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S The Concept of German *Bildung* as a Realization of the Hero Archetype

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Abstract This paper is trying to offer a perspective on why the German concept of *Bildung* was able to master transitions regarding time, geography, and disciplines. The argument of this paper is that *Bildung* is a transformative process which greatly resembles the archetypal pattern as identified by Carl Gustav and later refined by Joseph Campbell. In order to argue for this claim, this paper will provide an overview on the idea of the archetype and, in the following, identify aspects of *Bildung* which follow the archetypal pattern. The paper will focus on the history of the term as well as its origins but also on specific realization of learning processes as suggested by educational psychology as well as educational institutions.

Keywords hero archetype, *Bildung*, education, meaning, self-cultivation

Introduction

The German concept of *Bildung*¹ can be considered one of the messiest, most fluid, and least defined terms in the field of educational science and pedagogy (cf. Dohmen, 1964). Despite its suspected shortcomings,

1 *Bildung* is used throughout this paper in its German spelling as it can be considered a genuine concept which cannot be properly translated by anglophone terminology, such as education. Oelkers (1999) argues that *Bildung* should best be translated as self-cultivation. Since its earliest days in the 11th century, *Bildung* serves as a playing field to discuss and develop different kinds of idea(l)s related to (personal) development, such as (but not limited to) personality, morality, skills, or competences (cf. Neuhaus, Pieper & Vogt, forthcoming). As such, *Bildung* is not just a central part of Germany's intellectual history but is also frequently referenced

Bildung has been able to remain a relevant point of reference since its introduction to the German language in the 11th century (cf. Vogt & Neuhaus, 2021). Also, *Bildung* appears to be compatible with self-cultivation approaches and philosophies from different geographies and times (cf. Peters et al., 2021). Additionally, the idea of *Bildung* also transcends the field of educational science and has multiple overlapping with other genres and disciplines, such as (but not limited to) literature in its endeavor to create the *Bildungsroman*, politics, philosophy, psychology, or mythology. Therefore, it can be stated that the concept of *Bildung* mastered multiple temporal, geographical, as well as cross-disciplinary transitions. Taking these observations as a starting point, this paper wants to present a possible explanation on why and how *Bildung* was able to master these transitions while other concepts remained bounded to their place, time, or discipline. This paper will argue that *Bildung* is one realization of the (Jungian) hero archetype and therefore, in part, consists of universal truths which – while some aspects of *Bildung* have changed in the past and will change in the future – remain relevant across time. In order to argue for this novel perspective on *Bildung*, this paper will conduct the following three steps: in the second section, this paper will present an interdisciplinary discussion of the hero archetype in which lines of reasoning from the psychoanalytical literature will be brought together with evolutionary biology, cognitive psychology, as well as theology and mythology. After having discussed archetypes as well as their realizations, this paper will identify exemplarily aspects from *Bildung*'s longstanding history which could support the framing of *Bildung* as a realization of the hero archetype (section 3). Special focus will be dedicated the early days of the term in the 13th century but also further interpretations, twists, and turns of the term will be considered. As stated earlier, this paper wants to argue

in public as well as academic discussions of *Bildungsinstitutionen* and related processes and developments. However, the concept of *Bildung* also has been deconstructed – i.e. as a national project (cf. Stieger, 2020) – and reconstructed multiple times which led Vogt and Neuhaus (2021) to the assumption that *Bildung* should be considered an immortal entity in Germany's pedagogical landscape.

for a re-perspectivation of *Bildung*, preferably one which can explain *Bildung's* ability to master transitions. However, due to the fuzziness of both concepts, this endeavor will always remain partial and incomplete. Therefore, this paper understands itself as a selected (and thereby, incomplete) perspective on the matter, which will hopefully result in an emerging discourse on the relation of the two concepts. This paper ends with a summary of its key observations and will provide an outlook on potential future research (section 4).

The Collective Unconscious, Instinctual Learning Patterns, and Neuroscience – A Very Brief Introduction to Jungian Archetypes

The study of archetypes has in substantial parts been kicked off by Carl Gustav Jung who, alongside his psychoanalytical practice, also collected stories, myths, and narratives by different peoples; some of which have never had contact with the Western world. In these myths and stories but also in the reports of his patients, Jung found patterns which seem to – in diverging resolutions – narrate similar (meta-)stories. Based on these observations, Jung concluded that a uniting element between all human beings must exist or, how Jung (cf. 1936, p. 99) phrased it: “In addition to our immediate personal conscious [...] there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals and is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetype.” Thereby, the archetypal pattern can be read as a manifestation of a collective unconscious – a form of argumentation which split the psychoanalytical school of thought as Sigmund Freud and his affiliates have not shared the assumptions about the collective unconscious and rather see it as a mechanism to mitigate the terror stemming from one’s own vulnerability and ultimately mortality (cf. Becker, 1973). On the contrary, Jung (cf. 1916/1969) argued that these inherited structures of perceiving, seeing, and ultimately interpreting the world not just organize human’s perception and thinking but – through these fundamental cognitive processes – also manifest themselves in the narratological media, such as folklore, religion, myth, or dreams. Based on this line of thought, Hirsh, Mar, and Peterson (2013, p. 216) even argue that “most integrative levels

of an individual's knowledge system can be characterized as narrative descriptions of reality". While Jung proposed that cognition, thought processes, and emotional feedback structures should be considered the root of archetypes and archetypical storytelling (cf. Jung, 1961), psychological research could – due to a lack of technology – neither prove nor falsify his assumptions. Over time, the study of archetypes was – in times of emerging quantification of the (social) sciences – no longer regarded a valuable psychological research object and it moved into the domain of mythology, religious studies, and narratology.

While the study of archetypes was developed further in the domain of mythology and narratology, modern psychological research was able to tie these “reliably repeated early developmental achievements” (Knox, 2003, p. 9), which Jung discovered through the identification of the archetype, back to observable cognitive process. These cognitive processes can be considered universal for the human condition. Therefore, it can be argued that Jung correctly anticipated evolutionary processes which shaped human perception, thinking, and well-being (cf. Panksepp, 1998; Gazzaniga et al., 2002, p. 608; Tooby & Cosmides, 2005, p. 15) as “human emotions are underpinned by specific but universal psychobiological mechanism” (Stein, 2006, p. 766). Through these mechanisms and the corresponding emotions, human beings experience and ultimately perceive meaning (cf. Carr, 2002, p. 478). These shared patterns of cognition, development, thinking, and meaning-making not just explain the similar (meta-)stories “man as ‘animal symbolicum’” (Pietekanian, 1998, p. 328) has crafted but also that “[...] there are evolutionary reasons why we learn some things, like social exchanges and predator/prey inference more easily than logic puzzles or vector calculus” (Goodwyn, 2010, p. 504). Important with regard to archetypes is that the structure (i.e. of a story, dream, myth) is the archetype, while the specific story is only one realization thereof (cf. Jones, 2003, p. 653/654). This is particularly true regarding the fact that most religions embedded profane acts (i.e. building or crafting) as a low-resolution realization of an archetypical pattern; as such, archetypical patterns and behaviors are embedded into larger patterns – a nestedness of the profane life in divine patterns (cf. Eliade,

2016, pp. 63–93). Following this line of thought, the archetypal story can be told and re-told over and over again, yet – in its realized form – it presents itself with altering protagonists, in diverging resolutions, in different settings, or featuring other culturally specific markers. Some argue that archetypal stories require constant updating with regard to protagonists and setting so that the distance between the abstract and the specific does not get too huge for the individual to comprehend – a problem which is known in theology as the gap between the *deus absconditus* and the *deus revelatus* (cf. Leppin, 2005).

As argued earlier, the archetype can be considered the anticipated, narrated, and/or realized patterns while a specific story, text, or experience is the (partial) realization of the archetypal sequence. As such, only few texts or stories are fully representing the archetypal pattern but only constitute approximations thereof. Also, each hero story emphasizes different aspects of the journey. In his attempt to identify the archetypal pattern, Joseph Campbell continued Carl Gustav Jung's work by analyzing religions, myths, and folklores from the perspective of the archetype. In his preeminent book – *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949/2008) – Campbell identifies three central steps (departure, initiation, and return) which constitute the archetypal pattern; each of these steps can be further differentiated with five or six subsets. As these patterns are derived from meticulous observation and analysis of narratives, some of these stages are named after and/or resemble central religious/cultural references, yet they should be read as patterns which can be realized in multiple ways. According to Peterson, the (revolutionary) “hero reorders the protective structure of society, when the emergence of an anomaly makes such reordering necessary. He is therefore the agent of change, upon whose actions all stability is predicated” (Peterson, 1999, p. 271). These changing and ultimately stabilizing actions can be summarized in threefold fashion: departure of the known (human) world, conquering of the (magical/divine) unknown, as well as the return to the old world with the intention to improve the old status quo. In the last phase, the hero reestablishes – with the knowledge and wisdom acquired in the unknown world, which, in narrative form is often represented as treasures, magic items, or the

alike – a better status quo. These three phases of the hero's journey – departure, initiation (into the unknown), as well as the return to the old world – can be further differentiated.

Regarding the *departure phase*, Campbell argues that a *call to adventure* occurs – a hint that the status quo is insufficient – which is first refused by the hero but then, after s/he receives some aid (i.e. a supernatural guardian, companion etc.), is answered. The hero crosses the symbolic threshold and moves out into the unknown only to later find him-/herself in “the belly of the whale”; the furthest away from the old world, a place which is often considered a world of chaos, the underworld, the desert, a place of death or – in the case of Pinocchio (cf. Colodi, 2011, chapter 34 & 35) – literally the belly of a whale.

The hero entering the unknown/underworld constitutes also the part of the archetype in which the hero's *initiation* takes place. In this narratological phase, the hero faces different trials which force the protagonist to improve skill-wise but also morally. While the hero acquires different kinds of wisdom, s/he encounters “the totality of what can be known” (Campbell, 1949/2008, p. 97 – according to Campbell, the meeting with the Goddess which can be read as an encounter with the highest ideal. After the hero has gotten a taste of what s/he could become, the journey continues and the hero has to rescue his/her patriarchal father figure, the – according to Campbell – “atonement with the Father”. In the already quoted case of Pinocchio, Geppetto (the puppet's creator) is also to be found in the belly of the whale and requires Pinocchio's help to flee. This phase of atonement – which could also be read as at-one-ment or re-unification with old ideas or structures – is characterized by the father as “the initiating priest through whom the young being passes on into the larger world” which can quickly develop into “the son against the father for the mastery of the universe” scenario (ibid., p. 115). At the end of this initiation and mastery phase, the hero adopts god-like qualities in a process referred to as apotheosis (process of becoming a God) which is often regarded as the unification of male (the father's) and female (the Goddess) ideals: “And so it is that both the male and the female are to be envisioned, alternately, as time and eternity” (ibid., p. 145). This mastery of ideals as well as their

(partial) embodiment is followed by a test and/or sacrifice – Campbell coined that “the ultimate boon” – in which the hero who won the God’s favor could “beg for the boon of perfect illumination, [yet] what he generally seeks are longer years to live, weapons with which to slay his neighbor, or the health of his child” (ibid., p. 163). It could be argued that the unification of the male and female represent the hero’s mastery of his/her culture, trait, or skill. Now, after having mastered the craft at stake, the hero has to decide what to do with the newly found expertise. Campbell continues by stating that “the agony of breaking through personal limitations is the agony of spiritual growth” and, if this agony is taken upon by the hero, “the mind breaks the bounding sphere of the cosmos to a realization transcending all experiences of form – all symbolizations, all divinities: a realization of the ineluctable void” (ibid., p. 163). This constitutes the highest possible sacrifice, “not only of the hero but of the god [read as: the hero’s highest ideal] as well” (ibid., p. 164). The insight that potentially every aspect of life can require reform – ergo nothing is absolute – results in a, by the hero occupied, meta-perspective on life, which Campbell describes as the, mentioned prior, ineluctable void. This void needs to be endured and, if possible, used productively by the now wise and competent hero.

Once the hero has completed this process and has gained key insights into the structure of being, traditional myth „requires that the hero shall now begin the labor of bringing back the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds” (ibid., p. 167). However, often times the hero refuses to return until s/he is called upon by the old world and/or pushed out of the magical world. The magic world is often characterized by a lack of time (time seems to stand still) which, if one remains there too long, equals death. Carl Gustav Jung (1939, p. 59) on the matter: “But if [...] he leaves home and family, lives too long alone, and gazes too deeply into the dark mirror, then the awful event of the meeting may befall him” – the underworld is only a temporary place for mortals. Either being pushed out

or called upon, the hero initiates the *magic flight*. In this flight, the hero (often times) leaves a kind of tribute behind. May it be Orpheus turning around and thereby losing Eurydice, Persephone eating pomegranate seeds, or Sara turning into stone when looking back at Sodom and Gomorrah, small misdeeds result in huge sacrifices when one tries to leave the underworld. After being reminded of one's fallibility as well as the symbolic sacrifice to the magic world, the hero returns to the human world by crossing the symbolic threshold which separates these worlds; these are sometimes associated with common dualities, such as day/night, consciousness/unconsciousness, profane/divine, order/chaos, life/death, and the alike. However, after having returned, the hero understands that "the two kingdoms are actually one" as "[t]he realm of the gods is a forgotten dimension of the world we know" (Campbell, 1949/2008, p. 188). Yet, with the wisdom acquired on his/her journey, the hero revitalizes the old order and improves it. However, "[t]he boon brought from the transcendent deep becomes quickly rationalized into nonentity, and the need becomes great for another hero to refresh the world" (ibid.). One result of this sequence is that the hero figure transforms into the master of two worlds or, as Nietzsche called him/her, the *Cosmic Dancer* (cf. Bishop, 2009). This mastery of the two worlds and, with it, the mastery of time, space, craft, and self, results in an individual who "gives up completely all attachment to his personal limitations, idiosyncrasies, hopes and fears, no longer resists the self-annihilation that is pre-requisite to rebirth in the realization of truth, and so becomes ripe, at last, for the great at-one-ment" (Campbell, 1949/2008, p. 204/205). This insight enables the hero to live a life in complete freedom as well as a deep understanding of life and transformation. Ovid summarizes this on-going process in *Metamorphosis* as following: "Nothing retains its own form; but Nature, the greater renewer, ever makes up forms from forms. Be sure there's nothing perishes in the whole universe; it does but vary and renew its form."

Summarizing, it can be argued that archetypal stories describe one of human being's central evolutionary advantages: the ability of niche-switching, which describes the circumstances that – due to a change in the environment, a call to adventure so-to-speak – human

beings have been forced to explore uncharted territory and acquire new skills. This capacity for and degree of adaptive ability distinguishes human being from virtually all other species. With regard to archetypal narration, it can be argued that the hero archetype is the narrative manifestation of this evolutionary stable strategy and has, over time, become an almost universal hallmark of human reality. In fact, the evolutionary backstory of archetypal narrations are (implicitly) mirrored in biological language. Sewall Wright, arguably the creator of the *fitness landscape metaphor* – a powerful concept in evolutionary biology –, argued that evolution develops from (mountain) peak to peak (cf. Steinberg & Ostermeier, 2016, p. 1); the mountain top or peak is, with regard to the chosen imagery, tightly knit to the idea of deities and the divine (cf. Eliade, 2016, p. 105). In between these developmental stages, a species goes through an evolutionary valley – a metaphor which also has tremendous overlapping with the cluster of words describing the magical underworld (the world of the dead, the underworld, desert etc.). In line with Carl Gustav Jung's argument, it can be suspected that the hero archetype not just has its roots in shared cognitive and visual brain developments but – analogous with cognition and cerebral structures – also in evolutionary biology. Summarily, it can be argued that archetypes and the hero archetype in particular are decentralized sets of values (cf. Darby, 2020, p. 48) – read as: patterns one should follow – which are rooted in biology/biological fitness and, through that, determine human vision, cognition, perception, and interpretation of the world but also manifest themselves in (successful) narrations, religions, as well as individual experiences.

Bildung as the Hero's Journey – Selected Evidence from Pedagogy's God-Term

In the following section, this paper will try to identify aspects regarding the term and concept of *Bildung* which could indicate that *Bildung* is indeed a realization of the hero archetype. Even though such claims cannot be ultimately proven – both concepts are too fuzzy for such an analysis –, circumstantial evidence will be presented, discussed, and tied back to the elaborations on archetypal narratives. The focus of this

argument will be two-fold: in the first part, the etymological history of *Bildung* will be looked at; in this line of argumentation, *Bildung's* religious underpinnings will also be considered and tied back to the paper's larger argumentation. In the second part of the argument, educational and psychological insights on learning process as well as their realization in schools (as one central *Bildungsinstitution*) will be looked at from the archetypal standpoint. By following this sequence, both – the history of the concept/term as well as its real-life manifestation – will be considered.

Etymological history/mode of transmission: The concept of *Bildung* has first been referred to under this label in the 13th century when monk Notker of St. Gallen translated the word *imaginatio* as *bildunga* (cf. Dörpinghaus & Uphoff, 2011, p. 63). While *bildunga* served as the terminological basis of *Bildung*, *imaginatio* can also be translated in multiple other ways, such as imagination, fantasy, or – in line with the psychoanalytical research focus – as *dream*. Generally speaking, the etymological basis of the term and concept of *Bildung* has so-to-speak shared ancestry with the concept of dreams, which, in turn, was also Carl Gustav Jung's unit of analysis which started the research on archetypes. The translation of *imaginatio* as *bildunga* has likely been influenced by the intellectual environment in which the ancient philosophical texts (Roman and Greek) have been translated. In the 13th century, the ancient writings have been translated by religious institutions and individuals and, at least partially, also been interpreted by them. Therefore, the term *bildunga* resembles further religious vocabulary (cf. Hellmeier, 2016, p. 73), such as *Ebenbild* (image in which God created man) or *Bildsamkeit* (the ability to be formed in God's intended way). However, the term also has, depending on the translation, connections to the sphere of dreams. Since its earliest days, *bildunga* has not just described the natural form or look of an entity or person but also the process of shape-giving (cf. Kluge 1989), just as archetypal narration also features both, the starting point of the (incomplete) hero as well as the journey towards redemption. In the course of the Middle Ages, the processual traits of the term gained momentum and *Bildung* developed from a descriptor of a state (i.e. an image) primarily

to an action, process, or event (cf. Schneider, 2012, p. 304). From the 13th century onwards, the process of *Bildung* could also be described as a process of personal growth and ultimately completion which, if it works, unites the human soul with God (cf. Bechthold-Hengelhaupt, 1990, p. 482). The similarity to the hero archetype is rather striking as the imperfect human being (hero) completes him-/herself in God's intended way (the highest, divine ideal) in order to live up to his/her potential. This journey of atonement/at-one-ment tremendously resembles archetypical narration as Christianity – like most religions – features a plethora of archetypical motives and patterns.

It can be argued that Christian teachings and scripture have massively been influenced by the same (un- or subconscious) patterns and processes which also drive archetypical narration and as Christianity as well as its institutions have exercised great influence on the translation and interpretation of *Bildung*, *Bildung* also follows this shared pattern. Glimpses of this shared basis can be found in the dream-like origin of the hero archetype as well as *Bildung*. Further, the focalizing points of both – archetypical narration as well as *Bildung* – are identical as the two concepts address the individual human being as the meaningful unit of analysis (cf. Rieger-Ladich, 2019, p. 35/36). Also, the two concepts are growth oriented and are suspected to have redemptive power. Apart from a strong focus on the individual and its growth, the relationship between the individual and society at large appear similar in the concept of *Bildung* as well as archetypical narration. While the “revolutionary hero reorders the protective structure of society, when the emergence of an anomaly makes such reordering necessary” (Peterson, 1999, p. 271), ideals of *Bildung* – mostly stemming from ancient Greek philosophy (cf. Horlacher, 2011) – demand that “moral value is centered within a person” (Birmingham, 2004, p. 316) and that this moral value produces “good [...] beyond being” (McGuirk, 2008, p. 170) through the heroic act of “performing and hence embodying virtuous actions in public” (Hawhee, 2002, p. 187). While these ideas and ideals related to *Bildung* have often been ascribed to its predecessor of Ancient Greek philosophy, it can also be argued that the common core lies at the archetypical level and, as such, in evolutionary

biology, cognition, and ancient variations of religions. The relation of the individual and society as formulated by *Bildung* and the hero archetype even share a larger degree of similarity as they both advocate idea of embeddedness. Just as an individual action is nested in a larger culture, belief, and thereby (hero) narrative (cf. Eliade, 2016), the Ancient “Greeks thought of culture as character” (Gaddis, 2018, p. 44) and thereby tied together individual behavior to their larger beliefs and societal structures. Lastly, it should also be mentioned that the redemptive pattern in archetypical narration as well as in processes of *Bildung* always consists of two foci: practical skills as well as a moral dimension (cf. Neuhaus, 2021). Just as Jesus was a craftsman but also a figure of moral authority – he was giving shape to things and people, just as *Bildung* does (cf. Kluge, 1989) – the hero also has to develop in terms of his/her craft as well as morally. Summarily, it can be stated that – due to the rather direct mode of transmission – the concept of *Bildung* has tremendously been shaped by religious idea(l)s. Luhmann and Schorr (cf., 1988) even go as so far to label *Bildung* as pedagogy’s “God-term”. While a considerable amount of scholarly work conceptualizes *Bildung* as secularized religion (cf. Bühler et al., 2013, p. 7), this argument can be extended. Yes, *Bildung* can be seen as the secularization of religious idea(l)s; however, the roots of religion can be suspected in the archetypical patterns and, as such, also *Bildung* partly follows these patterns. Therefore, *Bildung* can be considered yet another temporally and culturally specific re-telling of the archetypical pattern. And just as *Bildung*’s religious underpinnings can be observed every now and then (cf. Kossellek, 2010/1990, p. 114), *Bildung*’s archetypical structure can also be seen. This is particularly true if the etymological origin of the term as well as its shared assumptions are considered.

Processes of Learning and Bildung in Schools: After having argued that from its earliest days onwards, *Bildung* and has had religious (and with that also archetypical) underpinnings, the second part of the argument will primarily focus on learning processes in institutionalized school settings. Processes of learning can be considered a meaningful part of *Bildung* and are – among other scenarios and settings – elicited by *Bildungsinstitutionen* (cf. Neuhaus, Jacobsen & Vogt, 2021) and,

at least in part, guided by theories of and research on learning. Therefore, a study on the archetypal pattern of *Bildung* must also consider its real-life realization.

Generally speaking, learning processes can be considered the creation of (cognitive) orders from prior chaos. The unknown (i.e. material, skill, or phenomenon) is gradually transformed and integrated into existing structures. Also, this transformative action expands the existing structures, processes which Jean Piaget described as assimilation and accommodation (cf. Piaget, 1975). This observable pattern led some to the conclusion that learning processes in schools should, regarding structure and patterns, oriented themselves on blockbuster movies (cf. Walden, 2015). These movies are the latest realization of the hero archetype which hints at a common theme of the two. Further, the act of transforming the unknown into order – i.e. by actively acquiring skills or understanding a material – is positively connoted as many learners experience positive feelings of being fully engaged in a successful learning process (cf. Deslauriers et al., 2019). Thereby, it can be argued that the emotional feedback structure which is activated when going through successful learning processes could be the same serotonergic circuit which is activated when following the archetypal pattern² (cf. Peterson, 2008, p. 14/15). Following this line of thought, successful learning processes not just provide feelings of accomplishment but also constitute a mode in which meaning is perceived (cf. Peterson/Flanders, 2002, p. 439/440) – an argument which is brought forward by educational psychology (cf. Ignelzi, 2000) as well as *Bildung's* advocates (cf. Humboldt, 1792/2002, p. 64). Additionally, optimal processes of learning have been described as making the involved individual ignorant of time, a state Csikszentmihalyi (2008) called *Flow* – just as Jung and Campbell have argued, time flows differently on the borders

2 Peterson (2008, p. 14) refers to these as “class 3 meanings” in contrast to class 1 and 2 meanings. Class 1 describes the meanings being perceived when orienting oneself in the determinate world, class 2 meanings occur when being confronted with anomaly (the indeterminate world) and class 3 meanings emerge when having the ability to transform class 2 occurrences into class 1 occurrences.

of the known and unknown world. Yet, learning processes rarely constitute individual occurrences but are embedded into a meta-structure (cf. Peterson & Flanders, 2002, p. 436): an exercise is part of a lesson, which is part of teaching sequence and subject, which in turn is embedded into a school as well as a curriculum, which again is part of a wider culture (cf. Berger & Luckmann, 1969/1980). The same holds true for the archetypical pattern which can be found in low-resolution manifestations (i.e. individual action) which then integrates into larger patterns of life (cf. Eliade, 2016). While being embedded into larger structures of existence, learning processes also follow the (infamous) learning curve (cf. Zangwill & Kantor, 1998, p. 914), in which learners reach peaks which are separated by valleys. These wave-like and upward-directed structures tremendously resemble Sewall Wright's landscape of evolutionary fitness which – that is at least the argument – has a connection to archetypical developments as the hero archetype appears to be the (meta-)story of the evolutionary necessity of niche switching (reaching new peaks). Each successful niche switching process could also be read as a learning process in which a new (adaptive) skill is learned and a new niche is conquered. Therefore, learning processes bear great resemblance with the archetypical pattern. As a closing remark on the matter, two last aspects should be considered: firstly, *Bildung* and learning – just as the archetypical pattern – do not have pre-defined aims but rather constitute infinitely repetitive structures; an inside shared by historical figures (i.e. Kant, Hegel, or Humboldt as shown by Vogt & Neuhaus, 2021) as well as current educational trends such as life-long learning (cf. Aspin & Chapman, 2000). Secondly, regarding their outcomes, *Bildung* as well as the hero archetype aim at a meaningful and autonomous life – an aim which a learner/hero can only accomplish when new skills are acquired and a more sophisticated morality is developed³ (cf. Neuhaus, 2021, p. 114).

3 Jung himself argued that education consists of three pillars: learning from example, learning norms and rules, and – arguably most important – learning about one's own unconscious (per definition, an unknown world); a process which Jung referred to as individuation (cf. Rowland, 2013, p. 2). The process of individuation

The Impossible Coda – Limitations and Future Research

This article attempted to unite the framework of the hero archetype with the concept of *Bildung* in order to explain why and how *Bildung* was able to transition to multiple and diverse contexts – an impossible task which this paper did not accomplish, at least not in the strict scientific sense. However, even though both concepts are fuzzy in nature, this paper could hopefully identify commonalities between the two and argue for their relatedness on a historical-etymological as well as practical level. Hopefully, this paper was able to illustrate that some of the hero archetype's narratological elements show some degree of correspondence to concepts, theories, and assumptions of *Bildung* as well as educational science at large; i.e. time running slowly or even standing still in the land of chaos/the underworld as a quite literal metaphor for the feeling of flow during a successful learning process (read as: transforming chaos into habitable, cognitive order). Of course, it could always be argued that concepts as abstract as archetypes and *Bildung* will always show some degree of similarity. However, this paper hopes that the provided pieces of evidence exceed the level of coincidental parallelisms. Future research regarding the cultural implementation and manifestation of archetypes as well as the mapping of *Bildung* in larger geographical, cultural, and temporal context will show whether the, in the course of this paper partly developed, idea stands on substantial grounds or is built on the proverbial sand.

shares great commonalities with concepts of *Bildung* as individuation should be understood as “a continual process of the ego being challenged, undermined, and remade by the richer creativity of the unconscious” (ibid.). Individuation has also been considered a key act of “self-education” (Semetsky & Ramey, 2013, p. 63) which is directed at a person's psychological wholeness.

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