldt thought this censorship law was a threat to freedom of thought. While travelling, he argued with people who believed in the Enlightenment (Maurer, 2016, p. 18). His essay *Über Religion* is the start of the section on religion in his work *Ideenschrift* and prepared the way for Humboldt's liberal ideas. The essay is important because it was the first time Humboldt wrote so extensively about freedom and the relationship between religion and the Enlightenment.

In 1789, he went to Paris, where he saw the French Revolution for himself. Many experts think that this trip had a big effect on his early political writing (Oelkers, 2001, p. 88). Humboldt arrived in Paris with his former teacher, Campe, at the start of the Revolution. This meant he could experience the revolution firsthand. He saw the storming of the Bastille. He followed the debates in the National Assembly and heard the speech praising Louis XVI as the king who brought freedom to France (Beiser, 2018, p. 188). In his notes about his first trip to Paris, Humboldt had a positive attitude about the Revolution. Humboldt starts his notes from 9 August 1789 with the following words: "The Bastille now lies in ruins, and in its place there

now steps a monument of victorious freedom” (Beiser, 2018, p. 120). But after he came back from Paris, he started to have doubts about the Revolution.

One of the most important moments in Humboldt’s intellectual journey occurred when he met his former teacher, the Enlightenment thinker Dohm, in Aachen while traveling to Paris. Dohm was a renowned author of books on the Enlightenment. In his work *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden (On the Civil Improvement of the Jews)*, he advocated for equal rights for Jews (Blumenthal-Barby, 2016, p. 170). Humboldt talked with Dohm about the constitution. Dohm said that the only reason for the state to exist was to keep its citizens safe. Initially, Humboldt believed that limiting the state’s actions wasn’t necessary because there might be other ways to protect freedom. However, as the discussion continued, Humboldt began to agree with Dohm’s point of view:

...I realized that Dohm’s ideas were new and excellent. His central idea is that the elements people use to ensure their physical, moral, and intellectual well-being [such as agriculture, factories, trade, enlightenment, and morality, Ö.S.¹²] will develop better without state intervention... For him, as much as for me, the most important issue is always the well-being of people—and in this context, the uninterrupted freedom of all actions (Humboldt, 1916, pp. 90-91).

Humboldt’s ideas about the role of the government in people’s lives, which he developed at the age of 22, became part of these discussions. Festl (2022, p. 9) says that the French Revolution and its problems made Humboldt want to change education. His experience with the revolution made him want to understand the Enlightenment. This quest focused on basic rights like freedom of speech, thought, and religion. It also focused on education. Festl (2022, p. 8) says that Humboldt wrote *Ideenschrift* as a response to the French Revolution. The work was also influenced by the ideas of his former teacher, Dohm.

Before he married Caroline von Dacheröden (1766-1829) in 1791, Humboldt was made an embassy undersecretary. Soon after, he criticized the Prussian government and quit his job. He left Berlin with his family and started doing academic work on his own (Burrow, 1969, p. ix). He lived in Jena and Erfurt, near Weimar, which was the center of intellectual life in Germany at the time. There, he became friends with Schiller, Wolf, and Goethe. Together, they collected letters that became part of Humboldt’s intellectual legacy (Trabant, 2016, p. 372). His friendship with Schiller helped him to grow as a thinker. Both Schiller and Humboldt are considered part of a group of thinkers called *neo-humanists* (Ruhloff, 2004, p. 448). In his work *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen (On the Aesthetic Education of Man)*, Schiller disagrees with the idea that people should only think about how useful something is. He thought this was the most important belief of his time and that it caused people to suffer. Instead, he wanted to change society through the aesthetic path (Schiller, 1795/2020, p. 23).

It was during this time that Humboldt first started writing about politics. He wrote two of his most important books during this time. *Ideen über Staatsverfassung, durch die neue französische Konstitution veranlasst (Ideas concerning constitutions occasioned by the new French Constitution)* and *Ideenschrift*.

¹² In this and subsequent direct quotations within the text, any explanatory remarks that I have added to the quotation are indicated by square brackets and marked with the abbreviation “Ö.S.”

Second Period (1797-1809)

Humboldt was a researcher on his own until 1797. Then, he got a job at the Prussian Embassy in Rome. During this time, he lived in Paris and visited Spain and the Basque region. This trip was an important experience that helped Humboldt better understand his ideas about folk culture and the Enlightenment.

Between 1797 and 1801, Humboldt lived in Paris with his family. He was an active member of the city's social community and kept detailed diaries. During this time, he studied the relationship between the ancient and modern eras. He explored this relationship by asking questions about beauty and the philosophy of nature. He was particularly interested in debates about the German national character, how the country is governed, and the relationship between the government and its citizens. He also started studying linguistics around this time (Berghahn, 2022, p. 11).

His time in Paris was interrupted by his travels to Spain in 1800 and the Basque Country in 1801. These trips helped Humboldt grow as a person. The journals he kept during these trips show his talent as a travel writer. They contain literary texts that reveal his perception of Spain at that time. Humboldt studied how people's way of life, local languages, and cultures are connected. In his journals, he writes about the relationship between language, culture, and history in the Basque Country.

According to Berghahn (2022, p. 12), Humboldt's time living in Spain was important in shaping his political ideas later in life when he was Director of the Section for Culture and Public Education. His trip to the Basque Country also made him want to focus more on linguistic studies. The Basque people are known for their unique language and national character. They embraced the Enlightenment as a popular movement, which fascinated Humboldt. What he liked most about the Basque region was their approach to freedom. Humboldt saw that people from different social classes in the Basque Country were equal. He used this idea to help with Prussian educational reforms. This influence is clear in the reform plans, or *Schulplan*, which formed the basis of the curricula.

After returning from his trip to the Basque Country in 1802, Humboldt settled with his family in Berlin-Tegel. However, he was appointed Prussia's ambassador to Rome that same year when he realized that he could no longer find his former intellectual circle there. He settled in Rome, where he would spend the next six years. There, he continued to study the ancient world. One of his works from this time is *Latium und Hellas oder Betrachtungen über das classische Alterthum* (*Latium and Hellas, or reflections on classical antiquity*) from 1806. This book is a study of ancient Greece. During this time, he also wrote the essay *Über den Charakter der Griechen* (*On the character of the Greeks*), which openly expresses his admiration for ancient Greece. However, as I will discuss later, Humboldt saw the ancient Greeks as a source of inspiration, not as something to be directly copied.

One of Humboldt's ideas from this time is that freedom is an essential part of *Bildung*, which he defines as the purpose of life—attaining a harmonious whole by developing all abilities to their fullest. In Humboldt's political philosophy, freedom is seen as a value that is connected to the idea of a government not being too controlling. Humboldt's approach to *Bildung* is based on the idea of achieving a specific goal. He thinks that doing the right thing or trying to be happy is not the purpose of life. Humboldt was a liberal who believed in humanism, which is different from the rationalist ethical views of Kant and Fichte. According to Beiser (2018, p. 183), Humboldt argues that reason alone is not enough to explain human actions or state policies.

When Humboldt returned to Prussia from Rome in 1808, he found himself in an environment of political and administrative reform following the war against Napoleon. The new government tried to reduce social differences by creating a general education system focused on human values, instead of limiting education to specific subjects (Miyamoto, 2021, p. 8). Humboldt's appointment in 1809 as the head of the Section for Culture and Public Education within the Prussian Ministry of the Interior was a big change. It allowed him to make important changes to the education system. These reforms tried to break France's dominance by creating a new, strong Prussia.

During this time, people also started talking about the importance of academic freedom and how the government should not be too involved in universities. During this time, Humboldt restructured and administered Prussian education. The goal was to educate citizens of all levels based on the idea of freedom. It also encouraged them to become active members of public life in Prussian politics (Clark, 2006, pp. 332-333). Humboldt was the smart person who came up with the idea to create the University of Berlin to make these changes.

The Third Period (1809-1835)

After leaving his job as a minister, Humboldt became the Prussian ambassador to Vienna, Frankfurt, and London. From 1810, when he started working as a diplomat in Vienna, until his death in 1835, Humboldt continued working on the philosophy of language at his home in Berlin-Tegel.

Before talking about Humboldt's linguistic work during this time, it is important to mention the founding of the University of Berlin. This was one of the most significant reform movements of that time. Problems in how universities were run at that time made it necessary to make changes. After Prussia lost a war with Napoleon in 1806, the country lost six of its eight universities (Haase, 2022, p. 362). To improve the remaining universities, which were considered outdated, the academies and scientific societies that had developed throughout the Enlightenment began to play a functional role. The Royal Academy, founded by Leibniz in 1700, was one such institution. The goal of the changes was to make it clearer what status institutions in different fields of specialization would have when they changed into applied science institutions (Maurer, 2016, p. 187). According to Trabant (2016, p. 372), the most important thing to consider about the University of Berlin and Prussian educational institutions is that Humboldt's theory of *Bildung* is central to the proposals to establish them. In other words, Humboldt's theory of *Bildung* is central to efforts to make education a part of institutions. Humboldt's idea for the university was to make it an independent institution that would guarantee freedom of research and learning and would have its own money (Trabant, 2016, p. 372).

In his text *Über die innere und äußere Organisation der höheren wissenschaftlichen Anstalten in Berlin* (On the internal and external organization of the higher academic institutions in Berlin, 1809), he mostly shares his ideas about how universities should be organized. These ideas are based on a new humanism. In this text, he suggests that universities should always be doing research and writing: "... higher educational institutions always treat science as a problem that has not yet been fully resolved and therefore remain engaged in research" (Humboldt, 1903b, p. 251). In this model, Humboldt defines academic freedom as including learning activities, rather than separating research and teaching. Humboldt says that academic freedom is more than just the freedom to do research and publish what you find. It includes everyone in the university. He suggests that students should be curious and ask questions instead of just accepting what other people say.

The *Schulplan* also shows where the idea of a university came from by looking at the different roles that students had. "... the university professor is no longer merely a teacher to the student, who is no longer just a student but a learner; rather, the student conducts his own research, and the professor supports and guides him in this endeavor." (Humboldt, 1920, p. 261). Humboldt explains that education should be creative. "For even the pursuit of scholarship as such is a form of creative work, albeit a subordinate one. Therefore, university education has no clear endpoint, and, strictly speaking, there is no single criterion by which to determine when students have reached maturity" (Humboldt, 1920, p. 261-262).

At the Congress of Vienna, which began in 1814 and lasted until the summer of 1815, Humboldt was in charge of Prussia's diplomatic relations. In 1819, he was briefly named Minister of the Interior. However, he quit his job because he disagreed with Prussia's chancellor, Karl August von Hardenberg, and Prussia's acceptance of the Karlsbad Decrees. He then went into another period of isolation (Maurer, 2016, pp. 207, 213).

He spent the last five years of his life studying linguistics. His work *Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues und ihren Einfluss auf die geistige Entwicklung des Menschengeschlechts* (*On the diversity of human language construction and its influence on the mental development of the human species*), published after his death, is a product of this period. In the introduction, Humboldt talks about how language can change things and make things better. He thinks of language as "a product of the human mind's ability to create" (Humboldt, 2011, pp. 111, 136). Humboldt believed that language is more than just a way to communicate; it's the product of our thoughts. Language is the way we think. "The organ of thought" (Humboldt, 1907, p. 53) and "the work of the mind" (Humboldt, 1907, p. 46). Humboldt believes that all languages are equally valuable and that all cultures have something special to offer. He believes that all languages should be respected equally. Humboldt (2011, p. 165) said that we should not judge or look down on the language of the most primitive savages.

Wilhelm von Humboldt passed away on April 8, 1835, at his castle in Berlin. His brother, Alexander, was with him when he died. Alexander lived until 1859 and was responsible for publishing Wilhelm's works, which had not been published during his lifetime. He strongly supported the publication of Wilhelm's collected works. Wilhelm's grave is in the Tegel Castle park. Today, the Humboldt Museum is in this park.

Humboldt's Contribution to Educational Thought

Humboldt's ideas about education were significant both during his lifetime and beyond. This elevated him above the status of a mere historical figure. To understand this, it is necessary to consider the historical context in which he lived and how it influenced his ideas. Humboldt's historical importance is evident in the Prussian educational reforms and the theoretical identity of education during that period.

He is renowned for championing the fundamental principles of liberalism — individual and collective freedom, and minimal government intervention — which have endured to this day. This influence stems largely from the *Ideenschrift*, which significantly impacted German liberals and those beyond Germany's borders (Beiser, 2018, p. 182). In his influential work *On Liberty*, widely regarded as one of the most important sources of liberalism in the English-speaking world during the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) draws on Humboldt's *Ideenschrift* (Oelkers, 2001, p. 87). According to Mill, Humboldt valued individuality, freedom, and diversity. Mill viewed this shift as a negative development. He believed that people were losing their individuality and that the world was becoming increasingly uniform. For this reason, Mill argues that different situations and conditions of freedom are important. Humboldt expressed a similar opinion (Mill, 1859/2009, p. 130).

Humboldt wanted to create an educational system supported by different parts of society that was not controlled by the government (Richter, 1971, p. 19). He believed that all children should have access to a humanistic education that focuses on developing their character and promoting their personal growth rather than merely preparing them for specific jobs.

During the wars of independence and the period of national fervor, Humboldt proposed a public education program for the contemporary era (Richter, 1971, p. 20). His letters to his wife, Caroline, during that time show how his ideas about public education changed:

All the strength, all the vitality, all the ruggedness, all the vigor of the nation can lie only in the wolf, which, while always acting as a weapon, also possesses a wild character. Whatever rises above the education of the people inevitably turns toward the individual and thus, in pursuit of its own goals, steps outside the nation... The lower classes have very little need for the upper classes in their education; for this reason, they are independent. Unless you place public education on a general foundation that no one can disparage, you cannot elevate what belongs to the people to the upper classes (Humboldt, 1814; cited in Sydow, 1910, p. 380).

According to Humboldt's perspective, regardless of their class position, people classified as belonging to the lower classes view public education as a phenomenon deeply rooted in their reality. Richter (1971), on the other hand, interprets these words as the foundation of the unified school system. This system is known in Germany as the *Einheitsschule* and encompasses all levels of education, keeping students within the same system until they graduate from high school. These schools build bridges between social classes. It functions as a public school that every child is required to attend for at least four years. There are statements indicating that Humboldt supported this school system. He grounds the organizational unity of the education system in the principle of unity and continuity of instruction across natural stages, basing the connection between primary, secondary, and higher education on this principle. According to Humboldt (1809/1965, p. 113), dividing subjects within the natural flow of instruction would lead to confusion among teachers.

Becker (2013) reveals Humboldt's universal identity by examining his definition of language. Language illustrates how the educated person is portrayed. The educated person uses language to create modes of speech and manage the interaction between thought, its content, and consciousness. According to Becker, the formation of *Bildung* occurs when the mind's endless cycles of thought—which return to existing content while generating new content—find voice and expression through language. This interaction depends on the expression of thought through language, which demonstrates how language shapes the educated individual. Effective communication entails interaction between thought content and consciousness. In this way, effective communication lays the groundwork for the formation of *Bildung*. According to Becker (2013), Humboldt's definition of language and his dynamic system of interaction reflect the universality of his perspective. His analysis of how different languages express diverse worldviews to understand the nature of human identity and how the world is shaped points to the universal validity of Humboldt's theory of *Bildung*.

To understand Germany's perspective on the French Revolution of 1789 and Humboldt's role in this process is one of the relevant historical contexts. Those who came to power viewed the revolution as a progressive event. In contrast, the German aristocracy saw the revolution as a threat to the absolutist state. This led Prussia to realize that fundamental reforms were necessary for survival. Humboldt's perspective on this matter was the neo-humanist concept of *Bildung*, which asserts that the conditions for the historical progress pioneered by the Revolution must be developed and secured socially (Sorkin, 1983, p. 55).

On January 6, 1809, when Humboldt assumed control of the Section for Culture and Public Education, he drafted a report on the organization of higher education institutions in Berlin. He proposed that modern universities combine research and teaching while maintaining the independence of education from the state (Berghahn, 2022, p. 16). In this context, Humboldt defined scientific institutions according to their purpose: "... as the pinnacle where everything that directly contributes to the moral culture of the nation converges is based on the fact that these institutions are dedicated to pursuing scholarship in the deepest and broadest sense of the word, and to making it available as material for intellectual and moral education" (Humboldt, 1903b, p. 251). However, by spring of 1810, it was clear that the reform proposals could not be implemented, and the old system regained the upper hand. Anticipating the failure of the reform project, Humboldt sought to resign from his 14-month post. Considering the state of the nation, King Frederick William III refused to accept his resignation. To avoid losing Humboldt's support, the king appointed him to the critical post of ambassador to Vienna. During this period, Humboldt sought to implement his reforms by emphasizing that the national institution served as an interventionist, balancing, and regulatory element within the state amid the collapse of the old order (Berghahn, 2022, p. 20).

During his eight-month tenure as director of the Section for Culture and Public Education in Königsberg, he drafted the *Schulplan* reports, which aimed to translate his theoretical work into practical applications. One report addressed the organization of schools in Königsberg and offered recommendations for reforming these institutions. Another report emerged during an inspection trip Humboldt undertook to Lithuania. These reports are among Humboldt's most notable later-year works regarding the organization of humanistic education. According to the reports, everyone in Prussia, including the poor, was to receive a general education regardless of background.

The idea that everyone in a nation should receive a certain level of education is emphasized in the essay *An der Spitze der preußischen Unterrichtsverwaltung* (At the helm of the Prussian educational administration), which was the first text that Humboldt wrote after being appointed director of the Section for Culture and Public Education in 1809. In this essay, Humboldt defines the department's mission as "bases its general educational curriculum on the entire population of the nation and seeks to promote the development of human abilities that are equally essential to all social classes and to which the skills and knowledge required for each individual profession can be easily applied" (Humboldt, 1903b, p. 205). According to Humboldt, the organization of schools is not concerned with any particular caste or trade (Humboldt, 1920, p. 277). He expresses this perspective by saying, "There is a certain education of the mind and character that no one can be deprived of" (Humboldt, 1920, p. 205). This foundational education must be provided before acquiring vocational skills. Humboldt addresses its design in detail in his reports. Through these reforms and reports, Humboldt is also recognized in German cultural circles as the founder of the humanist grammar school. The humanist grammar school examines *humanistic education*, the role of language in thought, and the educational importance of ancient languages (Maurer, 2016, pp. 182-183).

To understand Humboldt's contributions to educational theory, it is helpful to compare his views with those of Rousseau, a source of inspiration for neo-humanist educational thought. Humboldt accepts Rousseau's concept of the citizen, who is subject to a sovereign, as an evolving idea. While Rousseau outlines his educational program in *Émile* in terms of the individual and the citizen, Humboldt broadens the scope of this program from the perspective of his theory of *Bildung*, assigning the task of transforming the existing constitution into a constitution for free people to rulers. He also argues that limiting rulers' powers opens spheres of public action for citizens (Mattig, 2023, p. 44). The creation of this free space is considered one of the states and its leaders' fundamental duties. Society's education cannot serve as a tool for leaders' policies; leaders must define the limits of the state's sphere of influence and support

strengthening their citizens' education. The diversity of lifestyles that arises from the free interaction between the individual and the world points to this goal. The state contributes to individuals' progress by safeguarding their freedoms. By limiting the state's sphere of influence, Humboldt assigns the state the duty of supporting the education of human beings and citizens based on free and diverse mutual interaction. Viewing human beings and citizens as equals, Humboldt outlines a reform pedagogy that is independent of Rousseau's views (Benner, 2023a, pp. 36-37).

Current research challenges the perception of Humboldt as an idealist detached from the world by highlighting his interest in cultural diversity. Mattig (2019), for example, presents Humboldt as an empirical scholar of education and society. For example, Humboldt meticulously documented his observations at a village festival in the Basque Country in 1801, demonstrating his interest in the Basques, who did not produce literary works in their own language. By observing this society, which was considered *uncivilized* at the time, Humboldt ironically introduced a theoretical perspective on *Bildung* to German cultural society. Mattig (2019) builds on this example, pointing out that Humboldt was not an idealist detached from the world but rather someone embedded within society who was interested in different cultures and languages and possessed a universal perspective. In fact, he was an empiricist who grasped the breadth of social life clearly (Mattig, 2019, p. 10). According to this approach, Humboldt considers people in terms of not only their aesthetic aspects, but also their cultural and social dimensions. He emphasizes observing people in their living environments through dynamic interaction rather than defining them through cold, sterile symbols (Menze, 1965, pp. 33-34). In his own words, empirical observation is essential to depicting the character of a country. This method is more reliable than scientific analysis, which relies solely on documents such as books and letters. He defined the purpose of his travels as "producing an authentic and vivid picture of foreign countries" (Humboldt, 1904b, p. 30).

Humboldt's extensive travels abroad and the journals he kept during these trips show that he considered his time overseas an opportunity for research. Mattig (2019) notes that Humboldt's ideas are grounded in his cultural anthropological observations. At the core of this perspective is Humboldt's analysis of his research on France, Spain, and the Basque Country from the standpoint of the theory of *Bildung*. In this context, Mattig (2019) views Humboldt as an ethnographer (p. 42). Humboldt's observations among peoples who preserved their unique cultures and identities demonstrate his ability to derive a *popular enlightenment* from his ethnographic research. The dissolution of class structures in the Basque Country made the realization of this *popular enlightenment* a natural outcome. As in the Basque Country, Humboldt derives the meaning of folk culture from an educational perspective (Zabaleta-Gorrotxategi, 2006, p. 110). In this way, he establishes the connection between the Enlightenment and folk culture. According to Humboldt, the Enlightenment and folk culture interact with each other, and through this process, society unites as a nation and class boundaries disappear (Giel, 1987, pp. 2-4). Humboldt's ability to be viewed as both a theorist and an empirical researcher presents him as an expert free from one-dimensionality. Humboldt viewed the reemergence of the intellectual aristocracy in Europe with skepticism and attached as much importance to empirical research as to a theoretical perspective (Mattig, 2024, p. 71). Giel (1987, p. 1) points out that Humboldt's journey to the Basque Country was a significant turning point in his educational theory. Giel views Humboldt's connection of folk culture to the Enlightenment as a contribution to modernity debates. Thus, Humboldt's findings from his research travels have also contributed to the social significance of education.

Educational scientist Heinz-Elmar Tenorth (2023) characterizes Humboldt as a modern theorist of *Bildung* and a systematic thinker. This claim is based on the fact that Humboldt's entire body of work has a systematic core. The focus here is on a contemporary educational

theory that aims to understand human self-realization from individual and social perspectives, rather than from theoretical-speculative or empirical-historical ones.

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DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND BILDUNG

An Interpretation

This book discusses key issues in democratic citizenship education from the perspective of the theory of *Bildung*, offering a new approach to issues that remain relevant today. Since *Bildung* has carried different meanings over the centuries and describes a system of thought rather than a mere concept, this book's discussion draws on the perspective of Wilhelm von Humboldt, who pioneered the Enlightenment view of *Bildung*. Unlike other thinkers of his time, Humboldt developed a systematic theory of *Bildung*, embedding it in the intellectual foundations of educational reforms. By drawing on this approach to *Bildung*—one of the central concepts of the European philosophical tradition—the book offers a new perspective on the challenges of democratic citizenship education.



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