

There is yet another dimension to the concept of *Bildung* that plays a crucial part in Humboldt's ideas. He takes notice of the fact that it can refer both to external reality and to the inner realm of the individual, too. Interestingly this internal-external bipolarity is not disjoined from the other, above mentioned duality: that it can be seen either as individual- or as community-centred. In his fragment entitled *Theory of human Bildung*⁴⁵ (1793—4), the interpersonal relationship takes priority over one's own self, and with it, a stress on the long term effects of one's action become more relevant: "the human being ... with no purpose directed at one particular thing, wants to strengthen and intensify the powers of his nature, and to furnish his own being with value and permanence."⁴⁶ While *Bildung* is still about self-formation, its success is not independent of long term public recognition.

Making use of the Aristotelian conceptual distinction between matter and form, Humboldt joins the main tenor of classical German philosophy, when he writes that the power operating in man, his reasoning capacity is "pure form," which "needs matter, to express itself in it, and thus to survive."⁴⁷ In order to find raw material through which it can express itself, reasoning turns towards the external world, to gather knowledge and pursue activity. This is the explanation why for the individual the important thing is not what he acquires from the world, but what reactions he receives by his own activity, which reconstructs the individual's inner temple. It is "his own internal improvement, ennobling, or at least the pacification of his own turmoil, which tortures him."⁴⁸ By learning more about the world, in fact, he understands only himself better. Through his activity in the external world he wants to make only his inner self free and independent.

One should, of course, recognise that behind these ideas lies the Kantian teaching of the human being knowing herself, and this way showing both to herself and the world her dignity and analogy to God, in a more elaborate form. This is revealed in the detail of his teaching that the individual becomes a part of the wholeness of humanity by the cognition of her own particularity. The human race is characterised by the values that the individual targets through this reflected way: cultivation (*Bildung*), wisdom (*Weisheit*) and virtue (*Tugend*).

⁴⁵ See Wilhelm v o n H u m b o l d t, "Theorie der Bildung des Menschen," in *Allgemeine Bildung. Analysen zu ihrer Wirklichkeit, Versuche über ihre Zukunft*, ed. H.E. Tenroth (Weinheim-München: Juventa Verlag, 1986), 32–8 (available at <http://www2.ibw.uni-heidelberg.de/~aeschule/HumboldtTB.pdf>).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*