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DISCONTINUITY AS THEORETICAL FOUNDATION TO PEDAGOGY

EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGY IN OTTO FRIEDRICH BOLLNOW'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION
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Abstract
This study examines German educational philosopher Otto Friedrich Bollnow’s (1903–1991) existential-hermeneutic theory of discontinuous forms of education, unstetige formen der Erziehung. At the core of this theory is a view of human being subjected to education that appears disruptive and critical, influencing the development of disclosing the true powers of a person and unfolding of truths about oneself that could not be uncovered otherwise. Typically, this theory has been interpreted on the continuum of hermeneutic philosophy, as hermeneutic pedagogy with an extension of Martin Heidegger’s fundamental ontology, antisubjectivism and especially his theory of truth as unconcealment. According to this line of interpretation, Bollnow’s project brings an existential addition to classical pedagogical theories, as a level of appealing pedagogy. According to this existentialist view, education in a strict sense cannot really take place: it could not affect the true core of a person, nor this person could be subjected under any pedagogical influence in any meaningful way. The only task left for education is to appeal to the conscience of an already autonomous person. However, in this study it is claimed that this line of interpretation falls short to the fact that Bollnow’s philosophy of education builds heavily on his overall philosophical-anthropological project, which springs from Kant’s first critique and especially, as shown in this work, from Edmund Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology.

The study shows, that Bollnow’s discontinuous forms of education are not resulted from hermeneutic educational reality, with an extension of existential potentiality to authenticity of a person. In fact, one could not derive such a view from mere hermeneutics. Instead, what Bollnow’s structural view of educational reality indicates, is that it should be understood as a phenomenological description of a priori categorical structures. It is claimed in the work, that the discontinuous forms are the products of phenomenological reduction. They are derived from the direct experience within consciousness, from the essence of what is experienced, from the very nature of what is it like to be in a process of becoming human. From this perspective, from the subject-point, education cannot be described as a paradox of freedom and restriction between educator and educatee, nor transmission of culture between generations, but instead could be described as the subjective experience of being educated or educating oneself, disclosing oneself to oneself, which is constituted only by the necessary conditions of these subjective experiences of discontinuity.

Keywords: Bollnow, discontinuous forms of education, existentialism, formation, phenomenology, philosophy of education, subjectivity
Tiivistelmä


Tämä tutkimus osoittaa, ettei Bollnowin epäjatkuvan kasvatustuksen muodot pohjaudu hermeneuttiselle kasvatustodellisuudeelle, jota on jatkettu yksilön eksistentiaalisen autentisuuksen mahdollisuuuden ajatuksesta. Itse asiassa, kyseistä teoriaa ei voi johtaa hermeneutikasta. Sen sijaan, Bollnowin kasvatustodellisuuden tason mukaisen laajan tulkintatapana, jossa se nähdään *a prioris- ten* kategoriarakteiden fenomenologisena kuvauksena. Työssä vahvistetaan, että epäjatkuvat muodot ovat fenomenologisen reduktion tuotetta. Ne on johdettu tietoisuuden sisällöstä, välittömästi kokemuksista, niiden olemuksesta, toisin sanoen, sen luonteesta, että etätyöntä olla ihmiseksi tuliseminen prosessissa. Tästä yksilönnäkökulmasta käsint kasvatustuksista ei voida juurikaan vapauden ja pakon välisenä ristiriitana eikä kulttuurin välittämisenä sukuopleva toiselle, vaan sen sijaan sarjana subjektivisia katsomaisuutta kokemuksia kasvatetuksi tulemisesta ja itsekasvatuksesta, jossa yksilöläpaljastaa itselleen itselleen. Tämä näkemys kasvatuksesta konstituoituu subjektiviset kokemusten välittämiömyysehtojen kautta.

Asiasanat: Bollnow, eksistentialismi, epäjatkuvat kasvatustuksen muodot, fenomenologia, kasvatusfilosofia, sivistys, subjektiviteetti
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1 Introduction: An Onto-Phenomenological\(^1\) Foundation to Educational Theory? The Task and its Aims

In the Continental tradition of philosophy of education, or *Allgemeine Pädagogik* (general pedagogy), a notable onto-phenomenological trail emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century. Alongside Theodor Ballauf and Eberhard Grisebach, the main representative of this trail of the existential-hermeneutic theory of education was the German educational philosopher *Otto-Friedrich Bollnow* (1903–1991) (Wehner 2002). Bollnow was *Martin Heidegger*’s (1889–1976) student and trained both in physics and philosophy. As a philosopher and pedagogical thinker, he investigated the possibility of Heideggerian fundamental ontology as a foundation to pedagogical theory. He noted its weaknesses and its inability to function fully as one, although useful for articulating theoretical tools, which gave Bollnow a possibility to critically assess the classical assumptions of pedagogical theory.

This book is about this formulation of existential phenomenology by Bollnow and of its possibilities as a pedagogical theory. This is not an easy task. There are many lively philosophies of education, coming from the traditions of Continental thought and North-American pragmatism, but very seldom do we see existential educational thinking as something to be taken thoroughly seriously, or presented in the limelight of educational thinking. There are reasons for this. Specifically, it is hard to accept Existential phenomenology as the foundation of any stable and progressive educational theory.

In this book, I will articulate an interpretation of a formulation of onto-phenomenology in terms of pedagogical theory. This formulation is based on and functions as an assessment of Bollnow’s theory of discontinuous forms of education and its foundational theory of philosophical-pedagogical anthropology. His work is not easy to grasp in terms of understanding its theoretical background or “home.” Bollnow combines *Wilhelm Dilthey’s* philosophy of life with Heidegger’s existential-phenomenological perspectives of being human. There is also a significant amount of *Edmund Husserl’s* transcendental phenomenology involved as a foundational tool. All of these theoretical traditions are combined together in a modular fashion, to form what Bollnow described as philosophical-

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\(^1\) When phenomenology develops with explicit reference to Being, it may be called onto-phenomenology (Guerrière 1990: 76).
pedagogical anthropology. But is this modular construction stable and functional? Does this theoretical system, or rather, modular system of traditions, bring forth any significant aspects of becoming human being that couldn’t be grasped by any other theoretical perspective? And does this theory of Bollnow have anything to contribute to contemporary educational theoretical discussions?

I will make a re-assessment of Bollnow’s existential-hermeneutic pedagogy in terms of its fruitfulness to pedagogical theory and contemporary educational discussions. My research aims can be articulated as follows:

1. I will make a thorough articulation of what kind of theoretical and methodological foundation Bollnow’s existential pedagogy is based on.
2. I will formulate a contemporary understanding of the core concepts of Bollnow’s discontinuous forms of education on the basis of the articulation of the theoretical background.
3. I will evaluate Bollnow’s theory on the following basis: Is it a meaningful and sound pedagogical theory?
4. I will also articulate some possible topics for further theoretical work on the basis of Bollnow’s theory in order to establish its fruitfulness in contemporary educational theory.

In a nutshell, I will re-evaluate the possibilities for existential-phenomenological pedagogical theory in light of Bollnow’s formulation. This requires not only a significant understanding of Bollnow’s rather complicated play between different theoretical traditions, which at times contradict each other, but also a rather thorough understanding of the existential philosophical and phenomenological backgrounds themselves.

The initial assumption underlying my attempt is that Bollnow’s existential-hermeneutic pedagogical project should be understood as a thoroughly phenomenological project in its purest Husserlian meaning: it offers a notion that establishes a constitutive level of interpretation in the philosophical-pedagogical anthropology. The all-round framework for this anthropology, combining existential phenomenology and hermeneutics, is in phenomenology. I claim that Bollnow sets the phenomenological position on Heidegger in a way that does not sufficiently appreciate its obvious connection to Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology. I attempt to articulate that Bollnow’s overall project is leaning in a more Husserlian phenomenological direction than what Bollnow himself may have assumed. Despite its obvious closeness to Heideggerian existential hermeneutics and some neo-Kantian tendencies, Bollnow’s philosophical-
pedagogical anthropology is in fact an instance of Husserlian phenomenological research. My attempt in this thesis is therefore meta-theoretical. Although, articulating as clearly as possible what the theoretical foundations to Bollnow’s project are, my approach constitutes fundamentally what the object of “discontinuous forms of education” in reality is.

But is my approach, my Husserian reading legitimate? The apparent starting point for locating Bollnow theoretically has been to Diltheyan tradition. This has been the main interpretive current in Bollnow-studies for many decades (see e.g. Paczkowska-Lagowska 1978, Okamoto 1971). Herbert Tschamler lists Bollnow in the theoretical branch of hermeneutic-existential philosophical pedagogy (Tschamblger 1983: 145). This view is also supported by Lassahn, pointing out the Jaspersian character of Bollnow’s pedagogy, namely the critical aspects to education and fundamental development through Grenzsituationen, border situations, such as illness and crises (Lassahn 1978: 55). This combination of hermeneutics and existentialism has become a standard interpretation over the years (see also Siljander 1988). Bollnow has been seen as an existential-hermeneutic thinker, even still in recent interpretations, such as in Koerrenz (2004). Wehner (2002) has stressed the role of existentialism in Bollnow’s thinking, although not abandoning the standard interpretation completely. However, there are views that deviate from this standard interpretation. Danner (1989) lists Bollnow in the phenomenological branch of educational theory, as having a specifically Husserlian orientation (Danner 1989: 143). Heitger (1961) points out foundational aspects and views on science in Bollnow’s existential pedagogy, which come close to Husserlian natural attitude as critique towards naïve scientism and science-likeness (Heitger 1961: 61). Also Loch mentions Bollnow’s life crises as distinct life phenomena, through which the fundamental question of becoming human in philosophical anthropology comes to have a specifically phenomenological nature (Loch 1963: 95). The first “evidence” I have come to notice towards my line of argumentation in Bollnow’s works is seen in the article Philosophische Anthropologie und ihre methodische Prinzipien (1974b). In it, Bollnow sees phenomenological reduction in a remarkably Husserlian sense as the core of anthropological research (Bollnow 1974b: 28). As an outcome of this kind of research, Bollnow mentions the discontinuous forms of education. Therefore I am fairly confident that this phenomenological view on Bollnow has a fertile ground, and seems as a fruitful departure for new and original research.
As a phenomenological project, Bollnow’s anthropology does not attempt to understand the discontinuous forms of education as part of being human in an essentially existential way *per se*, as that would lead to obvious theoretical problems and dead ends in pedagogical theorizing, as Bollnow himself has pointed out. Instead, discontinuous forms of education are *descriptive tools of a certain category of description in educational reality*. This category is an ontophenomenological category and is not reducible to any other categories of description, such as hermeneutic descriptions of pedagogy. Therefore, Bollnow’s project dodges the obvious dead ends in pedagogical thought it has realized, claiming these other categories as a modular part of the overall project of understanding the human being through philosophical-pedagogical anthropology. However, while articulating this modular theoretical structure, having phenomenology as its framework theory, Bollnow underdevelops the relationship of the structure with its framework. Bollnow does not explicate the connection of his project with Husserl’s phenomenology elaborately. However, it can be seen as the overall framework of Bollnow’s project, even to the extent I will attempt to articulate in this thesis.

1.1 Understanding a Writer Better than He Understood Himself: On the Method of this Study

The title of this chapter comes from Bollnow himself. He writes of interpretation as better-understanding in his book *Das Verstehen: Drei Aufsätze zur Theorie der Geisteswissenschaften* (Understanding: Three Essays on the Theory of Humanities, 1949). As for pursuing what I believe to be a process of better-understanding in this study myself, I will assess what is meant with the treatment of interpretation and understanding in the hermeneutic tradition, and use the outcome as the basis for my own practice of interpretation and understanding.

In *Einführung in die Geisteswissenschaften* (Introduction to the Human Sciences) (Dilthey 1883: 335), Wilhelm Dilthey speaks of the rule of understanding a subject better than the author understood himself. “His labelling of this phrase as a rule of interpretation would indicate that it is a familiar notion to him from the history of philosophical methodology. Like many of Dilthey’s ideas about procedures in the humanities, especially the *hermeneutic circle*, this one can be traced back to *Friedrich Schleiermacher*” (Bollnow 1949: 1). But even Schleiermacher treats this idea as something familiar, stating only that in general, there is some truth in the formula that the highest perfection of interpretation
consists in understanding an author better than he could account for himself (Bollnow 1949: 1, Dilthey 1883, 1860–1903, 1910). According to Bollnow, August Boeckh adopted this idea from Schleiermacher, developing it further in his *Encyclopädie und Methodologie der Philologischen Wissenschaften* (*Encyclopedia and Methodology of the Philological Sciences*) (Bollnow 1949: 2). He states that “the interpreter must understand the author not only as well as, but even better than he understands himself” (Bollnow 1949: 87). But if even Schleiermacher calls this phrase a formula, which has some truth about it, he too would seem to be referring to something familiar, something that was also so well known that he could spare himself explicit citation of the source of the phrase. The most important sources before Schleiermacher are the well-known passages at the beginning of the *Transcendental Dialectic* in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (*Critique of Pure Reason*), in which Immanuel Kant refers to Plato when introducing his doctrine of ideas. In order to justify his own view, which differs from that of Plato, Kant remarks that:

> it is by no means unusual, upon comparing the thoughts which an author has expressed in regard to his subject, whether in private conversation or in writing, to find that we understand him even better than he understood himself. As he has not sufficiently determined his concept, he has sometimes spoken, or even thought, in opposition to his own intention.\(^2\) (Kant 2007 [1781]: 370).

The phrase occurs also in Fichte, who was no doubt familiar with the Kantian text, in the last of his *Lectures on the Vocation of the Scholar* (*Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten*) (Fichte 1845/1846), in which he disputed the doctrines of Rousseau by first demonstrating and then resolving their contradictions. Fichte says here, “We will resolve the contradiction; we will understand Rousseau better than he understood himself, and we will then find that he is in complete agreement with himself and with us”\(^3\) (Fichte 1845/1846: 265). The justification for this procedure becomes clearly expressed here, as well as its


\(^3\) “Wir werden den Widerspruch lösen; wir werden Rousseau besser verstehen, als er selbst sich verstand, und wir werden ihn dann in vollkommener Übereinstimmung mit sich selbst und mit uns antreffen” (Fichte 1845/1846: 265).
unavoidable violence. In the same way, although in a more specific and politically nationalistic context, Fichte states that a German “can understand” a foreigner “completely, even better than he can understand himself” (Fichte 1845/1846: 437). Not many years later, Johann Friedrich Herbart defended his own work against the arbitrary use of this procedure: “what is expressed here is I hope, neither new enough nor old enough to excite anyone’s desire to make it conform to strange theories, and to want to understand it better than the author”⁴ (Herbart 1971: 48).

The passage from Kant is understandable. Boeckh brings further hermeneutic light to the formulation, which functions as the starting point for a thorough discussion of the essence of scientific interpretation:

_The writer is for the most part unconscious of the laws of grammar and style that he follows as he composes. The interpreter, on the other hand, cannot interpret thoroughly without becoming explicitly aware of those laws, for the interpreter must reflect; the author produces, but he reflects upon his work only if he himself stands above it as an interpreter. It follows that the interpreter must understand the author not only as well as but even better than he understands himself. For the interpreter must bring to full consciousness what the author created unconsciously, and in this process much will be disclosed to him which was unknown to the author himself._⁵ (Bollnow 1949: 87).

The relation between producing and reflecting is a decisive one. The former occurs unconsciously; while this may not be true of content, it is true of form, of the laws of grammar and style. But the activity of the interpreter occurs in full consciousness. It must objectify in some way what remained hidden to the writer himself. Consequently, it can disclose things, which have remained hidden to the author himself. The idea is presented in a similar manner by Dilthey:

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⁴ “Das hier Vorgetragene ... ist hoffentlich nicht neu und nicht alt genug, um jemanden Lust zu machen, es auf fremde Theorien zu reimen, und es besser als der Verfasser verstehen zu wollen” (Herbart 1971: 48).

⁵ “Der Schriftsteller komponiert nach Gesetzen der Grammatik und Stilistik, aber meist nur bewußtlos. Der Erklärer dagegen kann nicht vollständig erklären, ohne sich jener Gesetze bewußt zu werden, denn der Verstehende reflektiert ja; der Autor produziert, er reflektiert nur dann über sein Werk, wenn er selbst wieder gleichsam als Ausleger über denselben steht. Hieraus folgt, daß der Ausleger den Autor nicht nur ebensogut, sondern sogar besser noch verstehen muß als er sich selbst. Denn der Ausleger muß das, was der Autor bewußt-los geschaffen hat, zum klaren Bewußtsein bringen, und hierbei werden sich ihm alsdann auch manche Aussichten erschließen, welche dem Autor selbst fremd gewesen sind” (Bollnow 1949: 87).
The rule: understand better than the author understood himself, which also solves the problem of the idea of a literary work. It is present not as an expressed thought but as an unconscious context which is operative in the organization of a work, and from whose inner form understanding arises; a writer does not need it – indeed, will never be fully conscious of it; the interpreter draws it out, and that is perhaps the supreme triumph of Hermeneutics.\(^6\) (Dilthey 1883: 335).

At first, the thought here appears to be the same: the inner form of the creation is not conscious to the creator himself but can and must be drawn out by the interpreter. But at the same time, the doctrine is decisively deepened here. Dilthey’s inner form of the work replaces Boeckh’s laws of grammar and style and is bound so tightly to the idea of a literary work that the act of understanding better goes beyond mere form, penetrating deeply into the thematic heart of the work itself. Dilthey believed that creation, not only of form but also of content, proceeds unconsciously. This is Dilthey’s doctrine of unconscious creation. According to Dilthey, understanding an author better than he understood himself is possible because creation takes place unconsciously and comes to full consciousness only during interpretation. “And understanding the author better than he understood himself is possible to the extent and only to the extent that creation takes place in the unconscious\(^7\)” (Bollnow 1949: 4). At the same time, a new problem arises, to understand not only the complete but the incomplete, that is, not restricting ourselves to those objects in which a certainty of understanding is guaranteed by their very nature, but venturing out into the uncertain, trying to grasp what is meant and intended in a work, even if it has not been brought to full expression. The task is to understand not only what a writer actually said in the very words of his statement, but to go beyond that and understand what he “wanted to say” (Heidegger, 1919: 193). “Such better-understanding is possible only when conclusiveness is not achieved in a work, when a certain imprecision remains in the work itself” (Bollnow 1949: 7). One is confining oneself to the more important contradictions, which cannot be resolved by referring to the work

\(^6\) “Aus der Regel: besser verstehen, als der Autor sich verstanden hat, löst sich auch das Problem von der Idee einer Dichtung. Sie ist [nicht als ausdrücklicher Gedanke, aber] im Sinn eines unbewußten Zusammenhangs, der in der Organisation des Werkes wirksam ist, und aus dessen innerer Form verstanden wird, vorhanden; ein Dichter braucht sie nicht, ja wird nie ganz bewußt sein; der Ausleger hebt sie heraus, und das ist vielleicht der höchste Triumph der Hermeneutik” (Dilthey 1883: 335).

\(^7\) “Und einen Autor besser zu verstehen, als er sich selber verstanden hat, ist so weit und nur so weit möglich, als eben das Schaffen im Unbewußten verläuft” (Bollnow 1949: 4).
as a whole, but are integral to the work as such. “A thought process has apparently not arrived at its full conclusion” (ibid.: 7). This can have two reasons. “One is the incompetence of the writer, in which case the matter is not worth further effort, or it can mean that important and decisive matters are being dealt with, whose mastery is beyond the power of a single individual. In this case, one’s task must be to reach beyond the words themselves and pursue the thought process operative here, so that one can understand what was meant and intended” (ibid.: 7). When one attempts not only to interpret the completed work but also to use it to penetrate into its subject matter itself, this subject matter provides a context in the light of which what was incompletely or even incorrectly expressed can be recognized and corrected. “This requires having the thematic insight that will complete what has not been fully developed in the text. And the prerequisite of this possibility is that the text is determinate at least to the extent that its goal can be ascertained with sufficient clarity” (ibid.: 8).

Every writer’s achievement is grounded in a specific world view; but he need not be aware of this ground. In fact, only to a very limited extent can he know of it at all. It is a part of the essence of human life to be supported at every moment by an understanding of life which gives direction but which can never be made objective in its entirety. (Bollnow 1949: 8).

Creativity is supported by this understanding, but creativity looks away from itself and toward its subject matter. “It sees only its subject matter and not its own relation to it” (ibid.: 8). For the interpreter, on the other hand, this background is not self-evident. He or she can gain access to the work only by working out this background and understanding the work in the light of it. This means, in the end, that the understanding of the creator and the understanding of the interpreter never become the same, they never coincide. “They do not see the same thing but different aspects of the same thing” (ibid.: 8). “This occurs not only because what is important to the one is unimportant to the other, but also for the deeper reason that the interpreter can see more than the creator, who is, in a sense, entangled in his work” (ibid.: 8). One is again confronted by the complex relationship between self-understanding and the understanding of others. “The claim to understand an author better loses its presumptuousness, if only because we can now see that the interpreter must necessarily understand other than, and thus in some ways more than, the one who is understood” (ibid.: 9). The claim loses its presumptuousness also because this better-understanding occurs only in a certain definite sense and
does not at all mean that the interpreter has exhausted the full extent of the work to be understood.

When one leaves the level of purely logical conclusiveness and enters the realm of expressions of human life whose coherence depends upon the worldview proportionate to that life, interpretation cannot be satisfied with repeating what the writer said. Since the interpreter is another person, and since what was self-evident to the author is not self-evident to the interpreter, he or she must elucidate the background from which the work has arisen. He cannot understand the writer as the writer understood himself, but if he is to understand him at all he must go beyond what the writer expressly said about himself, and even beyond what he expressly knew about himself. This means that the interpreter must understand the author better than the author understood himself. Thus, “better-understanding is by no means an intensification of understanding-just-as-well, but lies on an entirely different plane” (Bollnow 1949: 9). In the end, there is no understanding that is not essentially a better understanding.

Better understanding depends upon the interpreter’s distance whereby he can objectify the writer’s position as a whole from the outside, whereas the writer himself is so immersed in all of the unexpressed presuppositions of his worldview that he can never be totally conscious of it. (Bollnow 1949: 9).

Better-understanding is a consequence of the difference of standpoint and the different possibilities for perception that arise when a world is seen from within a subjective viewpoint and from without this viewpoint. The fact that no one can be conscious of what is self-evident permits us to speak of unconscious creation. But this sense of unconscious creation must be sharply distinguished from the notion of unconscious creation developed primarily by Dilthey. Only by considering this theory can one achieve the deepest understanding of the maxim. One must first understand precisely what Dilthey meant by “expression” (Ausdruck) or “experiential expression” (Erlebnisausdruck). Expression can be distinguished from other forms of human creativity by the way it reaches down into the depths of the unconscious life. Expression is human creation insofar as it is something formed in the process of creation out of the depths of the unconscious life. What is formed is not previously known to the creator, and may even surprise him or her. “In the work of expression, understanding-just-as-well is meaningless because in expression the person does not understand himself at all, for he is creating from out of the unconscious. He may understand himself later when he observes his own work, looking back on it as a stranger” (Bollnow 1949: 10).
Expression thus has the profound result of creatively producing something new from the depths of life, in a manner unconscious even to the creator himself. “Only in this relationship to the unconscious is human life creative in the true sense” (ibid.: 10). Because expression does not understand itself as an object, it needs the interpretive understanding, which will draw out what is contained in it and bring it to full consciousness. So expression and interpretation, creation and understanding reciprocally need each other. “Only in this reciprocal relationship is the development of spirit accomplished” (ibid.: 10). Expression is creative but is in itself blind and indeterminate. And conceptual interpretation cannot create anything of itself, but must refer to a previous achievement of unconsciously creative life. Only through interpretation can the meaning of this achievement be brought out.

Every understanding of expression is necessarily a better-understanding because, first, a person does not understand his expression of himself; which requires interpretation for its own completion; and because, second, interpretation is essentially a creative activity, which wrests a meaning from what was disclosed in expression. (Bollnow 1949: 10).

Interpretation is disclosed as “ultimately a process of creative development, in which the one who understands and the one understood participate together in the reciprocally alternating developmental course of spirit” (Bollnow 1949: 10). Understanding in the sense of a truly creative development is possible only insofar as the one who understands and the one understood genuinely have something in common, as if it could be said that the same life created both the expression and the interpretation, which appropriates it. Only within such community it is possible for the content of expression to be continued in a new effort, in which one person really develops the work of another. “The creative possibility of interpretation ceases when a gap separates the one who understands from the one who is understood” (ibid.: 11). The ultimate possibilities of understanding can come into play only when the one who understands affirms the one who is understood in an innermost union.

This is the foremost methodological aim of this Bollnow–study. The process of understanding Bollnow’s phenomenology is ultimately a creative development by myself, the researcher. This creative process not only aims at an innermost

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8 The views expressed here come also close to Hans-Georg Gadamer’s descriptive historicism. This however, is a separate, distinguishable view from the one Bollnow follows directly from Dilthey.
union of the one who understands and the one who is being understood, but that the understanding of what is being understood exceeds the latter understanding. My aim is to understand Bollnow better than he understood himself: I aim to articulate certain methodological and philosophical foundations to his project which he did not articulate himself to the best possible clarity. Here plays the unconscious a specific role at Bollnow’s creative work. His own creative process of existential phenomenological foundations to pedagogy was directed not only by his conscious knowledge and understanding of phenomenological hermeneutics, but that unconsciously he came to articulate something that deviates from mere Heideggerian approach to the direction of transcendental phenomenology. This is perhaps not only a philosophical accident, but perhaps the result of Bollnow’s own innermost worldview.

How come my interpretation as better understanding could be free from being merely a mistake? It is exactly the nature of doing an interpretation that relieves my attempt from becoming a complete mistake or misunderstanding. Interpretation as better-understanding, as mentioned by Bollnow above, is in its very nature a creative process. My interpretation in this dissertation is an act of creative study. Therefore the outcome of my creative understanding cannot be emptied to a remark of a mere mistake, but instead it portrays an original viewpoint.

1.2 Bollnow: An Overview

I will do next a complete overview of Bollnow’s work, as it is to be seen that all of the different theoretical paths during his active working live wound up together in the phenomenological project presented in this study. Therefore not many of his work nor crucial points in his life can be left unmentioned.

Otto Friedrich Bollnow was born March 14 1903 in Stettin into a family of teachers. His father, Otto Bollnow had taken a lively interest in the educational reform efforts after the First World War, and during World War Two, he worked as a rector in Anklam, at a newly constructed school he had helped to build. He was especially concerned with the establishment of a school daycare, an effort for which he was highly noted by Herman Nohl, but alas did not come to have general recognition for it.

Bollnow’s early career plans were not to become a university teacher. Appropriately, after going to school in Szczecin (Stettin) and Anklam 1921, he began studying architecture, physics, and mathematics in Berlin. There he
participated in a group of the "youth movement," which for him was a vital educational experience. During his studies at the University of Berlin, he was influenced by Eduard Spranger and Alois Riehl. In 1923, he went to study physics and mathematics and took also part in Hermann Schwarz’s seminar on Schleiermacher at Greifswald. In 1924, he went to Göttingen to study with Max Born and James Frank, both of whom later became Nobel laureates, and received his doctorate in 1925 with a thesis on the Gittertheorie der Kristalle des Titanoxyds, Rutil und Anatas (Lattice Theory of the Titanium Oxide Crystals, Rutile and Anatase). In addition, he listened to the lectures of Georg Misch and Herman Nohl. While Born was in the USA, Bollnow worked as a teacher at Paul Geheeb’s Odenwald school. The Odenwaldschule was a land reform school Paul Geheeb (1870–1961) had founded in 1910, in collaboration with Hermann Lietz and Gustav Wyneken. With the support of Martin Wagenschein, Bollnow was named as an honorary professor at the University of Tübingen in 1956. Wagenschein left a strong impression on Bollnow. In a way, it is interpretable that given the strong influence of Martin Wagenschein and especially Paul Geheeb in the winter of 1925–26 at the Odenwald school, Bollnow came to the conclusion to turn away from physics and mathematics toward philosophy and pedagogy. When Bollnow came back as an assistant for Born in Göttingen, the inner relationship with the field of physics was gone, but he found that the more directly human affairs were more important, and began to study philosophy and pedagogy.

Jointly written articles with Max Born brought generous monetary funding for Bollnow, in order to study philosophy and art history with Spranger in Berlin for a semester. He then went back to Göttingen for the wish of his father, to take a state examination for teaching at secondary schools, and continued working with Georg Misch and Herman Nohl. Bollnow had his academic home in Göttingen. In 1927, Heidegger published Sein und Zeit (Being and Time), which impressed Bollnow deeply. This influence was the reason for Bollnow to move to Marburg to study with Heidegger, and to follow him for two more semesters to Freiburg. He then returned to Misch and Nohl in Göttingen in the fall of 1929, where he worked on his Habilitationschrift, habilitation work on Die Lebensphilosophie F.H. Jacobis (The Life Philosophy of F. H. Jacobi).

In the winter semester of 1929–30, Bollnow heard Misch's lecture on hermeneutic logic, in which he tried to hold out the vitalistic approach to the logic arriving from the Dilthey school. Though Bollnow aimed his own work in a different direction, this lecture was the culmination of his studies. In fact, this "Göttingen logic" made a lasting effect on his method. In addition, he participated
in seminars by Moritz Geiger and Herman Nohl. The years 1927–1929 were crucial for Bollnow mainly for three important publications. First, for the appearance of Dilthey's *Gesammelte Werke* (Collected Works, Vol VII, 1927), secondly, for Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time, 1927), and thirdly, Misch's book, *Lebensphilosophie und Phänomenologie: Eine Auseinandersetzung der Diltheyschen Richtung mit Heidegger und Husserl* (Life Philosophy and Phenomenology: A Discussion of Dilthey's Direction with Heidegger and Husserl, 1929–30).

The influences of these three works of Dilthey, Heidegger, and Misch were conductive to the design of Bollnow's themes throughout his work. Bollnow was very strongly influenced by Heidegger's students Misch and Nohl, but he was thinking much more in the area of conflict to the positions of Heidegger and Misch. "It is one of those coincidences of the human story," complains Frithjof Rodi, a student of Bollnow's, "that the important Volume VII of Dilthey's collected writings came out immediately before the appearance of *Sein und Zeit*" (Rodi 1969: 14). From there, no more influence on Dilthey's work was possible; even the points of contact were not discussed. Of continuing the conversation between the Göttingen Dilthey school and the phenomenologists themselves, it is not self-evident to say that Husserl and Heidegger expressed their willingness to continue the dialogue. The fact that this did not come to be the case can today without exaggeration be understood as one of the great failures of the philosophy of the twentieth century. With regard to the following years, it could be indicated that Bollnow's writings alone gave information on these and related suggestions for the continuation of the discussion, the relation of Diltheyan hermeneutics and the phenomenologists Husserl and Heidegger and then the evolution of French existentialism (Rodi 1969: 16).

Bollnow sees an evolution in the early Heidegger in terms of the tasks of Dilthey's hermeneutics, the hermeneutics of facticity. Heidegger made a clear methodological identification to these hermeneutics, which he consciously practiced in *Sein und Zeit* as "the analysis of existence" or "hermeneutics of the theme of human existence." Heidegger, in his subsequent work, exacerbated the task of hermeneutics and came to see it as more than the mere analysis of the life context. In contrast to *Lebensphilosophie*, or philosophy of life, where the original course in the hermeneutic and the facticity wounds open as the essential structure, the self-aware hermeneutic method of fundamental ontology raised the essential structure of the original, carried by the facticity to a level that can only be understood from the facticity alone. This brought a separation of surface and
depth to the episode. Heidegger split the world into the ontic and the ontological, which was separated by Bollnow against Heidegger's ontology. Bollnow put a compass-like relationship of mutual determination between the essence and facticity, and claimed the immanence of Being in the facticity, with the methodical process of Bollnowian philosophical anthropology, affected particularly by Georg Misch, Helmut Plessner, and Hans Lipps.

Following Dilthey’s doctrine, Bollnow speaks—referring to Nohl—of a "hermeneutics of educational reality," i.e., of a systematic interpretation of the educational reality (Erziehungswirklichkeit) (Bollnow 1966: 119, 130). His method can be described as phenomenological hermeneutics. More accurately, it might not be seen in the beginning as purely phenomenological and only later as phenomenological hermeneutics, although this is not in the sense of Husserl's phenomenology, but understood perhaps in the way Hans Lipps puts it, namely, as an art of description, "which, unlike anything constructive and forceful advances in simplifying the patient work of distinguishing and comparing the 'phenomena' to get itself into the attempted view," and again by Lipps, as a process to proceed from natural language (Bollnow 1965: 42). To characterize the Bollnowian method, the words of Hermann Röhrs may be used here:

In general, we can understand Bollnow as a master of the structure of Dilthey's hermeneutical method with the succession of the phenomenological connection to the view. Precisely the methodology shows Bollnow's affinity to the vitalistic approach of Dilthey's, and life itself as to be interpreted with the phenomenological basic intention—despite unmistakable epistemological opposites with Husserl's concept of Lebenswelt. Bollnow has his hermeneutic conception of understanding as moduled design, such that it remains entirely open to the phenomenological method.⁹ (Röhrs 1968: 83).

In the spring of 1931, Bollnow was an assistant to Herman Nohl and completed his habilitation. In the foreword of this Habilitationsschrift he says: "The present work is related to a movement, which is currently emerging in Germany under the

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names of ‘philosophy of life’ and the ‘Existence’ and which is underway” 10 (Bollnow 1966 [1933]: 5).

It is significant to note that even as concerns the writing of the broad outlines of Bollnow’s life and work, the themes and issues he was occupied with were corresponding to a certain double origin: the hermeneutic philosophy of life by Wilhelm Dilthey and the existential-philosophical fundamental ontology by Martin Heidegger in particular, which in their core compounds were mediated by Herman Nohl to Bollnow’s awareness. These two origins are, as Bollnow points out in his work on existential philosophy and education, completely legible and relevant for his work and which to a certain extent are compatible in their own right. This double origin allowed a certain multifaceted approach, perspectivism or dialecticality, if one will, in contrast to a simple one-eyed, or rather monistic approach to practicing philosophy. What seems to be the main motif in Bollnow’s life work is clearly visible already in his habilitation: the philosophy of hope. Bollnow’s earlier works, however, dealt with the opposite mood of fear of believing in salvation, which as a body of work analyzed certain insights into the nature of man and his relation to the world, which was in clear contrast to Heidegger’s concepts of authenticity and inauthenticity as the determinants of a human being, and thus seemed highly incompatible with such thinking.

Bollnow lectured extensively on Brentano, Kierkegaard, and Dilthey, and naturally on the philosophy of his present time, existential philosophy and transcendental phenomenology. He wrote an elaborate critique of Jean-Paul Sartre’s existentialism in terms of the phenomenology of human condition in Being and Nothingness (L’être et le Néant) as a misinterpretation of Heidegger, who most certainly could be described as an early representative in post-metaphysical thinking. Sartre, however, turned Heidegger’s anti-foundationalism into Hegelianism. While Hegel’s absolute rationalism was represented through the idea of the spirit, Sartre introduced a more Husserlian concept of consciousness to replace Hegel’s Absolute. In terms of philosophy of mind, Sartre could be read as an externalist: the subject, to which we can refer to as ‘I’, is separated from the consciousness itself. The human is the temporal opportunity for or ability of the consciousness to emerge into the world. Bollnow criticizes such conceptions as a misreading of Heidegger. Sartre reads Heidegger in a Hegelian way. Bollnow also

10 “Die vorliegende Arbeit ist im Zusammenhang der Bewegung entstanden, die gegenwärtig in Deutschland als Philosophie des „Lebens“ und der „Existenz“ im Gange ist, und sucht auf dem Weg über die Geschichte zur Klärung der systematischen Fragen beizutragen” (Bollnow 1966 [1933]: 5).
wrote both critically but partially approvingly of Sartre’s ethics. What seemed problematically conceivable to Bollnow in Sartre’s radical ethics was the fact that the foundation to ethics should be thought to be the constitution of a human being: a human being does not have an essence to begin with, there is no essential picture of man as a yardstick, the standards of which everyone should learn to meet. And thus, there are no fixed choices one should make. Instead, a human being is able to reconstitute him- or herself as whomever he or she wants to be through making choices. To become something different, one ought to make different choices than those the person had made before. Ethically, the only reference of measuring moral choices is the individual him- or herself. The last point Bollnow agrees with, introducing an interesting new conception of a subjective conscience, which can be in contradiction to the external laws and norms of the society. Thus, conscience cannot be merely an internalization of these external rules and norms, but is awakened from within. However, Bollnow does not agree with Sartre on the idea of the essence of a man. For Bollnow, there is an essence of a person, or an authentic self, a true self, which can be awakened through a series of border-experiences, or, as Jaspers puts it, Grenzsituationen\(^\text{11}\). This reveals the possibility for reading Bollnow in a somewhat neo-Kantian fashion in contradiction to the standard interpretation of Bollnow as an anti-foundationalist in the fashion of Dilthey and Heidegger. Both Dilthey and Heidegger consider the constitution of a person as determinated by historicality and contextuality, and thus there is no ahistorical essence to a subject, or to any concept or idea in that regard. Bollnow seemed to interpret the Heideggerian authenticity in a rather essentialistic fashion. There is an essence to each and every one of us. On this understanding, Bollnow comes close to a fellow existence-philosopher, Karl Jaspers. Bollnow refers to Jaspers’ notion of existence while writing of his own notion of a true self. There is not much difference in these conceptions. Therefore, Bollnow’s essence of a person can be well illustrated through Jaspers’ notion of existence. For Jaspers, a person occupied by the banalities of the normal everyday life is a Dasein (a completely different notion than of that of Heidegger). Dasein, as an unreflective being as Jaspers points out, does not assess the life one is living, nor does Jaspers explore the possibilities of life and the world outside of the safe boundaries of this numbing comfort of everydayness. This awakening to the reality itself outside this banality,

\(^{11}\) On Jaspers’ existential philosophy and his notions of Dasein and Existenz and Grenzsituationen, see: Jaspers 1932, 2005 (1953), 1949 (1935).
awakening to Being, Transcendence (or God) can only happen through situations in which one is experiencing something completely different and alien from one’s own understanding and life-world. As stated before, Jaspers calls these border situations Grenzsituationen. Through these experiences, which cause the person to overcome the numbing comfort zone of the banality of Dasein, he or she is awakened to a true existence. In this awakened state, or Existen, one becomes aware of the Transcendence, which cannot be found in the world itself, or in the beings or the objects of the world directly. True Being can only be interpreted from the world, but it does not entail this Being itself. Bollnow’s true being is a relative concept to Jaspers’ existenz: an awakened state in which, in a temporal fashion, one becomes all of a sudden aware of the true nature of oneself, and thus lives in one’s own historical-contextual constitution of a person in accord with this existential core of the self. Bollnow’s take on the true self is less existential, in the sense that Jaspers’ notion has its roots in Kierkegaardian subjectivity and subjective truth, and Husserl’s notion of life-world as a take for a subjective grasp of the reality. Bollnow refers to the same authorities, but his take is more Kantian, as he also refers to many neo-Kantian thinkers. However, even this interpretation, I propose, can be falsified by Bollnow’s later works of the essence of the moods and the philosophical anthropology, in which the fact of being human is to be left as an open question, and that this open question is the foundation of the anthropological pedagogical research on being human and becoming a human being.

Bollnow also lectured extensively on Kant, romanticism, and idealism. He also worked on the Collected Edition of Dilthey's writings. In 1934, he published Teil IX, Erziehung (Volume IX, Education), of the Gesammelte Werke (Collected Edition). Just two years later, in 1936, Bollnow then had another book on Dilthey published, Dilthey: Eine Einführung in seine Philosophie (Dilthey: An Introduction to his Philosophy). In this book, he drew attention to the fact that the late works of Dilthey (the earlier works were regarded as primarily Volumes V and VII) should be considered as the core of his philosophy as a whole. A thorough examination of the history of mythology, especially with Schelling, characterizes his late Göttingen era. He seemed to try to work out the roots of our existence within its mythical layers. In 1939, Bollnow became professor of a chair of psychology and pedagogy at the University of Giessen. In Giessen, Bollnow introduced a pedagogical seminar in the spirit of Nohl and tried to continue with this spirit. He held a series of lectures on the psychology of romance, in which he primarily employed the works of the naturalist Gotthelf Heinrich von Schubert.
His essay, "The ‘way in’: Novalis" (Festschrift for Sprangers, 1942), still bears testimony to this engagement with the romantic. Also, during the Giessen era, his works on Freud and Adler were commissioned. The focus of his work during his professorship in Giessen was on the history of education from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Bollnow aimed to present the general intellectual development of that timeline. It was here where his work on Comenius and Basedow was set (Bollnow 1950: 141–153). Bollnow considered the image of the world and of man to be the essence and the key to understanding teaching and education. This work was later continued in 1952 by the fourth volume of a 5-volume work on the history of education: *Die Pädagogik der deutschen Romantik, Von Arndt bis Fröbel* (*The Teaching of German Romanticism: from Alph to Froebel*).

In Tübingen, Bollnow withdrew from further preparations on writing about the history of education. In 1941, Bollnow published *Das Wesen der Stimmungen* (*The Essence of Moods*), one of his most important books and first essentially phenomenological treatise. The core of this work provides a foundation to philosophical anthropology presented here in this research, and also denotes a specific turn towards phenomenological aims in Bollnow’s philosophy and theory of education. Especially the methodological aspect of his thinking in the book was in confrontation with Heidegger’s fundamental ontology. He conceives a beginning for a phenomenological anthropological research, in which every situation is individual and not reducible to another situation. Every phenomenon is irreplaceable, and thus a new depth of the human contribution opens up from a new angle, leaving the interminable way for the whole of humanity always open. What being human is, is an open question, and, as such, always leaves open new possibilities of conceiving this question. In this way of thinking, Bollnow makes, in contrast to Heidegger, a distinction between the ontological and the ontic level, but denies the possibility of replacing the existential-ontological structure as an unlawful simplification. In his analysis of the different moods of time and experience, Bollnow tried to prove the existence of his methodological approach against Heidegger's analysis. Then came the collapse of 1945.

After the period in Giessen University, Bollnow returned to Göttingen to continue working on Herman Nohl's seminar. Bollnow worked as a co-editor with Wilhelm Flitner of the Magazine *Die Sammlung - Zeitschrift für Kultur und Erziehung* (*The Collection - Journal of Culture and Education*), published by Nohl. It was the first magazine considered to be published after the collapse of Germany. The magazine was already approved by the military government in the
summer of 1945 but because of censorship, the first number appeared in October 1945. Characteristic of the situation existing after the collapse was the principal question: how is moral life still possible, just after the era of lost high ideals experienced in the Nazi perversion? Bollnow published in the early years of *The Collection* a series of essays on this issue. In 1947, these papers were summarized and published under the title *Einfache Sittlichkeit (Simple Morality)*. With his concept of "ordinary morality," Bollnow assumed that under the high ideals that in the face of horror and after the Second World War had become questionable, there was a different, simpler layer of morality. Even though this phenomenon is hidden and inconspicuous, it is not less important, but rather bears all the forms of the high ethos as well. This simple layer does not change with the change in form of high ethics, but remains in this transformation equal (Bollnow 1962: 22). What this simple morality means more concretely is, for example, honesty, reliability, helpfulness, etc. After a teaching semester at the University of Kiel, Bollnow moved to the University of Mainz in the spring of 1946, which was a new home for many students returning from the war. The focus of the work Bollnow achieved in Mainz was strongly connected with French existentialism. His next book *Die Ehrfurcht (Awe)*, published in 1947, contained a collection of essays from a long period of time, which gave rise to asking questions about human dignity. The essays were strongly determined by the methodological procedures derived from Hans Lipps, a typical representative of the analysis of human life.

In 1953, as successor to Eduard Spranger, Bollnow took over the chair of Professor of Philosophy and Education at the University of Tübingen. During his visit there he began to develop further his phenomenological project, established in his forthcoming books. In 1955, he also published his main philosophical work: *Neue Geborgenheit: Das Problem einer Überwindung des Existentialismus (New Security: The Problem of Overcoming Existentialism)*. In the book, Bollnow line out a set of thoughts on the basis of the sentiment of trust: living trustfully, being trusting, having security and load-bearing as basic conditions of life skills in the contemporary world. All this, Bollnow outlines, is in confrontation with existentialism. The main themes of the book and their pedagogical implications were also reflected in the essay *Pädagogische Atmosphäre (The pedagogical atmosphere, 1964)*. In 1955, Bollnow took a lengthy leave to spend a period of study in Paris, to work on a piece on French existentialism, which was later published as a book called *Existenzphilosophie (Philosophy of Existence)* in 1952. In the context of French existentialism, Bollnow saw the writings of Rainer Maria Rilke as most relevant. Especially in the late works of Rilke, Bollnow sees a
parallel to the movement of existential philosophy, but at the same time, he sees a possibility for abandonment and overcoming of the doctrines of the existential tradition. The book, *Lebensphilosophie* (*Life Philosophy*, 1958), must be seen in relation to the publications on “Existentialism” and deals with similar topics as Bollnow’s Rilke treatments, and is also greatly influenced by Bollnow’s earlier work on Dilthey’s collected writings (Bollnow 1965: 5, Bollnow 1956). Especially notable is Bollnow’s treatment of the principle of a philosophical anthropology in the book.

What is of fundamental importance, especially in terms of this dissertation, is Bollnow’s 1959 epoch-making *Existenzphilosophie und Pädagogik* (*Philosophy of Existence and Education*), in which he formulates and introduces his theory of the *discontinuous forms of education* (unstetige Formen der Erziehung) as a new category in education that hasn’t been seen before in educational theory. In this dissertation, it is this specific body of work that has the most interest and value for my aspirations. With the notion of the discontinuous nature of education, Bollnow refers to all the disruptive forces of human life. With this notion, he comes very close to Jaspers’ understanding of *Grenzsituationen*. These situations serve a different purpose for human development than those intentionally being taught by a teacher or another educator. They are, however, fundamental to the development of one’s self-understanding and becoming a “true self.” Educationally, these aspects of human life cannot be forced but can only be seen happening to the educated. Bollnow promotes Jaspers’ *appellative education* (appellierende Pädagogik) for the purposes of recognizing and dealing with these aspects of human inner unfolding in educational purposes. These discontinuous forms of education will be elaborated more extensively later in this dissertation.

Published in 1963, *Man and Space* (*Mensch und Raum*) is a book with the intention of continuing and completing the ideas in *New Security*. In the book, Bollnow tries to work out the main parts of an analysis of the temporality constituting the spatiality of human being. In this treatment, Bollnow brings forth the terms of the house and living the true opposites to the existential notions of life as a homeless journey and thrownness. Bollnow’s one great interest—inspired by Hans Lipps—had long been the problem of language and its significance to the human world-view and self-will. Even his earlier essay, *Philosophie der Sprache W. von Humboldts* (W. von Humboldt’s philosophy of language), speaks for his

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12 Bollnow had already pointed out some early notions on this new theory of discontinuous education in his 1955 speech *Begegnung und Bildung* (Encounter and Education).
great interest in language (Bollnow 1966). For him, understanding and trust are essential elements of any real conversation. Bollnow is along with Martin Buber and Karl Jaspers one of the enthusiastic conversationalists and promoter of the importance of communication in the constitution of the world, the self, and the norms and values. His treatment in the book, *Sprache und Erziehung* (*Language and Education*, 1966), portrays especially the dialogic form of conversation, and in it the contrast between the authoritarian dialogue and a monologue becomes significant. Finally, Bollnow’s influence on the anthropological approach to educational research could be considered as somewhat foundational. In his work on philosophical-pedagogical anthropology, he points out the necessity of the question of becoming a human being to the question of being human in general. Lectures on the foundation of the philosophy of knowledge in 1963–1966, which were published as a book in 1970, were an attempt to overcome the exclusivity of European viewpoints, and gave him a possibility for contact and liaison with Asian, especially Japanese, culture. This concern of cultural viewpoints is based, ultimately, on his anthropology itself and led to an external experiment, which meant two long studies in Japan (1959 and 1966), producing a fruitful connection between these two cultural areas, Europe and Japan.

Finally, I will make a brief note on Bollnow’s extensive circle of students. This so-called "Tübingen School" evolved and deepened following the Bollnowian approach and promoting his fruitful issues further. I will only mention here Gottfried Brauer, Klaus Giel, and Werner Friedrich Kümmel as highlighted members of this group. To get a clearer and more elaborated view of the Tübingen School, I would encourage you to read more on it in the notes in the last chapter on the anthropological reorientation of pedagogics in Klaus Giel’s habilitation work, *Studien zu einer anthropologischen Didaktik* (Study on Anthropological Education and Instruction, 1966), or in Hideakira Okamoto’s Ph.D. Thesis, *Studie über die pädagogische Anthropologie O.F. Bollnows mit seiner Schülern* (Study on O.F. Bollnow’s Educational Anthropology with his Students) (Okatomo 1971).

As my aim is to focus mainly on Bollnow as a phenomenologist, along with the works mentioned above, especially *Existenzphilosophie und Pädagogik*, there are other works that are crucial to my treatment in this study. The very beginning to the discontinuous forms of education was sketched in a speech *Begegnung und Bildung* (*Encounter and Education*, 1955). In it, Bollnow treated the concept in a systematic way for the first time, distancing it from the earlier theological notions towards a wholistic anthropological and pedagogical-philosophical direction. I
will deal with this treatment more thoroughly later in this study. *Maß und Vermessenheit des Menschen - Philosophische aufsätze neue Folge* (*Extent and Audacity of People - Philosophical Essays on New Results*, 1962) is a collection of various essays. The objectivity of humanities among other topics plays a particularly important role in this study. One of the most important works dealing with the discontinuous forms of education is *Krise und Neuer Anfang* (*Crisis and New Beginning*, 1966). In C.H. Beck’s *Philosophische Antropologie heute* (*Philosophical Anthropology Today*, 1974) Bollnow publishes an essay *Die philosophische Anthropologie und ihre methodischen Prinzipien* (*Philosophical anthropology and its methodological principles*) in which he articulates his main phenomenological views on the methodology of philosophical anthropology. These principles are the main source for my claim for a thoroughly phenomenological reading of Bollnow’s educational project. I will return to these principles in the next chapter.
2 Foundations of Philosophical-Pedagogical Anthropology

In this chapter I will commence meta-theoretical work. I will take a critical look at what Bollnow’s project of discontinuous forms of education is founded on. I claim that the treatment in this chapter will bring forth some crucial developments, applicable to commenting on the core concepts of Bollnow’s project in chapter three of this book.

2.1 Bollnow’s Philosophical-Pedagogical Anthropology and Phenomenological Method

Bollnow contributed significantly to phenomenological educational research. One major influence he made was in the development of philosophical-pedagogical anthropology. At the core of this movement is the fundamental question: What is it to be human? To shed some light on this question, all possible sides of the human life-world are to be reflected, education among others. This approach requires a specific method of analysis, dealing with all different categories of conceptualizing education, which until the rise of existential philosophy, has, especially in the German-speaking discussion, been dominated by the idea of Bildung; of becoming “an enhanced form” of human individual and humanity. Bildung has been a founding critical stance in continental philosophy and to the notion of modern rationality13.

13 Critical philosophy provides the framework in which reason can be understood as a poetizing imaginative force. The Einbildungskraft thus becomes the faculty of Bildung, of formation in every sense of the word, but only as it functions to mediate between contradictory and heterogeneous terms, producing an image that is not a copy but an exhibitio originaria. Consequently, in Fichte’s Wissenschaftslehre, the infinity of Self is nothing other than the infinite activity of imagination, namely the process of Bildung, of infinite formation which acts so as to make schematism possible only through an Anstoß, a clash that limits the activity of the Self, which can then lay claim to being both finite and infinite, since in limiting itself it discovers that it is infinite in its power of limitation. The infinite then becomes this perpetual plan of surpassing itself on the part of the finitude whose structure is time and whose principle imagination. However, Fichte sets out the Absolute in that way only in order better to reaffirm the split in it and to deny passage from the finite to the infinite. So Schelling will take as his point of departure an absolute Self, prior to any split, in order effectively to overcome the Kantian otherness, to challenge any passage from the infinite to the finite, to affirm the possibility of a passage from the finite to the infinite through an intellectual intuition which is the power of seeing the general in the particular, the infinite in the finite. If the philosophy of Identity then goes back to the concept of imagination, it does so in order to make it the principle of a genesis and individuation of the Absolute: As a principle of passing from darkness to light within the Absolute, imagination is the power of the production of Ideas; it is the informing (Einbildung) of the real with
With the help of the new method, Bollnow formulated a previously undiscovered level of description, namely the existential aspects of human development. This level, drawing influence from the existential philosophy of Nietzsche, Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre, and Buber, consists of concepts such as encounter, crisis, admonition, and awakening. These discontinuous forms of education do not go well with the idea of Bildung, but instead establish a certain tension between the two levels of description. This tension between Bildung and existential discontinuity, according to Bollnow, is a fruitful and most important discovery to understanding the human being more profoundly. It is by combining these levels of description that we get closer to a thorough understanding of the fundamental nature of humanity. Accordingly, following its hermeneutic pedagogical heritage, Bollnow’s method draws near to the praxis of education, analyzing such practical aspects as the atmosphere in the classroom, the concrete space of education, and the educative potentiality of crises and encounters in human life. I will return to the tension between Bildung and existential discontinuity later. Next, I will open up the methodological background practices and assumptions of interpretation that will be needed in order for me to state the main theoretical claims of this work. I will articulate the foundational views of Husserlian phenomenology.

2.1.1 Husserlian Phenomenology as the Foundation of Philosophical-Pedagogical Anthropology

Husserl’s thoughts aimed to find an absolutely certain foundation to science; to ground this attempt, Husserl formulated a philosophy of consciousness he entitled phenomenology. As the fundamental idea of phenomenology Husserl employed intentionality, a concept inherited from the Middle Ages and to which he gave a new meaning and content (Dreyfus 1984: 59). To Husserl, intentionality came to mean that consciousness itself is consciousness of something (Husserl 2009 [1907]: 15, Dreyfus 1984: 60–64). In other words, consciousness has a target the ideal, of the form with the essence. The question of transcendental imagination as developed by Kant thus leads to a problematic of Bildung. But while for Fichte imagination remains tied to finitude and to the project of an infinite praxis, for Schelling imagination invests the Absolute to such an extent that it becomes the principle of its genesis and even provides a basis for a philosophy of art as the counter image to a theogony. In any case, imagination became crucial to the absolutization of modern reason and to the unfolding of its sense of immanence. It is upon this point that absolutized subjectivity will be able to lead to the positing of its own problematic and to that of the metaphysical foundations of modernity.

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toward which it is orientated, a target present in consciousness as a meaning. Through intentionality, Husserl was able to detach himself from Cartesian dualism in the sense in which the conscious self and its object are seen as two separate substances: res cogitans, a thinking subject and its object; and a separate outside world, res extensa (Husserl 1995 [1950]). As a consciousness of something, intentional consciousness is always bound to its object (Husserl 2009 [1907]).

Phenomenology is based on this doctrine of intentionality. Every act of consciousness and every experience is intentional. Consciousness is a directed consciousness: an act or an experience of something. Intentionality in this sense does not refer to “having intentions,” as in “I have the intention of finishing this dissertation.” Rather, it refers to the directness of our conscious relation to the world, e.g., being toward the world. “All our awareness is directed toward objects” (Sokolowski 2000: 8). When I am conscious, I am conscious of something: objects in the world that appear to me, or objects that do not exist as concrete objects, but rather as imagined things. Intentionality separates the externalist view of consciousness from the Cartesian internalist view (Lawlor 2012: 63). “In the Cartesian, Hobbesian, and Lockean traditions, which dominate our culture, we are told that when we are conscious, we are primarily aware of ourselves or our own ideas” (Sokolowski 2000: 9).

Phenomenology is laid out against this egocentric predicament that what we know and experience is fundamentally happening in our heads, as an alternative view to the relationship of the mind, the body, and the world (Lawlor 2012: 63). Intentionality as directness toward the actual world speaks against such a Cartesian view. There are correlations between the object unraveling in our sphere of consciousness and the object itself. In fact, it is unfruitful to talk of the appearance of a thing and the thing itself separately. “For phenomenology, there are no ‘mere’ appearances, and nothing is ‘just’ an appearance. Appearances are real; they belong to being” (Sokolowski 2000: 15). Things can appear as they are; they are appearances. However, “things can look like other things, and sometimes we may seem to be perceiving when we really are not” (ibid.: 14). Intentionality is phenomenologically differentiated: “There are different kinds of intending, correlated with different kinds of objects” (ibid.: 12). There can be perceptual intentions, like when we see a material object, or look at a picture. But even these two perceptual intentions differ: “taking something as a picture is different from taking something as a simple object” (ibid.: 12). Also, these forms of intending are woven together. “To see something as a picture involves, that we also have it
as a perceived thing” (ibid.: 13). Reflecting upon and sorting out different intentionalities is what is done in phenomenology.

The natural attitude is the focus in which we are directly caught up with things in the world (Lawlor 2012: 67). It constitutes itself in the fact that we believe that there is a world and objects in it (Zahavi 2002: 93). “World belief is not subject to correction or refutation the way any particular belief is” (Sokolowski 2000: 45). This world belief is there to begin with, even before the self. Additional to natural attitude is the phenomenological viewpoint, in which one describes analytically particular intentionalities and their correlates, “and world belief as well, with the world as its correlative” (ibid.: 47). This requires certain neutrality: “While we are in the phenomenological attitude, we suspend all the intentionalities that we are examining. We neutralize them” (ibid.: 48). We suspend ourselves from exercising our intentionalities at that moment, but those intentionalities still remain our intentions. Phenomenological reduction targets intentionalities, not natural targets (Lawlor 2012: 69). Neutralization of the natural intentions that occur while one contemplates on those intentions is called the epoche (ibid.: 76). “We suspend our beliefs, and we bracket the world and all the things in the world” (Sokolowski 2000: 49). Putting the world into brackets means considering it as correlated with whatever intentionality targets it. The ontological way to reduction is a rigorous enterprise to complete the knowledge achieved in particular objective sciences with intentionality and appearance. “It shows the naiveté of objectivism, the belief that being is indifferent to display” (ibid.: 54). The Cartesian way to reduction relies on methodical scepticism: “it suggests that we adopt the attitude of attempting to doubt our various intentions” (ibid.: 54). However, one’s statements within phenomenology are apodictic, they “express things that could not be otherwise; they express necessary truths” (ibid.: 57). They may also seem obvious. “They can still be important and illuminating, because we often are very confused about just such trivialities and necessities” (ibid.: 57). There are also two more terms in the phenomenological attitude that are crucial: noema and noesis. “The noema is any object of intentionality, any objective correlate, but considered from the phenomenological attitude, considered just as experienced” (ibid.: 60). Noesis refers to the intentional acts by

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14 The distinction between noema and noesis has been interpreted in various ways. One is that noema signifies content, as the ‘object’ of noesis, from which this content originates from: (act- noema – object [noesis]). See Natanson 1992.
which we intend things, looking at these acts from the phenomenological standpoint (Lawlor 2012, 69).

There is a certain ambiguity to the ego: we can distinguish an empirical ego, part of the world, interacting causally with other objects. However, the ego in its transcendental form is no longer simply part of the world but is set against it (Lawlor 2012: 77). “It is the center of disclosure to whom the world and everything in it manifest themselves” (Sokolowski 2000: 112). It is distinct from the empirical: “when we exercise our rationality, when we act as agents of truth and meaning, we become involved in activities that cannot be adequately treated from a merely empirical point of view” (ibid.: 115). The transcendental ego is also set against biological or psychological reductionism, where things like logic, truth, and reasoning are simply empirical activities of our body or our psyche (Danner 1989: 142).

Transcendental subjectivity, which is inquired into in the transcendental problem, and which subjectivity is presupposed in its ontological ground [Seinsboden], is nothing other than this “I myself” and “we ourselves”; but not as found in the natural attitude of everyday or of positive science, that is, as apperceived as little pieces of existence [Bestandstücke] of the objectively present world before us, but rather as subjects of conscious life, in which this world and all that is present – for “us” – “makes” itself through certain apperceptions (Husserl 1982: 292).

Although the wiring of the brain as one of the causes for language, perception, intentions, and rationality is agreeable, it does not follow that empirical laws or psychological claims describe completely how mind functions. “The activity of achieving meaning, truth, and logical reasoning is not just a feature of our psychological or biological makeup” (Sokolowski 2000: 115), rather, they belong to the space of reason the transcendental ego stands for this domain, transcending subjectivity and entering the public sphere, acting as the agent of truth: “judgment, is in principle a public act” (ibid.: 121). In the phenomenological attitude, one can clarify what the transcendental ego does while exercising rationality. Firstly, the ego can be identified as “the agent of the intentional acts of perception” (ibid.: 123). Secondly, the agent of categorical activity can be identified: “he brings about categorial objects” (ibid.: 123). Thirdly, the ego covers all the intentionalties in the first and second stages and analyzes them: “It also takes possession of its own self in a new way” (ibid.: 124). The transcendental ego is not separate from a physical body: “the ego exists corporeally” (ibid.: 124).
Corporeality sets a place from which the transcendental ego exercises its intentional activities, perceptual or categorial. The body is a mobile thing, as life is an active thing. Still, memories are stored within the body. Nor does the body stay unchanged: the transcendental ego can identify the body regardless of it being young or old.

Life world has arisen as a philosophical problem against the worldview in modern science, which has considered it as a “construct made by our minds responding to the input from our senses” (Sokolowski 2000: 147). Life world has lesser importance to the scientific world: “The world we live in is ultimately unreal as we experience it, but the world reached by mathematical science … is real” (ibid.: 146). Phenomenology aims to show how “mathematical sciences take their origin from the lived world” (ibid.: 147), describing the intentionalities that constitute such sciences. Modern science deals with ideal forms, which “are not fabricated out of thin air“ (ibid.: 148). These ideal forms are called idealized objects (Zahavi 2002: 96). They are derived from the things we experience, but: “Such objects could never be experienced in our life world; we establish or constitute them by a special kind of intentionality, one that mixes both perception and imagination” (Sokolowski 2000: 149). We reach the ideal things by reducing any variations or fluctuations in form or feature: we imagine a perfect form. Life world is not only mine, but it is a shared world. We can look at the relation of myself and others to the world we have in common. “My experience is a mixture of the actual and potential” (ibid.: 153), I see what is there and what I assume to be there. This mixture “is heightened when other perceivers come into play” (ibid.: 153). What is potential for me about the object may be actual for the other perceiver. Thus, the object transcends my perception: “I appreciate the object ... as being seen by others and not just by me” (ibid.: 153). The object is given intersubjectively. Another self is experienced as a body: “the body is given as a place in which the consciousness of the other holds sway” (ibid.: 154), but it also “expresses the mind of the other” (ibid.: 154). Language, gestures, etc. “signal intentional acts, and they also express a content of thought” (ibid.: 154). However, some aspect of our consciousness “has a kind of extreme privacy in which the very sense of others does not come into play” (ibid.: 155). It is possible that there are levels of experiences that cannot be conveyed to others. However, “such an intense privacy could not be the whole of our experience,” but is “a move within the philosophical attitude, uncovering various levels of experience undergone by the transcendental ego” (ibid.: 155).
**Eidetic intuition** is the insight into the essence of things (Lawlor 2012: 70). It is a special kind of intentionality. There are three stages of intentional development through which eidetic intuition makes essences of things present to us. First, “we experience a number of things and find similarities among them” (Sokolowski 2000: 177). But they are not the same, however: “We discover the rather weak kind of identity that is called typicality” (ibid.: 178). On this level, “we experience individuals” (ibid.: 182), but they are not yet constituted as such.

On the second stage we experience empirical universals: “we recognize not just similars, but the very same, a ‘one in many’” (ibid.: 178). On this level does “the full sense of an individual arise for us” (ibid.: 182), as we get a contrasting sense of a particular under the universal. In the third stage, “we strive to reach a feature that it would be inconceivable for the things to be without” (ibid.: 178). We are looking for theoretical necessities for the things themselves. We move “from perception into the realm of imagination” (ibid.: 178), and “into the domain of the Platonic forms” (ibid.: 182). In a process called imaginative variation, “we attempt to imagine changes in the object” (ibid.: 179), and discard features that do not belong to the eidos of the thing. What remains are “features that we cannot remove without destroying the things” (ibid.: 179), that is, necessary features. This implies impossibilities: “a necessity come to light in the impossibility of what we tried to imagine” (ibid.: 180). Thus, we have eidetic intuition: “We evidence an essence” (ibid.: 179). We can fail in our eidetic intuitions, taking “as necessarily true what is only a fantastic projection” (ibid.: 183). We can correct mistakes by “talking with others about them, by imagining counterexamples, and … by seeing how our eidetic proposals conform to the empirical universals” (ibid.: 183). Imaginative variation and eidetic insight in the natural attitude is called *eidetic reduction*, which “focuses on the essential form of things” (ibid.: 184, Lawlor 2012: 71). Transcendental reduction does not, on the other hand, deal with experiences and objects, but “with eidetically necessary structures of such experiences and objects as they would hold for any consciousness whatever” (Sokolowski 2000: 184).

**Categorial intentionality** is a form of intending that supervenes on more basic forms of perception (Lohmar 2002: 125). The shift in intentionality from a simple perception to categorial intending happens gradually, first highlighting a feature or a part of an experience and then going back to the whole of the experienced thing. The experienced thing is made present in thought through distinguishing the whole and the part simultaneously. Thus, categorial intending is a “many-rayed intentionality of judgment” (Sokolowski 2000: 90). Through categorial
intentions, categorial objects are established. Categorial objects are ways in which things appear (Lohmar 2002: 129). “When we register a categorial object, we move from the continuity of perception to the more abrupt, discontinuous presence of intellected objects, with wholes and parts being explicitly recognized. We present higher-level, categorial objects, and such objects come in discrete packets” (Sokolowski 2000: 110). Categorial intending, in contrast to mere perception of things, is a space of reason and language. Categorial experience acts as a transit point from perception to “intelligence, where language and syntax come into play” (ibid.: 95). Language and categorial world-presentation are therefore connected: “Syntactic parts of speech express categorial forms, and in doing so they help express the way the world presents itself to us” (ibid.: 110). This indicates a correspondence theory of truth. “The correspondence between judgment and fact can be called a ‘disquotational’ theory of truth, because it involves the step of first merely ‘quoting’ the state of affairs … and then removing the quotation marks, annulling the propositional reflection, leaving the propositional attitude, and going back to straightforward acceptance” (ibid.: 101). There is no real gap between what is being said and the state of affairs: “The theory provides more than a linguistic explanation, because it describes the shifts in intentionality that underlie the quotation and disquotation” (ibid.: 101). The Categorial level of perception is also connected to logic. When the categorial objects have been constituted, they can be formalized in order to “pay attention to the consistency or inconsistency of the forms that result” (ibid.: 103). The science of formal structures of objects is formal ontology, and the science of formal structures of senses and propositions is formal apophatics.

Husserl’s great contribution to philosophy has been to revitalize Aristotelian realism. “‘Realism’ has often taken to refer to the view that philosophy is somehow capable of proving that we know things-in-themselves as they are apart from our knowing them” (Cobb-Stevens 2002: 82). Neither Aristotle nor Husserl was behind such a premise, but aimed simply to “Describe how things appear to us in an array of presentations” (ibid.: 82). This kind of descriptive realism is what Husserl is after in his accounts of perception and categorial intuition. “When we think or speak about things and facts in their absence, and when we perceive or register them, we deal with those things and facts and not with mental substitutes” (ibid.: 82).

Modern philosophy is accustomed to thinking of cognition in terms of the Cartesian notion of mind as an “enclosed theater of representations” (Cobb-Stevens 1990: 50), that it is such an obvious thing to presuppose a
representational medium between the object itself absent in one’s mind and the mind itself. Husserl was against Locke’s interpretation of mind as an inner space distinctly apart from nature. Nor was he in agreement with Kant’s notion of separating phenomena and things-in-themselves. Instead, Husserl makes “the unequivocal claim that our speech acts and cognitive intuitions truly target and present things in the world” (ibid.: 83). He insists that “the intentional object and the object of reference are one and the same” (ibid.: 83), and that we need not postulate any sort of intermediary content between intentional acts and their objects.

Husserl’s realism is not just simply Aristotelian realism, that “soul is somehow all things” (ibid.: 44, Cobb-Stevens 2002: 85), but his realism has been “forged by his radical break from the modern skepticism about the reality of the world based on the interpretation of mind as a subjective enclosure” (ibid.: 85). In Husserl’s categorial intuition, Aristotelian realism plays an important role, however. According to Aristotle, “the nature or form of a thing is revealed to us by its specific ‘look’ (eidos)” (ibid.: 85, Cobb-Stevens 1990: 45), as what we know when we know a particular thing. There is a specific relationship between a particular and its form to Aristotle, and the knowledge of them both always occurs as a unity, which is a prior condition for making a distinction between the particular and what it is. The intuitive or discursive process of cognition does not produce or modify the nature. Husserl not only repeats this Aristotelian account of substance, but he also dismisses the Humean-Lockean thesis about propositions referring to “intra-mental processes rather than to aspects of the world” (ibid.: 86).

According to Husserl, we are directed toward things rather than inner processes in our expressions of propositional content or syntactical components. “Categorial forms are articulations in things that are brought about by our thinking about things” (ibid.: 86). Categorial intuitions “present the work of presentation expressed by syntactical terms and by the surplus senses of terms for objects and features” (ibid.: 86). Husserl’s account of categorial intuition restates Aristotle’s relation between first (the “individual,” tode ti) and second (exclusively the “what,” ti esti) substance. Predicative articulations are made either in the mode of intuition of a particular through its specific look, or “the intuition of the look itself as instanced in the particular” (ibid.: 87). For Aristotle, a statement about something is a judgment. “To judge is first and foremost to articulate in an assertive manner the mode of ‘belonging’ that obtains between things and their features” (ibid.: 89). Judgment is directed toward things and not propositions about them.
Brentano agreed to a Cartesian interpretation of a similar relationship between assertive character of judgment and its content, which in distinction from the Aristotelian notion separates making judgments of things and of propositions about them. “To order concepts into a predicative combination is one thing. To judge that what is thus said actually describes a state of affairs in the world is another” (ibid.: 89). Husserl criticizes Brentano’s thesis about judgments being position-taking with regard to a presented content by distinguishing “two components which together comprise the intentional essence of an act: its quality and its matter” (ibid.: 90). He does agree with Brentano on the notion of separating predication from judgmental assertion, but “disagrees with Brentano’s description of judgment as an acceptance or rejection of a neutralized presentation” (ibid.: 90). Even when one is talking about present or absent facts one is talking about those facts and not about propositions. “A neutral presentation must be considered as a complete intentional act, having both quality and matter” (ibid.: 90).

When one frames a proposition as a hypothesis, one engages in an act whose quality is non-positional. The same claim with an affirmative or negative content modifies its quality from non-positional to positional. “Thus the act-qualities change while the act-matters remain constant” (ibid.: 90). A proposition as such does not collapse from its syntactic structure and simply remain a whole of content. “To claim that judgments have to do with simple objects rather than syntactically structured objects is to suggest that judgments necessarily nominalize their contents” (ibid.: 90). Nominalization means naming what has been asserted, “converting an originally articulated object into a compressed whole which may then serve as a subject of another judgment” (ibid.: 90). But this does not happen to a proposition as such, as the structure of the proposition is being articulated by simply neutralizing one’s assent. “Judgment is an assertive attitude which pervades a statement and which is governed by anticipated intuitions of the forms of things, rather than by some sort of appraisal of the sense of the statement” (ibid.: 91).

Husserl distinguished truth both as correctness and as actual presence. The latter mode is more fundamental, a manifestation of a fact in its fullness on an ontological level as a transition from empty to full articulation. “Judgment is essentially an assertive articulation that brings a state of affairs to disclosure” (ibid.: 91). Husserl’s categorial intuition lies on an Aristotelian foundation and acts as a counter-argument against the modern philosophy of cognition, cleansing
from ambiguous distinctions between the mind and the world, and the particular and the whole.

### 2.1.2 Categorial Intuition in Husserl's Sixth Investigation

In his Sixth “Logical Investigation”, Husserl offers a phenomenological clarification of the nature of judgment and the manner in which judgments relate to truth. Husserl develops a phenomenological account of truth in terms of fulfilment. He models this account of the relation between thought and its object on the relation between perception and its fulfilment. In the Sixth Investigation, Husserl proposes a *categorial intuition* side by side with sensory intuition.

The Sixth Investigation focuses on the manner by which such acts achieve their fulfilment, in other words achieve the accomplishment of winning an intuition of objectivity. Husserl sees the paradigmatic form of a fulfilled intentional act as an act where the meaning intended is actually fulfilled by the bodily *presence* of the object thought about. This is an act of *adequate self-presentation*, which is the paradigm for all genuine knowledge. Thus, when I see a chair, I have a fulfilled intuition of the chair. The experience presents the chair “bodily.” Later, I can relive this intuition, but now only as a memory—still oriented to the actual chair but this time the chair is not presented with the same sense of presence and immediacy. Similarly, if I idly daydream about a chair, see it in my mind’s eye with certain specific features, the chair is given in an intuition that presents itself in ways different from either a perception or a memory. The sense that the chair is really there is now absent.

These different forms of psychological relation have different essential structures. There are other forms of intending, which are merely “empty,” for example, when I use words in a casual way without really thinking about what I am saying, when I talk about the chair without really thinking about it, and so on. Here I am caught up mostly in operating with the sign standing for the thing. For Husserl, signitive or empty intending is a basic feature of human intentionality through which we grasp things not *authentically* as in the paradigmatic case of sense perception, but *inauthentically* or symbolically, such as when we are doing calculations in mathematics. Most forms of thinking, by their very nature, are required to perform operations with things taken merely as signs. I may count the number of people killed in road accidents in Finland in a year, but my focus is on the number, not on the felt experience of what it is to die in an accident. In
perceptual acts, when I see an object, the object is there before me in its full bodily presence. I have a sensuous intuition of a chair in the room, for example.

However, Husserl realizes that not all acts of immediate givenness are of this kind, namely that they present a thing straightforwardly and “in one blow” (Husserl 1982: 788). Besides seeing sensuous objects, I also see facts, and grasp states of affairs. Husserl argues, against the empiricists and against Kant, that we have a direct immediate intuition, akin to sensory perception, not only of concrete sensory entities but also of ideal meanings, objects, and states of affairs. I see that the chair is of wood, and so on. My intuition of a “state of affairs” involves what Husserl calls categorial intuition, an intuition that something is the case. Categorial intuition is the intuition of essences and it is a central concept in Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology. For Husserl, it is crucial to appreciate and be able to account for the difference between the expression “this wooden chair” and “this chair is wooden” (ibid.: 40). Cobb-Stevens (1990: 51) makes a distinction between Husserl and Kant on a priori categorial structures. Kant explicitly denied that humans had the capacity to intuit intellectual concepts; we do not have intellectual intuition. A priori concepts are deduced. Husserl agrees with Kant that there is no purely intellectual intuition. On the other hand, he believes that we have a graded series of intuitions of higher levels of categoriality, which, though based on sensuous intuition, have less and less of the sensory in them, as he mentions in the Sixth Investigation:

Acts of straightforward intuitions we called “sensuous”: founded acts, whether leading back immediately or mediately to sense, we called “categorial.” But it is worth our while to draw a distinction, within the sphere of categorial acts, between those acts that are purely categorial, acts of “pure understanding,” and mixed acts of understanding that are blended with sense. It lies in the nature of the case that everything categorial ultimately rests upon sensuous intuition, that a “categorial intuition,” an intellectual insight, a case of thought in the highest sense, without any foundation of sense, is a piece of nonsense. (Husserl 1982: 817–818).

All intuition has its accompanying sensuousness. There is an “apprehension” of the sensory matter, but the sensuous content underdetermines the range of assertible meanings to which the perception can give rise. The same sensuous apprehension can ground quite different judgments. I see the chair in the room and can formulate many judgments based on that perception: “I see a chair in the room,” “that chair is wooden,” and so on. In other words, the perceptual meaning
of the act of seeing cannot be strictly identified with any one of the judgments based on it. The sense underdetermines the meaning. We have a quasi-perceptual intuition of a non-linguistic state of affairs when we look and see the chair. Now, we can make judgments with higher degrees of abstraction from the sensuous. We have purely sensuous acts, mixed acts (e.g., acts that grasp geometrical concepts still have a residual sensuousness), and pure higher order categorial acts that grasp logical categories such as unity, plurality, and existence. These do not retain any sensuous element in their meaning. Categorial intuitions grasp the being of the entity (that this chair is wood) and not just the individual properties (woodenness).

Husserl comments on Kant’s claim “existence is not a predicate” and argues that, while correct, it misses the fact that we have another mode of intuiting facts, the being of states of affairs. Husserl agrees that I see a color, but that I cannot see the state of being-colored (Husserl 1982: 780). Nevertheless, I do immediately grasp the state of being colored, when I grasp the meaning of the judgment, “this is colored.” Saying that something “is” does not give us an intuitions of a new property in a manner similar to learning “something is red.” But, for Husserl, this shows that the assertion of the category of being does not involve grasping a property of the object. Nor does it emerge from reflecting on the act of consciousness—being is no part of the act either. Rather, the categorial structure belongs to the ideal structure of the object—to objectivity as such, which Husserl distinguishes from objects.

Bollnow applies such categorial intuition to his formulation of the phenomenological method in philosophical-pedagogical anthropology. In order to point out this, I will turn to Bollnow’s treatment of philosophical-pedagogical anthropology next.

### 2.1.3 On Philosophical-Pedagogical Anthropology

Philosophical-pedagogical anthropology asks what is it to be human in a setting in which a human is understood as a cultural being and as a product of education (Bollnow 1974: 7, 1966). This anthropology understands being human through a process of individual and societal cultivation, organic unfolding, Bildung. However, German educational philosopher Otto Friedrich Bollnow (1903-1991) points out a necessary categorical analysis of structures of the way we use concepts to take a grasp of the totality of the phenomenon. Becoming human
through the Bildung process of unfolding nature in a pedagogical relationship is merely one level of the total articulation of human existence. Other articulations and conceptualizations are also necessary. Being human exceeds a mere cultural link to the world in a continuous form, and thus an underlying existential basis can be highlighted.

The methodological influences of Wilhelm Dilthey’s hermeneutics and Martin Heidegger’s early work on fundamental ontology were constitutive to the design of Bollnow’s philosophical-pedagogical anthropology. Bollnow sees an evolution in the early Heidegger in terms of the tasks of Dilthey’s hermeneutics, the hermeneutics of facticity. Heidegger made a clear methodological identification of this hermeneutics, which he consciously practiced in Sein und Zeit, as "the analysis of existence" or "hermeneutics of the theme of human existence" (Heidegger 1962 [1927]). In his subsequent work, Heidegger stressed even further the task of hermeneutics in terms of seeing it as more than the mere analysis of the life context. In contrast to Lebensphilosophie, or philosophy of life, where the original course in the hermeneutic and the facticity wounds open as the essential structure, the self-aware hermeneutic method of fundamental ontology raised the essential structure of the original, carried by the facticity to a level that can only be understood from the facticity alone. This brought a separation of surface and depth to the episode, the ontic, and the ontological. Bollnow put a compass-like relationship of mutual determination between the essence and facticity, and claimed the immanence of Being in the facticity, with the methodical process of Bollnowian philosophical anthropology, affected particularly by Georg Misch, Helmuth Plessner, and Hans Lipps (Bollnow 1966; 1974b).

Following Dilthey’s doctrine, Bollnow speaks, like Nohl, of a "hermeneutics of educational reality," in other words, of a systematic interpretation of the educational reality, (Erziehungswirklichkeit) (Bollnow 1966: 112–113, 1972). His method can be described as phenomenological hermeneutics. More accurately, it might not be seen in the beginning as purely phenomenological and only later

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15 Bollnow understands the concept of Bildung in Humboldtian articulation as having a double-sidedness to its essential kernel in terms of individuality and totality. It is the goal of totality of humanity to overcome the limitation of individuality as it is given, by appropriating the widest possible universality of human possibilities and finally to re-establish this individuality on a higher level. This proposes a challenge to the individual: a human being should not lose himself in alien possibilities, but rather integrate them into his own inner Gestalt. This transcends any analogy to the organic growth, such as plant life, as this takes place to a great extent in intercourse with other human beings (Bollnow 1966; Spranger 1928 [1909]).
phenomenological hermeneutics, although this is not in the sense of Husserl's phenomenology, but understood perhaps in the way Hans Lipps puts it, namely, as an art of description, which, unlike anything constructive and forceful, advances in simplifying the patient work of distinguishing and comparing the "phenomena" to get itself into the attempted view (Lipps 1976 [1927,1928], Bollnow 1965a), and as a process to proceed from natural language.

To characterize the Bollnowian method in general, one is invited to understand him as an approacher of the structure of Dilthey's hermeneutical method with the succession of the phenomenological connection to the view. The methodology shows Bollnow’s affinity to the vitalistic approach of Dilthey, and life itself as to be interpreted with the phenomenological basic intention. This happens, however, with unmistakable epistemological opposites with Husserl’s concept of Lebenswelt. Bollnow has his hermeneutic conception of understanding as a moduled design, so that it remains entirely open to the phenomenological method.

The development of pedagogical anthropology was put forward by Bollnow and his co-workers in an intimate connection with the form of philosophical anthropology developed by Helmut Plessner. As a philosophical discipline, the approach should be distinguished from pedagogical anthropology in its other meaning as a mere summary of those results of the empirical social sciences that are relevant for education.

In the intended form of a philosophical-pedagogical anthropology, one seeks to achieve a solid reference point for pedagogy, by relating the different cultural domains—art, science, religion, the economy, technology, and so forth—back to the human being. The human being is conceived as “the productive place where a culture issues forth” (Plessner 1953: 13). That is, one comprehends these cultural domains in terms of the needs out of which they have developed and in terms of the functions that they have to fulfill in human life. In a somewhat broader version, this perspective poses the question: How must we conceive a specific phenomenon of importance for education, such as work, holidays, shame, the upright gait, the use of the hand, and so forth, in order that it can fulfill a meaningful and necessary function within the context of human life (Bollnow 1974b)? Inversely, how must we conceive the human being, such that this specific phenomenon can be seen as meaningful and necessary within human existence?

The medium for the analysis is the careful description of the involved phenomenon, suspending all presuppositions. In this context, phenomenology as developed by Edmund Husserl gains a special significance for pedagogy.
fruitfulness of this philosophical approach is proven by Bollnow, wherever he deals with an understanding of otherwise unnoticed or uncomprehended phenomena in the life of the child. As a simple example, Bollnow mentions the admonition. Educators are forever voicing the complaint that none of the forms of admonishment accomplish a thing. The admonition takes on a necessary function, however, when one reflects that the human being does not develop “organically” in a continuous line, as for example an apple ripens (Bollnow 1966: 151). Rather, in all his efforts, the human being tries again and again, falls back into old errors and habits, and requires an ever-repeated series of nudges, in order to exert himself once again. In this connection, Bollnow shows some evidence of the need for an “appealing pedagogy” (Bollnow 1966: 151). Until the advent of Bollnow’s pedagogical anthropology, there had been no recognition of the systematic significance of such a pedagogy, which directly appeals to the aspirations of the human being. The theoretical foundations for this form of pedagogy in which Bollnow is interested can be found in the works of Karl Jaspers.

A further and somewhat more complicated example that Bollnow uses is Adolph Portmann’s theory of the “extra-uterine Spring” of the human being, that is, the suggestion that a human child comes into the world essentially much earlier than do other comparable animals (Bollnow 1966: 151). This signifies that the influences of the external world forming the human child commence to act at a point in time, when the young animal would still be protected within its mother’s womb against such influences. That signifies further, that the human being is much more plastic than most other young animals and can be formed differently by varying environments. This can be the biological presupposition for the historical mutability of the human being (Bollnow 1966: 152).

Dutch pedagogue M. J. Langeveld worked on the anthropology of childhood, which stands in a very similar context. His work illuminates many phenomena of the child’s life, such as the significance of the “secret place” or the multiplicity of relationships with things in the life of the child (Langeveld 1962, Vandenberg 1971, Bollnow 1966).

What Bollnow describes by his pedagogical anthropology is ultimately a hermeneutic procedure. In this regard, one can see the fruitfulness of hermeneutics for pedagogy. It makes possible a close proximity to praxis, which cannot be achieved through a purely technical consideration of education and of instruction. Bollnow sees that a methodologically guided understanding is to illuminate the concepts that are already utilized in practice, and free those
concepts to their full potential, in order to provide a reliable foundation for empirical research as far as it is possible.

2.1.4 The Main Principles of the Methodology in Bollnow’s Phenomenology

Bollnow had already formulated the basic methodological structure of philosophical anthropology in his book Das Wesen der Stimmungen (The Essence of Moods, 1941), which Döpp-Vorwald claims to have become something of a methodical “Basic Law” of the pedagogical anthropology both to Bollnow-followers but also to those anthropologists who do not explicitly invoke it, but in fact seem to proceed upon it without knowing it (1967: 998). This formula is about as follows: How can a complete understanding of being human be obtained, so that even the peculiar phenomenon or manifestation can be seen as a useful and necessary part of the fact of life (Bollnow 1965a: 163)? Bollnow treats the problem of method in pedagogical anthropology in more detail by establishing three methodological principles:

1. The principle of anthropological reduction: The structures of the objective spirit of man seek to understand their emergence as the “productive figures” (Bollnow 1965a: 163). By this, Bollnow means, following Dilthey and Plessner, that all areas of culture should be regarded as creative achievements of man, and can therefore be understood originating from man.

2. The Organon principle involves looking the other way around to the subject of the objective structures to understand what an individual has produced (Bollnow 1965a: 163). This principle is therefore an inverse operation to the anthropological reduction, and uses each area of culture as a starting point to examine what and who this man is and who he can be, as having created such an objective entity16.

3. The principle of anthropological interpretation of individual phenomena is the broadest and most general. It takes a single phenomenon, which it imposes, and asks: How can the nature of man be understood as a whole, as a frame in which this single phenomenon can be understood as a useful and necessary part, and by reversing this phenomenon back to the subject, how

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16 The Organon principle, or the primacy of objective spirit originates from Hegel’s Phänomenologie des Geistes. See e.g. Väyrynen 2012, 1994.
can this individual be understood in such a framework more deeply? (Bollnow 1965a: 163). This idea is a refined form of his “Basic Law.”

4. Bollnow brings forth also a critical fourth principle, namely the principle of the open question, to protect the first three from oversimplifications and unjust treatment to the nature of fundamental anthropological inquiry on human essence (Bollnow 1965a: 163). Each newly absorbed phenomenon provides some unpredictable new aspect for the full understanding of man. Each phenomenon is indispensable, and in principle, the quest for a clear and complete picture of man must therefore remain open to new discoveries.

Donald Vandenberg, one of the main Anglo-American receptors of Bollnow, introduced this method in terms of a more complete introduction to Bollnow’s existential philosophy of education (Vandenberg 1971). His treatment does not include the fourth, most critical principle, but points out the procedural recommendations of the first three. He also stresses too much the property of linguistic analysis in Bollnow’s project, and thus distances himself from the holistic concept of “anthropological interpretation” (Denton 1974, Vandenberg 1974).

Döpp-Vorwald criticizes Bollnow’s methodology for inequality in methodological structures. He claims that the first two principles are not as comprehensive as the third one. Only the third, the principle of anthropological interpretation of individual phenomena, is really a valid structure of the method of pedagogical anthropology, a true methodological principle. The first and the second “principles” would more accurately be called methodological “parts,” which do not seem to be justified as dependent structures of the truly-independent and holistic concept of “anthropological interpretation” (Döpp-Vorwald 1967: 1001).

Döpp-Vorwald also criticizes Bollnow for the principle of open question as portraying the educational object phenomenon as merely “conditions of possibility” in the Kantian sense rather than as concretizations of very specific individual educational phenomena (teaching and learning, school, exercise, etc.), rendering the fundamental project of pedagogical anthropology quite abstract and leaving it somewhat distant from the purposes of empirical educational research (Döpp-Vorwald 1967: 1007).

However, it seems that Döpp-Vorwald’s critique is directed at a particular Kantian reading of Bollnow. Also, there is no categorical necessity for the methodological principles to be equally justified nor equally comprehensive in
order them to be valid. From a more phenomenological, and even Hegelian reading, the principles come to seem more believable than Döpp-Vorwald might account for.

2.1.5 A Short Introduction to Bollnow’s Impact on Current Phenomenological Educational Research

Undoubtedly, Bollnow contributed significantly to educational thinking. Bollnow’s phenomenological method to describe the lived experience of education was taken forward by his students. Until the end of the twentieth century, a certain current of the Bollnow-school was present in Tübingen, Germany, where Bollnow spent the latter part of his life teaching as a professor in philosophy and education. This current was known as Bollnow Gesellschaft, Bollnow-society. The method took further forms and immigrated to the North American continent, and found fertile ground as a foundation to phenomenological projects in educational philosophy. An especially mentionable authority of this is Max van Manen. His contribution to the phenomenology of education is significant; his work continues and further develops many ideas founded in the methodological project by Bollnow, such as the treatment of a pedagogical atmosphere (see Manen 1991; Bollnow 1964). Other similarly prominent scholars in existential educational thought are Leroy Troutner, Maxine Greene (1997), Robyn Harrison (2000), Donald Vandenberg (1971), and David Denton (1974). Bollnow’s pedagogical anthropology had an influence on the further development of the anthropology of education. A more systematic approach to viewing education in the anthropological perspective has been taken further in the works of Werner Loch (1963) and Christoph Wulf (2002).

As a productive result of Bollnow’s approach of philosophical-pedagogical anthropology, the development of “discontinuous education,” which, as shown in the categorical analysis, conflicts with the notion of Bildung, is worth mentioning. In this regard, truly, tensions exist between classical Bildung and existential notions of discontinuity, but this should not be considered a subject of theoretical treatment: these two different articulations of the human developmental process belong to two different levels of the categorical analysis and thus, to avoid misleading conclusions and paradoxes, should not be mixed up with each other. This shows Bollnow’s modular model of his theoretical influences. The level of Bildung comes with a Humboldtian understanding of inner unfolding as individuation and socialization, plus the dialogical process of understanding as a
two-way transmission and constitution of culture between individuality and totality\textsuperscript{17}. With the existential level comes the “rationality of the irrational” (Koerrenz 2004: 42), the sudden, potentially hazardous non-understandability, the existential nature of the concept of encounter, and also the concept of awakening, not as a result of organic unfolding or transmission of culture, but rather as a “peeling off” of such irrelevances to this existential level of description, out of the way of awakening to conscience, and true self.

2.2 Existentialist Educational Reality

Influenced by the philosophical-phenomenological anthropology and hermeneutic phenomenological method, a new approach to education emerged, which was described by Bollnow as the \textit{discontinuous forms of education}. What does Bollnow mean by discontinuity, and how is it especially existential in nature? It can happen that a particular manifestation of the world suddenly presents itself to a person as an immediate and powerful challenge, jolting him out of his previous accustomed way of living. This manifestation makes a person conscious of the nullity of his everyday life. He senses in it a call for a radical change in his life. And the important thing is that the challenging voice does not tell him what to do; it remains indefinite as to content, telling him only that he must change, but not how (Bollnow 1959: 87).

Behind this phenomenon is a particular dualistic view of man, the humanistic, and the existential. The humanist picture of man goes back to the Era of Romanticism and is the basis for the classical educational ideals and their further developments in hermeneutic pedagogy. In contrast to such a view of man was the breakthrough of existentialist philosophy. This existentialist view of man could be recognized best in the philosopher Martin Heidegger’s (1889–1976) formulations of the distinction between the "\textit{Eigentlichkeit}" (reality, authenticity) and the "\textit{Uneigentlichkeit}" (spuriousness, inauthenticity) of human existence, of man as he ought to be and mostly is not; the former term is designated with the concept

\textsuperscript{17} However, not all formulations of Bildung boil down to this view. Hegel’s concept of Bildung is a different kind, recognizing the discontinuity of the whole process (see Väyrynen 2012). However, it is not the same as Bollnow’s view, in which there are two simultaneous, parallel processes which have their own distinct nature: the process of Bildung or Formation, and the process of encounter. The latter process is solely based on a discontinuous nature, leading to crises but also to awakenings of truths which would not be revealed otherwise. As Hegel points out, Bildung is also a process which is disturbed by discontinuities. However, the process continues with its inherent force regardless of the momentary discontinuity.
of "existence" in the particular sense of Existentialist philosophy. To some extent, a similar, but perhaps more psychological, distinction can be found in Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*: “facticity,” which refers to the reality of one’s situatedness and “transcendence,” which refers to the way one identifies himself through the attributes he in reality does not have yet (Sartre 2003 [1958]). This new view of human life demands a new view of education, a view that can be grasped through such concepts as *encounter, crisis, awakening,* and *admonition* (Bollnow 1959; Heidegger 1962 [1927]).

With the concept of encounter, Bollnow characterizes the process by which “I,” usually in an accidental and unexpected fashion, collide with a reality that confronts “me” as other, alien, and resistant to “my” natural life force (Bollnow 1966: 161). In other words, encounter totally displaces a person from his or her natural course of life, and occurs without the possibility for the person to consciously affect the encounter. A displacement from normal, safe, habitable behavior raises existential demands: one must re-evaluate one’s perceptions and general conceptualizations of life.

For Bollnow, encounter is a fundamental experience in which the subject meets something new, strange, uncontrollable, and (to the subject) incomprehensible. It is a meeting with the irrational, as Koeppen puts it (2004). An encounter is a collision with everything outside one’s understanding, not a meeting with the familiar. Through this collision with something new, encounter presents a possibility for self-examination. In other words, encountering a force outside subjective understanding results in a change to that subjective understanding; one recognizes an entity that is not understood, and begins to learn about it and of oneself in relations to it. By no means is encounter necessarily a pleasant experience; it affects the subject profoundly, leading to self-examination or reflection and a change in one’s way of living or being.

One may have an intellectual encounter with an author or figure of the past or present (Bollnow 1959: 110, Vandenberg 1971: 159), groups of people, previous times and cultures, works of poetry, and with intellectual truths (Bollnow 1959: 93). To distinguish encounter from theoretical interest, Bollnow cites Heidegger’s claim that deficient moods underlie abstract theorizing, but that an educative encounter involves one’s whole being: “one must first of all value and only then can one understand” (ibid.: 108), and, “I understand only insofar as I place myself in question” (ibid.: 110). These citations precede a definition of education as “the intellectual encounter between the generations, or of the educational encounter between the rising generation and the intellectual-historical world” (ibid., 93).
Teachers cannot contrive encounters with students, but they can promote their occurrence through a serious, respectful, engaged treatment of curriculum content (ibid.: 125, 130).

With his concept of "appellative education" (appellierende Pädagogik), Karl Jaspers (1883–1969) introduced a new, hitherto neglected aspect into educational theory. Education cannot "do" anything in the existential sphere, but by means of its summons or call, it can awaken the hidden inner life (Jaspers 1932: 93, Bollnow 1959: 18–20). The frequently misunderstood necessity of an admonition perpetually to be repeated thus acquires a more profound anthropological justification. With the notion of awakening, to Bollnow, the most profound view of education, the fourth basic model of the process of education alongside the concepts of encounter, crisis, and admonition, has been reached. Here, as with encounter, the concept of awakening must be taken in a strict sense. One can also speak, in the field of cultural education, of the awakening of powers of the mind in the child, for instance technical or artistic ability, just as one can say in poetic language that the new spring awakens the sleeping blossoms. That, however, is only a vague metaphorical mode of expression. If one takes the concept in a strict sense, a person when asleep is in a state where he or she is not conscious, that is, is not present in a full sense, and is not able to dispose freely of himself (Bollnow 1959: 44). The awakening caused by being woken is a sudden process without gradual transition by which he is brought to himself again. If we use the concept of awakening in this sense, as Bollnow does, it can also only mean a sudden process as the waking of a hidden, dormant true nature of a person. In this sense, awakening is an originally religious notion, and this religious undertone is always audible when awakening is applied to education in an extended sense (Bollnow 1959: 42–59).

If the concept of awakening is taken in its strict sense, it does not refer to individual powers and skills. It refers only to the core of a person, the subject-point, which can relate to everything that makes up the content of a life, to all acts and omissions, but itself remains indeterminate and non-affirmative. Awakening is at bottom always awakening of the conscience, and it is in education for conscience that education attains its zenith (Bollnow 1959: 43). Here the question arises: What is the conscience, and how can education of the conscience be possible? Firstly, the conscience seems to have received very, very little attention in modern educational theory. Finding it awkward, people have attempted to explain it away with psychological theories and thus dispose of it (Bollnow 1959: 58). The conscience is easily seen as nothing but the "internalization" of
requirements made by society. According to this, Bollnow states, the conscience does not originate in the soul itself; a person adopts the requirements made of him by society so thoroughly as to feel them to be his own (Bollnow 1959: 59). This view is refuted by Bollnow through the mere fact that the conscience can also resist the requirements made by society. In one’s conscience, a person feels a demand that, by its absolute nature, is distinct from all other requirements made of him, and to which he must justify himself in his life (Bollnow 1959: 59). The voice of conscience is thus a metaphysical, rather religious experience, and to be able to hear it is the guarantee of the metaphysical nature of human life.

The demands of conscience are in general in harmony with the morality obtained in the society. This is the case as long as a person finds himself in typically patterned situations. The difficulties arise when a person finds himself in situations for which the predominant morality provides no solutions (Bollnow 1959: 47). Here, his conscience places upon him the responsibility for making decisions for which there are no precedents. Then a person is all on his own, and it can happen that he has to reject the demands made on him by society, perceiving them to be wrong. His conscience challenges him to resist, with the result that he exposes himself to the repressions of his environment (Bollnow 1959: 48). In this way, that which emerges from the call of conscience may be distinguished from arbitrary offences against prevailing norms. This, then, answers the question how the education of the conscience, or rather education for conscience, is possible. The conscience cannot be "made" in the sense of the view of education as craftsmanship (Bollnow 1959: 48). Nor can it be transmitted to a young person by teaching. It can only be awakened by appealing to the individual’s conscience. The result of this is the abandonment of the view of education as craftsmanship, determined by the laws of organic growth, and the acceptance of another and more profoundly incisive limit and possibility, which rests on the freedom of a young person. Whether he follows the appeal to his conscience or not is a matter for his own free choice, and which cannot be forced on him by education of any kind (Bollnow 1959: 54–55). This leads to a certain restriction on the part of the educator. He can appeal to the conscience, but he must not anticipate the decision. He must really release his pupil to the freedom in which he alone can realize his innermost self (Bollnow 1959: 55).
2.2.1 Philosophy of Life in Bollnow’s Thought: Constituting Theory and Praxis

Bollnow defines the concept of human life, the fundamental concept in his philosophical-pedagogical anthropology, from the perspective of Lebensphilosophie, the philosophy of life. In doing this, he does it not in the sense of referring to a specific philosophical school or jargon, but rather in the sense of a natural departure point for every philosophy. The philosophy of life leaves aside any rational narrowing of philosophy by basing itself on the total human being, with all of his or her powers for understanding, as well as for feeling and willing. The life lived by the human being, concrete lived reality, is the natural point of departure.

Accordingly, Lebensphilosophie also opposes any attempt to conceive life from some kind of externally imposed standpoint, which, as in the case of René Descartes, believes it has found an absolute beginning point in some kind of rational evidence, from which one could erect the edifice of knowledge in a step-wise, progressive, constructive process. It also with equal force opposes every dogmatic foundation on the part of religious belief, not presupposing such beliefs within the context of its philosophical foundations as a purely secular science, which must rest on its own basis. To disclose the life lived by human beings in its total fullness, and to understand it purely in its own right, without underlying presuppositions, is the goal of the philosophy of life, at least as Bollnow would understand it.

Bollnow conceptualizes his statement further terminologically, by formulating it with reference to Dilthey: philosophy as a hermeneutics of life, as the art of interpreting life. The concept of hermeneutics as a methodologically regulated art of interpretation is in this regard carried over from the philological sciences, where it originated and already had a long prehistory (Bollnow 1965b, 1966: 122). Thus, just as philology interprets its text and undertakes to clarify it, so too philosophy takes life in its given actuality as a text, which it aims to read and to understand without prejudice and without preconceived opinion. A methodological circle characterizes the human sciences, which, lacking the possibility of an absolute starting point, begin with at first a quite indefinite total understanding and press forward with progressive refinement into greater depth. This same methodological circle also carries over into hermeneutic philosophy. Thus, the philosophy of life stands in sharp contrast to all dogmatic and scholastic philosophies; at the same time, according to Bollnow, it converges closely with
the philosophy of pragmatism developed in America, especially as Dewey understood it (Bollnow 1965b). However, the philosophy of life seeks to comprehend the concept of life-experience more fully than pragmatism, and to include all of the irrational aspects of life as well.

This standpoint of the philosophy of life shows its fruitfulness especially in systematic pedagogy, which Bollnow refers to as a “hermeneutics of educational reality” (Bollnow 1965b, 1966: 123), taking educational reality as one important partial domain of life.

Bollnow sets the problem of the relationship between theory and praxis as Dilthey had formulated it in his day: How, from the knowledge of that which is, can the rule be derived, of what should be (Bollnow 1965b, 1966: 133)? To Bollnow, a more precise question is: How can one begin with research on reality, as it presents itself to one without any influence on one’s part, and ultimately derive a goal for one’s own actions, by means of which one can even, if necessary, critically confront this same given reality (Bollnow 1966: 134)?

Bollnow lets the discussion of this question, developed in the Dilthey school, lead him to a rather obvious conclusion. He includes the work of Herman Nohl, Wilhelm Flitner, and Erich Weniger to back up his own examinations. For Bollnow, the usual relationship that can be observed between natural science and technique, in which practice involves the after-the-fact application of an already developed pure theory, will not suffice. Already at the outset of one’s reflections on the function of education in life, one must emphasize that education and upbringing take place long before all theory. Indeed, prior to any actual theories, there is a cultivated and richly organized totality of educational institutions and procedures practiced in these institutions (Bollnow 1966: 134). These institutions and procedures always already contain a set of goals for education and an attribution of meaning to education.

These elements are thus always already present as a part of reality prior to all theory; there is praxis prior to theory, and pedagogical theory proceeds from it. Thus, theory need not develop its conclusions on its own; rather, it already has them as something pre-given, which it must critically examine. This means, however, that there is basically no “Archimedean point” in pedagogy, upon which it could begin to construct its edifice without presupposition and entirely from the bottom up. Rather, the totality of the “educational reality,” which has arisen over
the centuries, always already forms the “presupposition” for pedagogy as a science (Bollnow 1966: 134)18.

This educational reality in its full breadth is thus the intrinsic object for pedagogical research and not merely some artificially prepared laboratory segment of learning. Pedagogy thus finds itself in no different a situation than do the philological and historical, or more broadly, the human-scientific (Geisteswissenschaftliche) disciplines (Bollnow 1982). Thus, the methodologies developed in these areas can also be applied to pedagogy. For example, to use a frequently cited principle, the philologist undertakes to interpret his pre-given text with unbiased devotion and in the process grows so beyond the text without realizing it, that at the close he understands his author better than the author has understood himself (see ibid.).

In the same fashion, theoretical pedagogy involves a reflection in the sense of distancing oneself from immediate action, clarifying and interpreting the pre-given educational reality. In this regard, this pedagogical analysis of reality, as it already exists prior to all reflection, must at the same time disclose the immanent law or principle within this reality (Bollnow 1982). Recognition of this law will then enable pedagogy in turn to judge this reality itself, to evaluate it, and to develop goals, which will guide it from the unsatisfactory state of a reality toward a better configuration.

Pedagogy can therefore rely in this context on the procedures developed in the human or cultural sciences (Geisteswissenschaften), but it must at the same time transform these procedures accordingly in light of its own needs. Thus, it is understandable that perhaps the strongest and most widely disseminated pedagogical school in Germany (especially in the 1920s) drew strongly on the methodological self-reflection of the human sciences, as begun by Wilhelm Dilthey. This school included such figures as Eduard Spranger, Theodor Litt, Herman Nohl, and Wilhelm Flittner. Bollnow characterizes this basic methodological position within pedagogy, to which Bollnow himself adheres, as an understanding of pedagogical theory in the sense of a hermeneutics of educational reality (Bollnow 1966: 135). The concept of hermeneutics as it was developed in the philological sciences, in the sense of a methodologically regulated art of interpretation, is transferred thus to pedagogy. It remains in

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18 These views are at the very roots of Gesteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik, even before Bollnow. For more on the foundations to hermeneutic pedagogy, see e.g.: Dilthey 1989[1883]; Nohl 1961; Spranger 1960, 1928; Litt 1968; Klafki 1958, 1985; Lipps 1976; Weniger 1953.
connection in this regard with “Lebensphilosophie,” the philosophy of life. Education, as it has always already developed in practice, with its institutions and procedures, is in certain fashion the “text,” which is to be interpreted and elucidated in pedagogical theory. Only from the perspective of this approach can the relationship between comprehending reality and providing norms be resolved, according to Bollnow (ibid.: 135).

2.2.2 On the Levels of Categorical Analysis of Educational Reality

In order to be able to pursue this methodological approach neatly within the context of hermeneutics, it seemed to Bollnow that the most suitable procedure would be an application of phenomenological methods to a scrupulous analysis of the educational reality. Before Bollnow, the art developed within the school of Edmund Husserl under the name of phenomenology, an art of describing and distinguishing, which makes possible a penetration into the essence of a thing, still had much too little influence on pedagogy. The arts of careful description and of seeing in such a way as to make fine discriminations have been little cultivated in pedagogy.

The forms of a pedagogy that seek “to appeal,” such as Bollnow had sought to develop in connection with an existential-philosophical train of thinking, cannot be comprehended by the same conceptual means that have been developed for the description of organic formation, development, and unfolding, as in the classical concept of Bildung. The effects of an encounter that shakes a human being to his or her core cannot be described in the same thought forms as are used to convey scientific instruction, and so forth. Bollnow would suggest, therefore, that one must distinguish in human life the slowly growing, continuous forms of life and the suddenly intruding and discontinuous existential events. Thus, there exist very differently structured regions, which overlap and intermingle within the larger reality of education. Each region must be worked out in its own unique character and the mastery of each requires its own conceptual tools.

The elaboration of these differing conceptual structures in all necessary clarity is a task that one might characterize as the “categorical analysis” of educational reality, borrowing here the language of Nicolai Hartmann. Thus, if one were to anticipate such a task by a crude preliminary schema, one could distinguish the following regions, as Bollnow suggests (1966: 147):
1. Child rearing and care in both the physical and intellectual sense;
2. functional education, which involves an automatic and spontaneously occurring adaptation to society;
3. instruction and teaching through a planned out and regulated transmission of pieces of knowledge and skills;
4. Bildung in the sense of an organic shaping and of a closely connected plant-like growth from within; and
5. the “pedagogy that appeals” in the existential sense.

Bollnow does not see this enumeration by any means as being comprehensive and leaves it to be further refined if necessary. These regions actually take the form of levels, which ascend from the lower toward the higher and overlap one another. To a large extent (but not completely), the formation of the higher level presupposes the preceding structure of the lower level. Each of these levels has its own conceptual system, decisively coherent in itself, which is only valid for this particular level, and which is essentially different from the conceptual systems of other levels. Thus, the concepts of conscious planning, of goals and means, and of a step-by-step construction are quite at home in the region of instruction and teaching, but cannot be transferred to the phenomena of an organically unfolding idea of Bildung. Thus, too, to mention another example, the concepts of totality and structure (Gestalt) and of harmony and development in the genuine sense of the word, in connection with the so-called negative education, are suitable to the level of organic formation, but cannot be transferred to the existential region. The uncritical carrying over of categories to a region alien to them leads necessarily to misleading results. To sharply refine and work out the details of these conceptual systems in their diversity remains the task of a categorical analysis within pedagogy.

Bollnow’s motives were to find an approach in opposition to a one-sided concept of research oriented only to the natural sciences, so as to bring to light the deeper relationship between philosophy and pedagogy. At the same time, Bollnow clarified the claim of a reciprocal working relationship between philosophical thinking and empirical research within educational science (Bollnow 1966, 1974b). A categorical analysis such as what has been described here, supported by careful phenomenological investigations, provides the presuppositions that are indispensable for successful empirical research. But this same example also shows that one cannot conceive the relationship as one in which the philosophical phenomenological reflections create in advance the foundations upon which then
each individual research must build. Rather, precisely the opposite is true: The ever-new experiences within the concrete life of education and the ever-new adaptations to the changing intellectual and social conditions of the times compel one to an individual research project (Bollnow 1966: 148). The establishing of philosophical foundations and the carrying out of individual research do not stand in a relationship of “before and after”; rather, from the beginning, they are intimately linked with one another in a necessarily circular, reciprocal interdependence, and they remain in this same relationship for the future as well. According to Bollnow, the strict separation of disciplines leads to sterility. Philosophy and pedagogy cannot be thus separated, and an isolated, purely positivistic pedagogy will never be able to achieve the goals it poses for itself. Only in the most intimate connection with philosophy can pedagogy fruitfully approach its tasks (Bollnow 1966: 149). Within this connection, Bollnow points out views on educational reality, which were underdeveloped in educational theory until his time: the existential aspects of educational reality.

2.2.3 Evaluating the Subjective, Phenomenal Notions in Bollnow’s view of Educational Reality

Bollnow’s basic understanding of education is something that has been stated in the humanistic, hermeneutic tradition of educational theory, or geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik. The object of inquiry in this tradition has been referred to as “educational reality” (Erziehungswirklichkeit). In its broadest sense, this concept includes all the historical-cultural conditions under which the actual educational practice is commenced. Educational reality in this sense is to be understood as a part of human reality, a specific area of human existence, and therefore as a part of the totality of historical-cultural conditions. As Wilhelm Flitner (1950) puts it, educational reality in its most general meaning contains a circle of life, or a segment of a life-world, in which education plays the central role. As such, educational reality seems only an abstraction, because it is in many ways part of almost all structures of cultural and societal life (see Flitner 1950: 25). There is an educational praxis prior to theory, and pedagogical theory proceeds from it. Theory is a description of this praxis, but also, by necessity, an abstraction of it. Therefore, theory not only describes, but also by making abstractions of its target, proclaims what the target ought to be, through this abstracted, even “perfected” state. Theory and praxis are framed in this two-directional constitution: theory is derived from praxis, and through theory, praxis
itself can be re-articulated and re-developed, as mentioned earlier from the viewpoint of Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik.

Through which kind of concepts and categories is the target of educational research, educational reality, described and worked on? The starting point for the human-scientific or geisteswissenschaftliche tradition can be well interpreted to be in the concept of formation, or Bildung. This concept refers to, as it has been defined in its recent form, the “reciprocal interrelationship of world and individual” (Klafki 1997). Only through it, can the main question of the hermeneutic pedagogical inquiry be articulated: How is this process of Bildung possible in a modern society and how can education proceed to uphold and foster it? From the concept of Bildung, other significant concepts can be derived, one being the concept of Bildsamkeit, or educability. Johann Friedrich Herbart made the first pedagogical formulation of the concept19. With it, he paves a way for education: Bildsamkeit is to be seen as a principle, a presupposition behind any educational practice. Herbart criticizes Kant for his formulations of human capacities as understanding, judgment and reason: for Herbart Bildsamkeit does not follow apriori structures as such, but educability becomes factual wherever it is given the possibility to blossom. Thus, education is preconditioned and becomes possible only through the idea of Bildsamkeit. Education is the given possibility and space for actualizing abilities. Educatability cannot be categorically expressed but is rather a property, which is contextually interpreted.

The concept of Bildsamkeit implies that the process of Bildung, or formation of an individual, does not happen “naturally” by itself upon the basis of the abilities of this individual, and that this individual is not able to proceed with this process of formation by him- or herself, but requires outside help, pedagogical intervention. The concept of educability also presupposes that the intervention to promote the individual Bildung process makes a lasting influence: without a lasting influence, no progress could be caused. It would be irrational to talk of such a process, or of a precondition to this process.

Bollnow continues from but never distances himself from the hermeneutic tradition. He does, however, see a problem with the hermeneutic understanding of educational reality. The socio-cultural conditions with which it is being described are constituted by rationality; they are rational conditions. This is understandable from the point of view of the concept of Bildung: the process of formation can be

19 For a thorough introduction and more profound analysis on Herbart’s Bildsamkeit, see Siljander 2012.
understood as a process of rationality, or rational development. This understanding of educational reality does not entail the elements of human life that are not derived from rational action, but which instead are sudden, drastic, unexpected, and even irrational by nature. This problem of definition, Bollnow thinks, can be fixed by bringing forth to educational discourse certain themes attractive in a philosophical movement in the continental philosophy, especially after the Second World War: existential philosophy, *Existenzphilosophie*, which includes, depending on the definition, at least such thinkers as Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Jaspers, and Martin Heidegger. The addition of existentialist views of education to hermeneutic pedagogy brings some changes in the way education should be understood: Education is a discontinuous process in which the collisions with the incomprehensible and uncontrollable play a significant role. First of all, an existential view of education means a profoundly subjective approach: a personal sense of autonomy and self-understanding.

For good reason, existentialism is a difficult chunk for pedagogy to swallow. One fundamental existential philosophical thesis—that a person can grasp the authenticity of being only *in the moment* and cannot preserve it beyond the compass of the moment—seems to call into question the possibility of pedagogy in general, because pedagogy cannot exist without an assumption of lasting influence. Without it, the concepts of Bildung and Bildsamkeit would not seem sensible, and thus the whole conception of educational reality would not hold as a theoretical construct (see Bollnow 1959: 14–16, Siljander 2002: 97). Bollnow envisaged, through the possibility to re-evaluate but also maintain Bildung and Bildsamkeit as hermeneutic concepts, a possibility for German existentialism to function as a reflection theory or background philosophy for the formulation of a new *existential-hermeneutic* theory of education and formation. He sees *geistesswissenschaftliche Pädagogik* and existentialism as inclusive, but modular foundations for educational philosophy. Subjective existence does not reveal itself fully or constantly in the mode of being-in-the-truth or of authenticity, he theorized: the cultivation of true understanding of oneself is possible only irregularly, on a discontinuous basis (Bollnow 1959).

Bollnow brings forth certain concepts based on this notion of discontinuity, to define those aspects of educational reality that the hermeneutic notion fails to take into account. Bollnow describes the concept of *encounter* (*Begegnung*). It can mean, as mentioned before, an encounter with another person, with illness, a figure from literature or history, or a work of art, also with particular emphasis on an encounter with God. The notion of encounter does not refer to any
acquaintanceship, but only to an experience, which shakes a person to the core. Encounter, in this sense, is always an existential experience (Bollnow 1959: 59). As mentioned in the previous chapter, from such an existential view to pedagogy restrains it to a significant degree: education cannot "do" anything in the existential sphere of a being, or a person. However, as Jaspers points out, education can responsibly awaken the hidden inner lifes of people. Thus, we get to one more concept Bollnow introduces: awakening (Erweckung).

By the notion of awakening Bollnow refers to the core of a person, the subject-point, which can relate to everything that makes up the content of life, to all acts and omissions, but itself remains indeterminate (Bollnow 1959: 50). Awakening is at its core an awakening of the conscience. In his conscience, a person feels a demand, which, by its absolute nature, is distinct from all other requirements made of him, and to which he must justify himself in his life. The voice of conscience is a metaphysical experience, and to be able to hear it is the guarantee of the metaphysical nature of human life, Bollnow points out, referring in this view to the existential philosophers Kierkegaard and Jaspers. The demands of conscience are in general in harmony with the morality of the society.

However, it can happen that the person has to reject the demands made on him by society, perceiving them to be wrong. His conscience challenges him to resist, with the result that he exposes himself to the repressions of his environment. In this way, that which emerges from the call of conscience may be distinguished from arbitrary offences against prevailing norms (Bollnow 1959: 50). The conscience cannot be educated in the sense of viewing education as craftsmanship, nor can it be transmitted to a person by teaching. By these notions, Bollnow points out the boundaries of the hermeneutic pedagogical methodization of Bildung. Conscience can be awakened only by appealing to this conscience of a person. Whether he follows the appeal to his conscience or not is a matter for his own free choice, and that cannot be forced on him by education of any kind. This leads, on the other hand, to restricting the duty of the educator. He can appeal to the conscience, but he must not anticipate the decision. He must really release his pupil to the freedom in which he alone can realize his innermost self.

To sum up, Bollnow’s view on the existential notion of education is the view of education in all its discontinuity as awakening, with the distinction of what the experiences of an existential encounter and responsible invoke to the demands of conscience. His theoretical formulations spring from the foundation laid by the hermeneutic tradition, as he accepts the anthropological position that the human being is a cultural, social, and rational existence. Bollnow critically examines
those existential viewpoints that claim that the human being is thoroughly isolated, extremely individual, and non-rational, for those views would not hold any possibility for education with its attempts for a lasting influence. However, alongside the hermeneutic conceptions, he nourishes the idea of a human being as a thoroughly subjective being, with his or her existential core untouched even after an educational intervention, appealing for conscience.

Thus, the existential aspects of educational reality are first and foremost aspects of the subjective reality. Education in its appealing or invoking role refers to the subjective existence of a person, its life-world, or Eigenwelt. It is possible, therefore, to understand education as a form of self-education (Selbstbildung), as appealing to consciousness does not itself have an educational effect, but if we read the rationality behind this appealing as an inner, subjective demand for better self-definition and conscience, we can understand the existential notion of educational reality to be, especially and strictly speaking, dealing with a thoroughly subjective educational reality. This points out the limits and boundaries of existentialism in education. Existential aspects do not clarify well the nuances of the socio-cultural settings, or Mitwelt, for education, as hermeneutic or critical educational theory perhaps would. Existential education, however, does articulate well the dynamics of self-relation in the educational setting, in the form of subjective reality, from where the basis of human knowledge is pointed, not as objective truths, but as anything subjectively meaningful and truthful to oneself (see Kierkegaard 1992 [1846]: 196–257, Habermas 1976: 68).

If the developmental process of the individual, or Bildung, is taken to be a reciprocal interrelation between the world and the individual, as it is, then it should be noted that there is a possibility of not just one world, but many worlds to be in relation to. This idea is shared by philosopher of science Karl Popper, for whom the world is neither monistic nor dualistic, but pluralistic. There are at least three worlds, the physical world, the subjective world, and the socio-cultural world. Each of these worlds presupposes the earlier. No subjective world is possible without a physical world with its causalities, even though the subjective world of meanings and intentions does not boil down to these causalities. The socio-cultural world is presupposed by the subjective world. This world could be described as the world of “Objectivations of the Spirit” as the great hermeneutic Wilhelm Dilthey would say, e.g., the cultural artifacts, such as literature, concepts, and even norms. Educational theory has mostly been described with the discourse of the third world, since the modern Bildung-theory has been dealing
with the interrelation of the subject and the cultural world, or societal world. However, the world of the subject with its intentions and affections has not been articulated as elaborately as in the existential philosophy.

This shows the limits of existentialism. As Theodor Adorno polemizes in his book, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, such a focus on the subject extracts a price (Adorno 2008). A constant focus on the subjective world that leaves out the link to a social world may bring deep and difficult moral and political problems. The affirmation of authenticity has given a chance for blindness toward social pathologies.

### 2.3 Objectivity and Truth in the Humanities

Bollnow points out that almost every time when someone is dealing with questions about humanities from the point of view of methodology, “one is always leaning toward a view of the natural sciences as a methodologically rigorous enterprise. This occurs not only when one attempts to apply the proven methods of the natural sciences to the humanities, but also when one attempts to maintain the methodological independence of the humanities from the natural sciences” (Bollnow 1974a: 3). One assumes almost certainly, that:

one must have thought through the simpler and more distinct relations found in the natural sciences before working on the more complex relations in the humanities. Because of a supposed guaranteed procedure that has been developed in the natural sciences over a long period of time, the extent to which something similar is possible in the humanities must be determined by reference to it. The difficulty about questions pertaining to the humanities is their more intimate connection with human life. In this respect, new complications arise, which seem to be unknown to natural sciences. From the point of view of the natural sciences the difficulty with humanities is that the subjectivity of the knower cannot be eliminated. (Bollnow 1974a: 3).

But what appears to be a serious difficulty is seen in Bollnow’s view as an unmistakable advantage. This so-called problem leads us to consider the role of knowledge in the entire context of human life, a problematic situation that has generated insights, and will do so in the years to come, which, when correctly understood, throw new light even upon the questions pertaining to natural science. “From this point of view it is clear that the point of departure of natural science, which presumes to find in simple sensations a universally certain foundation for
higher acts of knowing built hierarchically upon them, mirrors a very definite, inherited epistemological position, one which remains one-sidedly oriented toward sense perception” (Bollnow 1974a: 4).\(^{20}\)

For Bollnow, the questions that arise from this problem of knowledge as holistically transparent in human life have a universal meaning, which transcends the sphere of the humanities and throws new light on the question of truth in general, a question that is concealed by the usual orientation toward sense perception and the framework constructed from elementary sensations. From this orientation, it is absolutely impossible to move into the world of the opinions and views, moral valuations, or political and religious convictions that rule everyday life. “Unless we can successfully frame the problem of knowledge anew this entire realm must be abandoned to unverifiable arbitrariness” (Bollnow 1974a: 4).

In this chapter, I will take this question of the objectivity of the humanities further from the point of departure that Bollnow makes himself: “our goal is to discover points of view which take us beyond this question and are fruitful for the more general question of the essence of truth” (Bollnow 1974a: 4). On the basis of questions that are clearer and already quite well developed at the level of theoretical science, it can be anticipated that the result will apply beyond the sciences to the doctrine of knowledge in general. The basis of theoretical work Bollnow is referring to as the starting point is Martin Heidegger’s idea of truth as unconcealment. But I will return to that notion later.

First, it is important to set forth a broader outline of the problem from the point of view of the humanities, at least in the form Bollnow sees it: “The most universal trait of all sciences, that which differentiates them from unscientific points of view, is their objectivity” (Bollnow 1974a: 4). What Bollnow means with objectivity here is:

\emph{the elimination of all subjective bias. Such objectivity is not restricted to science alone; it is an attitude toward life, which one can assume also in practical affairs. One can meet it especially in the judicial objectivity that is most closely connected to the virtue of justice. Objective means unbiased, unprejudiced behavior toward an object.} (Bollnow 1974a: 4).

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\(^{20}\)One can even find a double layer to this one-sidedness. It is not only sense perception that the epistemology in natural sciences is leaning toward, but it is a particular sense perception that the theory of knowledge has arisen from. All the great empiricist theories of perception, say Berkeley and Locke, focus solely on seeing. It would be interesting to speculate on what a theory of knowledge would be like, if it was built not upon seeing as perceiving, but say, on hearing or smelling.
This thus presupposes disengagement from immediate vital commitments. For instance, the objective judge, who practices judicial objectivity, must stand above conflicting vital interests. This example shows the general tension between objectivity and life. A formulation of it can be found in Kierkegaard’s writings on truth and subjectivity: if one pursues objective truth about an object, one must diminish the subjectivity of this inquiring person, and therefore one cannot achieve an objective truth because there is no subject to gain this objective truth (see Kierkegaard 1992 [1846]). By way of anticipation, one may say that when it is a matter of objectivity, the immediate existential relation has been cancelled, and at the same time, when on the other hand, something is a matter of existential gravity, one stands outside the realm of possible objectivity. This is what Kierkegaard’s formulation boils down to. “It is the question of the existential limits of objectivity, and one must acknowledge it without being led immediately to depreciate objectivity” (Bollnow 1974a: 4).

“Objectivity is pre-eminently the basic attitude of the scientist, and in the case of the judge, the immediate existential relation must be bracketed, if there is to be achieved that objectivity which is the presupposition of every science” (Bollnow 1974a: 4). At the same time, however, there are limits to this analogy: while the objectivity of the judge must be achieved in concrete behavior again and again, in science the objectivity of the result enters into the further construction of the particular science. Thus, objectivity characterizes not only an attitude toward life, but a definite result, which can be taken over and built upon by another. This cumulativity deepens the question of objectivity to deal with the methodological guarantee of a science. The methodological question of objectivity asks what is the criterion of such objectivity, and thus the issue of objectivity as a human attitude toward life becomes the issue of that objective structure, which is precisely the context of the foundation of science.

For modern natural science, this criterion has been universal validation. “There are two traits of which guarantee universal validation within the natural sciences. One has the ability to repeat experiments at will, so that the results of one investigator can be checked by others” (Bollnow 1974a: 4). The second trait is the reduction of all relevant phenomena to the quantitative, the measurable, excluding thereby all unverifiable sensations. Historically, the humanities have continuously sought to establish themselves as rigorous sciences, and too many times have these enterprises been conducted with this same ideal of the universal validation of their results in mind. In so doing, Bollnow thinks, they have found themselves from the outset in a situation much more difficult than that of the
natural sciences. “On the one hand, they have been unable to experiment with their subject-matter, to work out individual factors by varying the conditions, etc.; they must take their reality as it presents itself” (Bollnow 1974a: 5). One cannot set up experiments in history; it is already given as such. The same is true of all spiritual creations.21 poetry, the graphic arts, and so forth, produced “by history.” “And even when we might to a certain extent experiment with factors that influence the development of individual persons, as in pedagogy for example, one soon encounters the ethical questions. In matters profoundly human one cannot reduce men to objects of experimentation” (ibid.: 5). And, on the other hand, in the humanities, what is essential is not measurable, and what is measurable is not essential but at best superficial. “In the humanities, the universal validation of results cannot be attained in the end. At least this cannot happen in the same rigor as in the natural sciences. Therefore the humanities lack a corresponding, easily manageable criterion of objectivity” (ibid.: 5).

It seems, therefore, that only the natural sciences have objective truth in the sense of universal validation. The humanities cannot achieve universal validation; “they remain irredeemably trapped in the subjectivity of the individual researcher” (Bollnow 1974a: 5). And, it seems to follow, that therefore the humanities cannot claim objectivity, for the two, subjectivity and objectivity, are mutually exclusive, as pointed out before by Kierkegaard. This would mean, however, that what goes on in the universities under the title “humanities” cannot be called science in its most rigorous meaning. It seems that the French are justified when they speak of lettres and natural sciences separately, the same way as the English-speaking world talks of the arts and sciences. This dichotomy may even escalate to a consideration of the impossibility of the humanities as a university discipline at all, if what we think should happen in the universities is the practice of the positivistic presentation of science (see Kraft 1925, Carnap 1966).

Georg Misch, to whom Bollnow also refers in his essay “Zur Frage nach der Objectivität der Geisteswissenschaften” (1937), has approached this problem by distinguishing between objectivity and universal validation (Bollnow 1974a: 6). What he sought after with this separation was to establish that in the humanities there is a form of objectivity, which is not necessarily based upon universal validation. This leads to the possibility in the humanities to give up the claim of universal validation. It would be extremely difficult to maintain serious universal validation without abandoning objectivity per se; as objectivity is a crucial feature

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21 Or objectivations of the spirit, as put by Wilhelm Dilthey and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.
of science itself. “This means that in the humanities there is a genuinely objective, that is, substantively demonstrable knowledge, which is nevertheless not accessible to everyone in the same way, because it is bound up with definite, particular presuppositions within the knowing subject” (Bollnow 1974a: 6).

The precise difference between the natural sciences and the humanities would be, therefore, the fact that in the latter understanding is a matter not only of formal intellect, but of the depth of the soul, or consciousness, with all of its forces. This means that in the humanities, a subjective factor is unavoidable. “The question is whether this subjectivity necessarily excludes objectivity” (ibid.: 6). This question can perhaps be answered differently depending upon what is meant by the word subjectivity. Here, Bollnow does some analysis of the language. For this word, “subjectivity” seems quite ambiguous and eminently capable of generating confusion when used carelessly. On the one hand, there is subjectivity in the pejorative sense: subjective arbitrariness, imprisonment in various accidental limitations and prejudices. One projects one’s own wishes and fears into the subject-matter; one views things in terms of one’s own advantage and disadvantage; one gives uncontrolled play to one’s own likes and dislikes, building upon them value judgments that have no other basis. This is that subjectivity which the serious investigator can and must set aside, for it rises up between him and his subject-matter, barring his free access to it. And this is usually what one is thinking of, according to Bollnow, when one says that “science must guard against the disturbing influence of subjectivity” (ibid.: 6).

But subjectivity takes also another form. The influence of the soul of the knower, which “must enter into his process of understanding in order that this object be disclosed in its depth” (ibid.: 6). No one would perhaps hold that a man who sees colors is unjustified in talking about them; he sees things that remain hidden from the man who is colorblind. The same is true in a deeper sense. Max Scheler has spoken of value blindness, the condition in which men lack the organ necessary for value experiences. And in general one can say that “life experiences, forms of spiritual sensitivity, or most broadly, individual talents and capacities are what alone permit one to see things correctly, for they alone make possible one’s penetration into the reality to be investigated” (ibid.: 6). As opposed to the first sort of subjectivity, these forms of subjectivity are not limitations and hindrances

22 Or individual consciousness, or whatever word one wishes to use for the immanent subjective experience of oneness of the experience; that which one experiences are de facto one’s own experiences; that one has emotions and meaning that are one’s own and that there is a certain understanding or a sense of mineness to these experiences and to one’s own body.
but organs of knowledge, which provide access to reality. This sort of subjectivity is unavoidable; “it is the necessary precondition to knowledge” (ibid.: 6). Further, this subjectivity does not exclude objectivity, not if one defines objectivity correctly, as Bollnow seems to have been doing.

Objectivity so defined is perhaps no longer to be measured by the standard of universal validation, but nevertheless it is related to the object, devoted to the object. It connects us to it by disclosing it in its essence. And, ultimately, this is what Bollnow means by the term objectivity. A certain task seems to arise from this understanding of objectivity as disclosure: the task of purifying oneself of arbitrary subjectivity in order to achieve that deeper and purer subjectivity that is completely devoted to the object. It is a matter not of eliminating subjectivity per se, but of purifying it. However, the question arises, how much a purification of subjectivity is to be conceived? “It is somehow an extinguishing of the egoistic aspirations of the arbitrary ego in favor of a deeper and more universal ego, and to this extent it is a process comparable to mystical experience,” this according to Bollnow (ibid.: 6). But it is not the passage to a kind of transcendental ego (in the Kantian sense) that would assure the universal validation of the results. Rather, what enters into knowledge as the inseparable, constitutive element is “precisely the uniqueness of the individual soul, which grants the result its unique, individual character” (ibid.: 6).

In this view, subjectivity and objectivity are no longer mutually exclusive. Deeper subjectivity enters into knowledge and discloses the object at a greater depth. One must therefore recognize a truth, which is inaccessible by way of universal validation and which nevertheless does not cease to be the truth. “Truth in this determinate sense is accessible only to a limited circle of men, and thus it is apparently a necessary consequence of Misch’s starting point that there can be a truth that is valid for only one man and yet is objectively true” (Bollnow 1974a: 7).

However, the question still remains: How can one establish the objectivity (or truth content) of the knowledge of the humanities, if one cannot ground it on the criterion of universal validation? Bollnow naturally thinks first of the rules of textual interpretation, which are developed in the philological disciplines and are summed up under the title “hermeneutics.” “This includes methods of understanding an unintelligible text in the context of the whole, of relating parallel texts to an author’s isolated statements, and of properly extrapolating beyond the author’s unfinished thought so as to better understand what he intended but did not say” (Bollnow 1974a: 7). It includes the consideration of
historical circumstances, biographical, psychological, and sociological points of view etc. However, these rules on interpretation do not lead to the ultimate decisive question about the essence of truth in the humanities. “They are only vestibule, not the sanctuary, or research in the humanities” (ibid.: 7). Their deeper presuppositions seem to lead to far beyond all questions of mere scientific technique and force us to take up, beyond the particular realm of the humanities, the question of the essence of truth in its universal form, which then can apply to the particular situation of the humanities. This means the engagement of the subject to the subject-matter: how the researcher marks the presence of genuine truth. Bollnow points out definite criteria of truth in the “‘soul’ of the researcher that one must get accustomed to and get to know them” (ibid.: 8):

1. The resistance of the subject-matter, its behavior in opposition to the expectations one brings to it, forcing oneself to deeper levels of penetration.

2. Intersubjectivity; the possibility of reaching an understanding with another man about his subject-matter. Bollnow (1974a: 8) calls this the openness of truth for the other man.

3. The connection between the truth known about an external object and the inner truthfulness of the knowing subject; the indissoluble interpenetration of knowledge that is adequate to the subject-matter and the ethical problematic.

These three conditions are not criteria of truth in the ordinary sense of the word, because the ordinary sense would mean truth known by one man as verifiable by another. Here, the difficulty is that only the knower him- or herself is certain of the truth and this certainty cannot be verified by anyone else. “Even the knower himself feels this certainty only in the very act of knowing itself and cannot retain it as though it were a detached possession” (Bollnow 1974a: 8). This brings forth a heightened responsibility. One must decide the issue him- or herself and may not depend on confirmation by another. This, as will be shown later, may not necessarily be in contradiction with the openness of truth, asserted in one of the criterias. The most important notion of truth for Bollnow is what Heidegger calls *Unverborgenheit*, truth as disclosure or unconcealment. This notion I will deal with next.
2.3.1 Truth as Unconcealment: Heidegger’s Phenomenology in Bollnow’s Epistemology

Heidegger begins his philosophical work with Husserl’s phenomenology but conquers new territory, especially in Sein und Zeit (Being and Time, 1927). To Heidegger, phenomenology offers a method by which one may elaborate on the question of the meaning of the existence of being (in German, Sein) in a radically new way. Heidegger notes that the question of existence was the basis for pre-Socratic philosophy and for the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, and has been the central concern of philosophy throughout its history (Heidegger, 1927: 1–2). The question of existence has always been bound to particular ways of understanding time. Existence has been considered as being present (Anwesenheit) and as a continuum of “now” moments for those present. In other words, it (existence) has been understood from a basis of the present moment (Gegenwart) (Heidegger 1927: 25). Metaphysics have always been the metaphysics of that which is present. To really understand being in its existence, one needs a new manner of understanding the relationship between existence and time, a manner that presupposes what Heidegger calls the “destruction” of ontological tradition. One must separate oneself from ontological tradition so as to find the original experiences from which the understanding of existence stems; one must simultaneously bring forth the possibilities inherent in the tradition on the basis of the new definition of existence (Heidegger 1927: 22–23).

Heidegger’s new approach requires a new understanding of subject. Understanding existence is possible only by taking human temporal existence as the focus of perception and by understanding the nature of the question; in other words, by considering a person as a being-in-time and a being-in-the-world. Heidegger entitles the subject as a whole Dasein, or being-there. In its being, Dasein already understands the meaning of its existence. What Heidegger calls “existential Dasein analysis” offers, according to his judgment, the possibility to grasp the question of existence, the meaning of existence (Sinn des Seins), or at least the foundations from which this question can be formulated. Heidegger names this project fundamental ontology (Heidegger 1927: 11–15). Dasein is already determined by the quality of being-in-the-world, which is part of the existence of Dasein; it cannot be separated from the world in which it exists.

Contrary to Husserl’s “conscious self,” the relationship of which to its world is left quite distant and rational, Heidegger’s Dasein does not focus on the world as an observer but is an actor functioning as part of the world. For Dasein, the
world does not display itself as objects that are observable and “being-present” (vorhanden), rather as “being-at-hand” (zuhanden), as tools and equipment (Zeug). By using these tools, Dasein finds itself in the middle of a meaningful world and participates in common practices with others. Where Husserl’s intentional consciousness constitutes the world without letting the world constitute itself, Heidegger’s Dasein—a direct opposite—is constituted by the world and constitutes the world at the same time.

Martin Heidegger interpreted the word truth from its Greek etymology as a negative concept: as a combination of the verbal stem to conceal, with the alpha privative. Thus, truth is translated as unconcealment.

Truth as unconcealment means that there is not at the outset a situation of some sort of unknowing from which one then begins unrestrictedly to build knowledge or acquire truth. Rather, at the outset, there is the situation of concealment and one must wrest the truth from it in an explicit exertion. One must tear the veil from truth. (Bollnow 1974a: 8).

This holds both from the truth about external things and for the inner truthfulness of the man himself. Heidegger speaks of the “error” in which man always finds himself and which belongs to the inner constitution of his Dasein (Heidegger 1927, 1943: 23).

Unconcealment (Unverborgenheit) was a term that first entered Heidegger’s philosophy as a translation for the ancient Greek word alêtheia. The more standard translation of the word is “truth” (Wahrheit), but Heidegger elected to go with a literal translation: a-lêtheia means literally “not-concealed” (Wrathall 2011: 1). Unconcealment is an event: it happens with human beings through what Heidegger calls “the creative projection of essence and the law of essence” (Heidegger 2001). The idea of unconcealment rejects the idea that there are uniquely right answers to questions, promoting therefore a type of epistemological relativism. Heidegger thinks that we encounter entities as being what are only in virtue of the world within which they can be disclosed and encountered. Unconcealment, thus, is a privative notion: it removes concealment.

In his later works, Heidegger observes several senses of concealment. Concealment can be understood as 1) having no awareness of, and 2) no possible context (Heidegger 2001). Sense 1) describes a superficial form of concealment, where something is, but we lack a sense for it (Wrathall 2011: 2). Sense 2) points to a more profound and fundamental form of concealment. For an entity to be is for it to stand in a context of constitutive relations. The lack of any possible
context is thus an ontological concealment—the absence of the conditions under which the entity in question could manifest itself in being (Wrathall 2011: 2). There is a core notion here that can be already found in Being and Time: unconcealment consists in bringing things to awareness, but also creating the context within which things can be what they are. Thus, the core notion of unconcealment functions as a methodological principle.

The first misunderstanding is to think that Heidegger defines propositional truth as unconcealment. Because the analysis of unconcealment is an analysis of the ground of propositional truth, it should be clear that unconcealment is not to be taken as a (re)definition of propositional truth: “to translate this word [αλῆθεια] as ‘truth’, and, above all, to define this expression conceptually in theoretical ways, is to cover up the meaning of what the Greeks made ‘self-evidently’ basic for the terminological use of αλῆθεια as a pre-philosophical way of understanding it” (Heidegger 1927: 219).

Heidegger comes eventually in his later works to think of the truth of being especially as truth as the clearing (Lichtung). There is a clearing within which an understanding of being or essence can prevail while incompatible possibilities of being are concealed or held back. This clearing is to be understood as the most fundamental form of unconcealment. Unconcealment as clearing does not name a thing, or a property or characteristic of things, or “a kind of action we perform on things, or even the being of things” (Wrathall 2011: 14). It names, instead, a domain or structure that allows there to be things with properties and characteristics, or modes of being. It is a domain, or a space of possibilities.

However, before 1928 Heidegger does not mention unconcealment of being or connect unconcealment with clearing. In Being and Time, the word unconcealment only appears to be introduced as equal with uncoveredness (Entdecktheit) (Heidegger 1927: 219). This is an important philosophical distinction of Heidegger’s thinking in his early work, Being and Time. In Being and Time, unconcealment is not to be considered separate from propositional truth either. Heidegger argues that truth “has by no means the structure of a correspondence between knowing and the object in the sense of a likening of one entity (the subject) to another (the object)” (ibid.: 218–219). Heidegger suggests that correspondence is a characteristic of our orientation to the world, in particular of our “assertive being toward what is asserted” (ibid.: 218). A phenomenological description of cases where we confirm the truth of an assertion, Heidegger believes, shows us that this is in fact how we ordinarily understand the truth of the assertion (Wrathall 2011: 19). “To say that an assertion ‘is true’ signifies that it
uncovers what is as it is in itself. It asserts, it points out, it ‘lets’ what is ‘be seen’ (*apophansis*) in its uncoveredness. The being-true (truth) of the assertion must be understood as being-uncovering” (Heidegger 1927: 218).

Heidegger believes that propositional truth is a kind of bringing out of concealment. Concealment reigns in a nonassertoric dealing with the world in the sense that, in such pre-predicative comportments, the world is experienced in a way that lacks determinacy, that is, propositional articulation (Wrathall 2011: 19). This means that the world is not available for thought, for the discovery of inferential and justificatory relationships between propositional states and worldly states of affairs. Heidegger believes that in our everyday dealings with things, we experience the world in precisely such a propositional concealment. In our prepredicative experience of the world, things are understood as the things they are in terms of our practical modes of coping with them. Such practically constituted things are implicated in a complex variety of involvements with other objects, practices, purposes, and goals, and are understood immediately as reaching out into a variety of involvements. In assertion, by contrast, our experience undergoes an explicit restriction of our view, and we dim down the whole richly articulated situation in front of us to focus on some particular feature of the situation (Heidegger 1927: 155).

The dimming down or leveling off that occurs when we suspend our everyday dealings with things is what first makes it possible to give something a conceptual character by uncovering the kind of determinate content that allows one to form conceptual connections, draw inferences, and justify one occurrent intentional state on the basis of another. This is where Husserl’s notion of philosophical attitude presents itself in Heidegger’s phenomenology. The prepredicative is a nonconceptual way of comporting ourselves toward the things in the world around us. The prepredicative is parallel to Husserl’s notion of natural attitude. Rather than a conceptual or a logical articulation, the prepredicative manifestness of things is articulated along the lines of our practical comportment. In such an articulation, things show up as what they are but in the whole complexity of their involvements (Wrathall 2011: 20). This makes propositional truth in Heidegger’s view a privative concept. It is defined relative to the richer, more primordial givenness of the world, which is lost in propositional articulation. Propositional truth is consequently a specific form of a broader kind of unconcealment where what is at issue is the availability of entities for comportment in general (ibid.: 20). The uncoveredness of entities makes entities available for comportment (*Verhalten*). Comportment is a broad term that

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means every instance in which we experience something, and everything we do.

The specific form of concealment that is removed by the uncoveredness of entities consists in entities not being available as that toward which or with which we can comport. Every uncoveredness of the world occurs together with a concealing of entities. For Heidegger, the default state of entities in the world is being covered over. Truth, understood as uncoveredness, is robbery. “The factual uncoveredness of anything is, as it were, always a robbery” (Heidegger 1927: 294). This default state applies also to Dasein as well. Dasein’s default state of being in the world is having the truth of its Being covered. The understanding, dispositions, and skills that Dasein has in the first instance are the banalized understandings, dispositions, and skills of the one (das Man) (Wrathall 2011: 24).

Thus, entities are initially manifest but nevertheless concealed in what they most authentically are. Authenticity, by contrast, consists in Dasein learning to “uncover the world in its own way … this uncovering of the ‘world’ [is] … always accomplished as a clearing away of concealments and obscurities, as a breaking up of the disguises with which Dasein bars its own way” (Heidegger 1927: 129).

After first pointing out that the view of truth as uncovering has historical precedents among the Greeks, Heidegger discusses one of the more important and challenging characteristics of his theory of truth. Truth, he claims, in the first and most real sense, refers not to objects but to Dasein. If we define truth as uncovering, it must obviously be a characteristic of Dasein itself. Only in the sense of being uncovered can one say that “objects” are true. “True” and “false” are characteristics of human activity in terms of one's hiding behind masks and deceits. It is indeed Dasein that most properly uncovers and discloses, and it is in fact Dasein itself that is being disclosed. In Chapter 5 of Being and Time, Heidegger interpreted the disclosure of Dasein in terms of state-of-mind (thrownness), understanding (projection), and fallenness. Heidegger himself, in pointing out the role that the disclosure of Dasein has for the meaning of truth, recalls the analyses of thrownness, projection, and fallenness. This means that as an entity that uncovers (as an entity “in truth”), Dasein reveals itself as factual—limited by what actually is; as existential projection—open to its own possibilities; and as fallen—closed off to these possibilities by its they-involvement (Gelven 1989: 132). This last characteristic is especially important, for it introduces the concept of untruth. For the most part, Dasein does not expose itself; it remains hidden. As hidden, it is in untruth. This is due to its fallenness. Heidegger points out that the very etymology of the Greek aletheia shows that truth is a kind of
violation or robbery of what is normally the case. Truth is snatched from the usual mode of untruth in the they-self. The whole structure of the existential analytic proceeds from an everyday and inauthentic existence in which the grounds of authenticity can be spotted. We are all aware that we avoid those areas that will expose and reveal our inmost selves, so that a shrewd observer can recognize just where our real selves are hidden by noting what it is we avoid.

Heidegger himself points out the two really important results of his analysis of the phenomenon of truth: (1) that truth belongs primordially to Dasein and (2) that Dasein is both in truth and in untruth. He also shows, in greater detail, that propositional truth is derivative from truth as uncovering. Carman (2003) stresses to a significant detail the preassertoric domain of expressive significance in Heidegger’s account of truth as unconcealment in Being and Time. Heidegger’s point is neither to analyze propositional truth in some revisionary way nor simply to insist that entities must be given to us in order for our assertions of them to be true (Carman 2003: 6). Entities are revealed to us in discourse (Rede), and this is itself a condition of the interpretability of assertions as true or false. Discourse is a hermeneutic condition of the truth of assertions (ibid.: 6).

The real opposite, therefore, “to truth is not lie. The lie is secondary: there must first be a truth before one can consciously hide it in a lie. The real opposite of truth is the deceptive appearance whose indeterminateness, like a thick fog, hides the true essence of things” (Bollnow 1974a: 9). This deceptive appearance Heidegger allocates to the world of chatter and ambiguity: everything is understood in an approximate manner such that absolutely nothing is doubtful (Heidegger 1927, 1943). The path to truth, therefore, consists in conquering deceptive appearance. However, this deceptive appearance is not untruth in the sense of it being consciously distorted. It is an unproblematic condition instead, in which man is estranged from the question about the real truth. Truth is not gained in a neutral process of knowledge; it requires the cancellation of a deceptive but pacifying appearance. This process is, however, always a painful process, which “touches a man in his inmost depth” (Bollnow 1957: 142, 1947: 9, Heidegger 1927: 34). This epistemic process, a necessary ground to truth, is also reflected in Bollnow’s fundamental pedagogical theory in his concepts encounter and awakening (Bollnow 1959).

If truth can never begin from the beginning without presuppositions, if truth always consists in conquering a given intelligibility which is deceptive, if truth means lifting something out of concealment into the light of full visibility,
then this means that the path to truth can never consist in building from the bottom up; rather, it must consist in the circular procedure known to us from the methodology of the humanities: it is here that the universally fruitful path to truth is revealed. (Bollnow 1974a: 9).

In the beginning, there is always a certain understanding of the subject-matter, as described in hermeneutics, but this understanding is superficial and conceals the truth. One must first demolish it in order to find behind it the authentic profound truth, to “extract” it from the superficialness. Truth is thus not only a discovery but a simultaneous creation. How then does the researcher recognize that his interpretation is correct, if truth is not just found but created? Bollnow answers that the researcher knows his knowledge is true by virtue of the resistance of his subject-matter: “the object holds rigid in the face of his interpretation and does not fit together simply according to his wishes” (Bollnow 1974a: 9). One knows the object is real because it opposes oneself; it does not yield when one approaches it. It painfully restricts one’s living space and is often something one absolutely would not like it to be. This holds, not only “when the issue is the actuality of a thing or a man, but for all cases of truth” (ibid.: 10). Here one must understand that “in truth” and “in actuality” are almost equivalent expressions; they are referring to almost the same thing. Truth, in the sense of lived, existentially experienced truth, has this hard, resistant, if not aggressive character. In one’s everyday understanding, one lives not in the truth, but in the previously mentioned world of chatter and ambiguity. Only if some event literally strikes one, “does the truth come up against this person and jolt him cruelly out of his everyday understanding” (ibid.: 10). Truth is, in the broadest sense, the deeply painful event wherein the veils that conceal are torn away and a man sees reality as it is, as the “naked” truth. One might easily fear this truth and would like to retreat in the face of it to the old irresponsibility. “But only in resisting this temptation, only in maintaining the truth and in seeking to tear the veil away completely, does a man actualize his own existence” (ibid.: 10). This, Bollnow refers to later in his pedagogical writings as awakening to truth (see Bollnow 1959).

What would this rather general idea of truth as unconcealment in human existence mean in terms of knowledge in the humanities? “If in general, one knows the truth by the severity with which it resists one’s wishes, then this must apply also to knowledge in the humanities, though in the peaceful flow of scientific endeavor there is usually no ultimate existential intensity” (Bollnow
1974a: 10). This applies also to every interpretation. One realizes that one is on the right track when the subject-matter resists one’s interpretation, when it remains independent of one’s expectations and forces one to correct the original starting point one has had again and again (see Bollnow 1949: 85). Whenever a theory unfolds neatly and seems to fit in smoothly, one should fear that what one is dealing with is a fantasy or a misconception. One should feel deeply suspicious toward neat unfoldings.

One must be on guard whenever one thing seems to confirm the other, whenever the starting point one has derived from one example can be directly applied to another example, whenever our expectations seem all too easily confirmed. Conversely, however, whenever one’s expectations are not confirmed, whenever one finds in one example something other than one had thought of on the basis of the first, one may be certain that one is touching the bedrock of reality whose resistance sparks one’s own (creative) effort. (Bollnow 1974a: 11).

Whenever the resistance of the subject-matter forces one to increase one’s effort, one can be sure of the knowledge of not having lost contact with reality. This means that in general, the analytic attitude in thinking has primacy over the will to synthesize, but it does not mean one is to renounce all attempts to synthesize. Without such attempts, “analysis would remain a chaotic multiplicity” (ibid.: 11). Bollnow thinks that the danger of all synthesis and all idealistic systems is the frivolity of “building a castle in the air.” Opposed to all synthetic simplifications are the advantages of the phenomenological method in its original sense.

Bollnow uses the term *encounter* to characterize the process in which one experiences being struck by the resistance of the subject-matter in spiritual concerns, meaning something being given to us in our conscious experience. Bollnow limits the term to the ultimate, decisive experiences when one is in the truest sense “shaken” and thrown off course by the power of the reality that confronts oneself. “The ‘wholly other’ confronts man, demanding and frightening” (Bollnow 1959: 54). While encounter with the overpowering defines the ultimate quality of the humanities, it also permeates the details of its everyday work. “To a certain extent every truth in the humanities is characterized by the encountered reality in something independent of the subject, and this is what is meaningfully called objectivity, that is, verification in the object” (Bollnow 1974a: 11). Feuerbach (1975–1976) has stressed the point of overcoming subjectivity by agreement with another man. This means that there is truth only if several men
concur: “Not by oneself, but only with another, does one arrive at concepts, at reason in general. For both physical and spiritual procreation two people are needed: community is the first principle of truth and universality. Even my certainty about the existence of external things is mediated by the certainty of the existence of people other than myself. What I alone see I doubt; I am certain only if the other sees it too” (Feuerbach 1975–1976: 304). Bollnow accepts this view, a view that in its applied form becomes also important later in this study as we look at the theoretical links between Bollnow and ethicist Levinas.

2.3.2 The Intersubjectivity of Truth

“It is meaningless to talk of truth at the level of the individual man. Something like truth arises when there are several. Nietzsche has talked of the same thing: One is always wrong; truth begins with two” (Bollnow 1974a: 11). This is evident in the simplest example that Feuerbach uses himself: if one can see something, one can also be deceived; only if another sees it too and confirms it for one, does one know it was no deception (Feuerbach 1975–1976: 304). However, the limits of such truth are very narrow; its validity extends only as far as the possibilities of one’s immediate practical verification, and thus it does not go beyond one’s technical-practical comportment. At any rate, such verification is irrelevant in the humanities. Even the formation of concepts presupposes language and thus communication, but certainly there is absolutely no possibility of immediate practical verification when one calls something beautiful, or someone’s behavior good (Bollnow 1974a: 12). Nor is such verification possible if one believes one understands the concepts, which guide the understanding leading to such claims. A positivist extremist would conclude from this that:

*to speak of truth or falsity of propositions in this way makes no sense, that such affirmations would be meaningless. However, we would not do without such affirmations in our lives, as another man’s understanding acceptance alone can confirm the truth in one’s thinking. This understanding of truth is based on seeing in common, that if one sees something, one should doubt it, only if another person can see it as well, can it be verified. Only when one can grasp a thing immediately with one’s own hands can one alone convince oneself of its reality.* (Bollnow 1974a: 12).

But even the stars in the sky depend on another’s confirmation. This understanding of truth comes close to a phenomenological account, of seeing as a
Heidegger defines the task of phenomenology as a “letting that which shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself for itself” (Heidegger 1927: 34). His conception of truth as unconcealment is etymologically related to this task of phenomenology, as the pure sense perception of something. But his letting-be-seen occurs not only in immediate sense perception, but also throughout the entire realm of self-consciousness: how warm is this red, how melodic this verse sounds, etc. And through this, one is calling attention to the referred situation or thing, as guiding the others toward it (see Bollnow 1947). However, the other cannot be forced to grasp it, or to understand it. Many would not be able to understand what one is guiding others to see. Many, therefore, “would prefer to exclude the possibility of such confirmation” (ibid.: 12). Only in a community, where there is at least one man who sees what one shows him, can one attempt to penetrate deeper in to knowledge. Here, Feuerbach’s statement of community comes to be valuable, that “community is the first principle of truth and universality” (Feuerbach 1975–1976: 304). The condition of truth is that one can come to an agreement about the matter with another. “There is absolutely no truth, which holds for only one man” (ibid.: 12). Truth that is open for the other is an intersubjective manner. Community, as in a scientific community, can find truth only through intersubjective, open dialogue.

This truth is not about universal validation, but a common agreement, which transcends one’s subjective views. This dialogue means reciprocal openness, and that in such a testing and clarifying dialogue all participants stand on the common ground of rational discussion. Karl Jaspers has described this as a “loving struggle.” (Bollnow 1974a: 13).

This presupposes a fundamental equity of the participants; everyone can and is accepted to give an opinion. “This openness for dialogue is the presupposition of truth” (ibid.: 13). If one denies this openness, and develops the conviction of having a monopoly over truth while withdrawing the possibility for other views, one comes to hold a fanatical belief rather than a stance in the science of the humanities.

2.3.3 Ethics, Truthfulness, and Truth

Bollnow brings forth an important point concerning the interpenetration of truth and the inner truthfulness of the man concerned with truth. One may assert that only the man who is inwardly truthful is able to grasp the truth and that,
conversely, the truth necessarily remains closed to the man who is untruthful within himself. This relationship signifies a close interconnection between the theoretical and the ethical. If in one’s scientific work one is immersed in one’s own pet ideas and seeks only to confirm them, there is always a possibility for a conflict with reality. In this situation, one is forced to withdraw or to modify one’s original starting point. This may be uncomfortable and requires a certain severity toward oneself. This severity, therefore, is an indispensable presupposition of all scientific effort. It is especially required whenever the newly emerging truth immediately concerns the person himself, whether it is a matter of the immediate self-recognition of new dimensions of his being or situation, or whether it is a matter of the very foundations of the meaning one’s life has borne so far. Bollnow rejects the false and superficial arguments of life-philosophy, which assert that because a man can neither seek nor esteem a truth hostile and resistant to him, truth must always be life-enhancing. Here, Bollnow points out the works of F.H. Jacobi (see Bollnow 1933: 225). This view, correct though it may be in its initial tendency, that is, in its denial of a concept of truth that is natural to life, is nevertheless superficial, for truth that is painful to man is not on that account hostile to life; precisely as it is painful it contributes to the deepening of life. “This profound age-old experience, which is expressed again and again by the more recent poets, especially Rilke, goes right to the roots of the problem of knowledge” (Bollnow 1974a: 15).

The ethical question of truth comes in connection with the problem of truth, when we look at the openness of truth for dialogue with other men once again. “This openness requires exposing what has been gained to the criticism of other men again and again, and so the truth remains in that suspense which prevents it from hardening into mere possession” (Bollnow 1974a: 15). Openness requires the constant courage to place oneself under a critique again and again. In the struggle for truth, one must pledge unconditionally both to recognize, against the grain of one’s own wishes and expectations, what is painful and threatening in the truth one encounters and, with respect to other men, to be open to every objection that calls one into question. This may happen only if one is on good terms with oneself, so that one does not try to conceal anything from oneself or others, either for one’s own sake or the sake of the others. On the last page of his book, Hans Lipps (1941: 155) speaks about the truth of a man. By this, he understands the truth that concerns one’s substance, not just one’s function as a witness; that is, the truth that characterizes one’s inner condition, not just one’s statements (Lipps 1941: 155). And Lipps says of this truth that it is something other than and deeper
than what one would call man’s sincerity. Sincerity has to do with the agreement between man’s outer appearance and his inner essence. Its opposite is artificiality, insincerity, the externally assumed, the stylized and mannered. But mere sincerity alone, says Lipps, is without the power of an ever-increasing, self-originating self-transparency (ibid.: 155). “Only here does grow a man’s authentic truth” (Bollnow 1974a: 15). Lipps’ account of truth reminds one of Heidegger’s account of truth as what must be wrested in an express effort from unconcealment. According to Bollnow, Lipps’ notion of the truth of a man is the inner equivalent of Heidegger’s truth as unconcealment. However, this truth is gained, according to Lipps, in the power of an ever-increasing, self-originating self-transparency (Lipps 1941: 155). What Lipps means by this is that a man does not try to fool himself by his actions that he does what he does clearly and simply and without hidden motives. It is a standing-with-onself, a self-identification with oneself, a process not of introspection but of self-becoming, in the action itself. This seems true and in accord with Heidegger’s view of Dasein and unconcealment. For Heidegger, unconcealment has to be wrested from concealment: “this self-transparency is no self-evident starting point, but has to be wrested in explicit exertion from ambiguity, unclarity and vagueness” (Bollnow 1974a: 16, Heidegger 1927). And only in this process, Lipps stresses, does a man become himself in the authentic sense. This perspective is shared by Bollnow, especially in his pedagogical writings, where “becoming oneself in the authentic sense” is crucial.

2.3.4 Critical Evaluation of the Notion of Truth

From this view of truth, it follows that this substantial truth of a man himself is the presupposition for his knowing any objective truth of knowledge. Such knowing is then more than an isolated activity of theoretical consciousness; it occurs only in the comprehensive effort of the whole man. There is no separation of the substantial truth of a man and objective truth of knowledge; they are gained only in one and the same indivisible process. Thus, one arrives at the existential ground of truth, which is prior to any separation of ethical and theoretical points of view.

However, the notion of unconcealment so closely connected to the view of man that has a core essence that can be wrested from the unconcealment, is not something Heidegger would necessarily agree with. It can be interpreted without a greater difficult, that Dasein is a way of being, and not an essence. The core idea
of Being-there (Dasein) is, that man as Being is able to ask the question about one’s being, thus distinguishing this way of being from any other ways. Being (Sein) is therefore inseparable from the being that is, like running cannot be separated as an essence from the runner. This way of understanding being and self is far from any notion of an essence of true self, as Lipps or perhaps Jaspers would put it. Therefore, just as one cannot separate running from the runner, one cannot separate the essence of being or a person from the empirical man who exists. Therefore, unconcealment is not connected in Heidegger’s terms to showing the essence of things that have been hidden before, but rather, it is to explicate the background practices that make one be the way one is (Wrathall 2011). Dasein’s default state of being in the world is having the truth of its Being covered. The understanding, dispositions, and skills that Dasein has in the first instance are the banalized understandings, dispositions, and skills of the one (das Man) (ibid.: 24). Thus, entities are initially manifest but nevertheless concealed in what they most authentically are. Authenticity, by contrast, consists in Dasein learning to “uncover the world in its own way … this uncovering of the ‘world’ [is] … always accomplished as a clearing away of concealments and obscurities, as a breaking up of the disguises with which Dasein bars its own way” (Heidegger 1927: 129).

This notion puts into question the connection between unconcealment as a notion of truth and any notions of truth that cling to subjectivist accounts, as proposed by Lipps. For Heidegger, there is no subject in the Cartesian sense. It is not something that concerns him. The epistemological poles of authenticity and inauthenticity in terms of unconcealment and concealment, as described here, articulate a bipolar constitutive background practice for a human being: human existence as Being-there does not constitute the world in one’s subjective, phenomenological perspective to it, nor does the world itself constitute the self. The world is revealed to or concealed from the self, and this at the same time portrays the qualitative state of the human being him- or herself. Bollnow’s non-subjectivist and non-universalist notion of truth lingers in between the Heideggerian anti-essentialism of unconcealment and Husserlian essentialism.

The interpretation of Heidegger’s almost pragmatic notion of truth finds in Bollnow’s treatment a Christian existentialist tone. It alienates itself in a diminutive sense from Heidegger’s project. Some have found neo-Kantian tones in Bollnow’s thought as well (see Gordon 2008, Schuhmann & Smith 1991). This may turn out to be factual concern, although there won’t be room to address this issue further in this study.
For Bollnow, when talking of truth, the subject is a necessary condition, even for the intersubjective practice of science, or science as communication, which comes close to Buber and Jaspers’ existentialisms. Subject is a necessary and core condition to Bollnow’s thinking in general. Therefore, one is not able to fully evaluate the vague perspective of this notion of truth and how much more exact elucidation it requires. But it is not safe to say that it should be discarded. It might be a welcome thing for any researcher to ponder on the tension between objective truth and the subjective truthfulness, and how do and should they go together. What is clear about this notion of truth and its implementation to pedagogical theory is that it brings forth a different and fruitful anti-essentialistic background compared to Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik, however, with phenomenological undertones.

2.4 Concluding Notes on Bollnow’s Anthropological Epistemology

It is with comfort that I am able to conclude that Bollnow considers theoretical altitude to be not self-sufficient but as a by-product of active life. Practice is more primal than theory. Our conceptions are fashioned in the moulds of our activity. Heidegger has elaborated the way in which things are presented to us in the first instance in their obvious availability (Zuhandensein) and how it is only on this account that the mere existence (Vorhandensein) stands out in relief as, in Heidegger’s conception, “a deficient means of practical acquaintance with things” (Heidegger 1927, Bollnow 1974a). But this rules out the possibility of evolving at the theoretical level a knowledge that is self-sufficient. Then, there is a second view: that rational knowledge is not separable from the underground of volitional impulses, feelings, and moods, that these are not to be regarded as obstructions that one should try to eliminate as far as possible but that they enter into the ground of knowledge as inseparable postulates. When Heidegger states that we must leave the primary discovery of the world to “mere mood,” he is reiterating a state of affairs that makes the unconditioned evolution of knowledge impossible.

2.4.1 Problems of Anthropological Epistemology

Bollnow points out difficult problems that deal with anthropological epistemology. The task of the theory of cognition, the task of establishing an assured knowledge through critical examination of the fundamentals, is urgent and bound up with the situation of man in his world. The previous, or classic theory of cognition, dating
back as it does basically to the beginning of modern philosophy with Descartes, was characterized by the quest for an “Archimedean point” on the basis of which, after the exclusion of all ambiguities, it could construct a system of assured knowledge by a process of advancing a step at a time. This conformed to the rationalistic and the empirical approach. Neither the evidence of primary propositions nor the results of simple perceptions could provide such a basis. But if that is the case, if we must accept this conclusion (as having been established at the beginning of our observations), then there remains no other choice than to renounce altogether the quest for such an Archimedean point and, with it, the attempt to acquire knowledge by this constructively progressive procedure. That is, indeed, a bitter renunciation and one may ask oneself in what sense one can still speak of knowledge at all. But it seems to Bollnow that no other possibility exists if one considers the situation honestly. “The position is not as hopeless as it looks at first sight and that, instead, a way is nevertheless opened here which corresponds to the real situation of mankind and one along which research has in reality always gone” (Bollnow 1974a: 17).

If we take a look at the objections that have already been mentioned, then it will be found that, in fact, “it is only a knowledge that is self-dependent that has become impossible and that every cognitive achievement originates, rather, in a close connection with human life and is supported by it” (Bollnow 1974a: 17). So far as epistemology is concerned, this means that it cannot start off unconditionally and completely independently as a basic philosophical discipline, but that it must return to this general connection with life in order to derive therefrom a new basis of knowledge. There is a function of knowledge in the totality of human life, and this is what Bollnow considers the anthropological approach. “It is necessary to understand the nature and possibility of knowledge in terms of its anthropological prerequisites” (ibid.: 17).

This provides for Bollnow the link between philosophical anthropology and epistemology: epistemology must be based anew on an anthropological foundation. At the same time, however, the anthropological inquiry acquires a new and strong impulse from the tasks of an epistemology. What Bollnow means with this is that as of what comes to our knowledge, we must go back to our active life in the circumstances of the world surrounding us. And that is a distinct method Bollnow points out in his approach to an epistemology that is based on anthropology: the reversion of theoretical knowledge to the original grounds of practice.
In this sense we must adopt Bergson’s approach to man as the homo faber and we shall find that Heidegger’s reduction of what exists (Vorhanden) to what is available (Zuhanden) and its origination in active intercourse with the world already provides us with an important piece of a concretely implemented anthropological epistemology. (Bollnow 1974a: 17).

The so-called pragmatic concept of truth, the testing of an assumption by its success, becomes here a principle of knowledge. Taking this pragmatic principle too concretely, in a confined manner that deals only with knowledge merely in practical intercourse with the world, would represent a fundamental misunderstanding of Heidegger. According to Bollnow (1974a), practical activity that has been rationally devised is only a comparatively late product of mankind’s development. It is only to this form of practical activity to which the pragmatic concept of truth is applicable.

“If we take the entire realm of moral and political views, the entire realm of the so-called intellectual world, the task of establishing a reliable knowledge becomes all the more difficult here” (Bollnow 1974: 17). For this, the approach must be broadened again: to start out, Bollnow introduces Dilthey’s approach, according to which the human being as soon as he finds himself in the world, already always understands his world. Bollnow clarifies:

wherever we find man, even at the earliest stage of his development, it is impossible to go back beyond his understanding to a state where he does not yet understand and from which he can begin to build up his understanding. This understanding may be small to begin with and it may then increase in the course of the experience of life, but basically it has always existed.” (Bollnow 1974a: 17).

Understanding and availability (in the world) are equally primal, as Heidegger formulates it, and because we can never go back beyond understanding, we must start out from it. This understanding is already adequate as a starting-point insofar as it is still indifferent toward the later separation between theoretical and practical behavior. For Heidegger, understanding is revealed in practical behavior, thus he does not separate the two. Bollnow also notes that this is in his opinion the sense in which Dewey took habits as his starting-point. Bollnow sees this approach of Dewey as “very discerning and that its far-reaching, systematic significance has by no means been adequately recognized” (Bollnow 1974a: 18).
There may be possibilities to dispute this, but I will not go any further on it at this point.

According to Heidegger, habits seem to be somewhat misleading and it seems necessary to reach back beyond the habits to the antecedent from which they develop. These precursory background practices are impossible to pinpoint back to, where understanding is concerned. It would also contradict “the principle of the impossibility of an Archimedean point” (Bollnow 1974: 18). Human habits are in no way fixed but they change in the course of a life, and it is precisely in this process where Bollnow’s real interest lies: “When a person, with his habits, encounters resistance and when he makes no progress with them, then he is compelled to give the matter consideration” (ibid.: 18). We are facing the ultimate epistemological principle that Bollnow offers:

*It is in these moments of interruption of his habits that consciousness develops in man. Thus, consciousness is not a self-evident fact from the start, as the traditional theory of cognition assumed, but it only begins to develop in certain situations and is thus founded in a comprehensive life-context. This is where the human being objectifies the difficulties and the whole context in which they exist, and an objective knowledge develops in this process. This knowledge, which develops in the act of consciousness, then helps the human being to alter his behaviour significantly, to overcome difficulties, and to form new habits that are better suited to the circumstances. They then become engrained habits once again and the consciousness withdraws.* (Bollnow 1974a: 19).

But here is where Bollnow goes beyond the phenomenological approach he is setting up with this fundamental epistemological notion of encounter. The knowledge in these (phenomenological) encounters is not derived intuitionally, as Husserl would accordingly note, but through deduction. The human being is also able to retain the deduction he or she has made for use on a later occasion and to expand it, through further such deductions, into a coherent knowledge. This discerning approach is closer to Kantian deduction, or one could point to the teachings of Arnold Gehlen as well. This deductive approach is extended beyond practical behavior and applied, in the process, not only to the psychophysically neutral description of behavior but also to its “inner aspect” in the notion of the subject-object consciousness of the Cartesian tradition.

According to Bollnow, the function of an adequate epistemology must carry on founding knowledge on the basis of opinions based on human background
practices and to reason out clearly the methodical questions that have arisen out of them. The decisive point of approach thus consists in recognition of the fact that “we always find ourselves in a world that has already been understood and explained, that we can never break out of it and that knowledge must therefore move along a necessarily circular course within the framework of this world which has already been previously interpreted” (Bollnow 1974a: 21). Phenomenological hermeneutics need to address the knowledge as a whole. “The world as a whole will become a text to be read and construed, and then to be interpreted” (ibid.: 21). The situation in which hermeneutics would simply be a principle of knowledge had already been begun with Nietzsche when he transferred the concepts of the text and the exposition of the text from philology to the knowledge of reality as a whole (Nietzsche 1997 [1882]). Gadamer’s *Wahrheit und Methode* (Truth and Method) describes itself in the subtitle, “characteristics of a philosophical hermeneutic” (Gadamer 1960, Bollnow 1974a). By this, Gadamer did not mean just one particular philosophical discipline among others, but he adopted the term hermeneutics as a description of philosophy in its entirety or at any rate of that branch of it that is directed toward knowledge; hermeneutics is simply a philosophical method (Bollnow 1974a).

The basic situation of hermeneutics rests on the fact that, fundamentally, knowledge has no beginning. Humboldt summarized this in the classic formula: in order to understand I must have always already understood. Heidegger has spoken in connection with this of a preconception in order to denote the fundamental fact that no knowledge begins “unconditionally” from below but that it always starts off with an existing understanding, even though that may still be diffuse to begin with. One is nevertheless left asking, to what extent this is a felicitous description; for one wonders how this preconception stands in relation to the real understanding. (Bollnow 1974a: 22).

Heidegger regards this question in what is a deficient form of what is available, suggesting the view that it is mainly a question of making explicit something that is already inexplicitly complete (Heidegger 1927). Everything is already envisaged in this apperception (Vorverständnis) and that all that man has to do then is to appropriate it, i.e., consciously convert it to his own use (Bollnow 1974a). When one has become clear about this consequence, one then realizes that this way, which is conditioned by “existential philosophy,” cannot, according to Bollnow, lead any further, as then the sense of “newness” of a real experience
would be cut off. One can only talk of a real experience where there is this unforeseeable “newness” to it. What is required is to determine in a comprehensive manner the way in which something new can be experienced in the encounter with reality, i.e., a way in which the apperception cannot only be made known but can also have its content expanded and corrected.

This, then, is the decisive line of approach for the development of a satisfactory epistemology: to trace the process by which a deeper understanding can be acquired as a result of the contact of the inherited understanding with what is unfamiliar and, at first, unintelligible. And, because this way can only be taken by studying the whole of human life, it thus became a question of an anthropological foundation of knowledge. (Bollnow 1974a: 22).

Bollnow’s critical result is an abandonment of the productive expectations of hermeneutic interpretation: nothing new can be disclosed if everything has a preconception, or previous understanding. He calls for the fundamental phenomenological principle of encounter again, to salvage the possibility of new beginnings in anthropological knowledge. This principle, having being founded in Bollnow’s epistemology of an assessment of Heidegger’s onto-phenomenology and Dilthey’s hermeneutics, guides his pedagogical thinking as well, and to an even greater significance. I will turn to this project next.
3 Evaluating the Onto-Phenomenological Notions of Educational Reality

In this chapter I will make a critical commentary on Bollnow’s formulation of the existential plain of human development, namely the core concepts of *diconstitutive forms of education*. I will attempt to be true to the tradition those concepts are based on, but I will also superimpose some contemporary issues on them. This will, I believe, lead to fruitful outcomes.

3.1 Defining Educational Encounter

The concept of encounter is widely used in educational discourse. It bears multiple meanings, and it is used ambiguously. However, it does have concise definitions in educational theory. I will clarify the meaning of the concept through a reading of Bollnow’s educational philosophy and through more contemporary phenomenological accounts of it. In Bollnow’s work, education presents itself as a process, which is influenced by disruptive forces that lead to life-changing events, *encounters*. Encounters happen with otherness, be it other human beings, ideologies, art, or different cultures. Through encounters, one is granted a glimpse of the existential side of one’s being, the authentic existence, or “true self.” I claim that encounter is to be seen as a phenomenological concept of a mental state, an experience of the tension between one’s conception of oneself and the external life-world of a learning subject, thus leading to an awakening, in which such contradiction diffuses and individual learning occurs.

In this chapter, I aim to clarify the pedagogical meaning of the concept of encounter. I will make a critical overview from the historical foundations of the concept in Bollnow’s philosophy to contemporary readings by Maxine Greene, Donald Vandenberg, and Robyn Harrison. The outcome is a critical analysis of the concept but also an evaluation of the pedagogical significance of using the concept in educational contexts.

I will start my analysis by a systematic reading of Bollnow’s existential philosophy of education, in which he gives an articulation of the concept of encounter in relation to the classical notions of *formation* (Bildung)\(^\text{23}\) established

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\(^{23}\) The German term “Bildung” cannot be directly translated into English. In pedagogical texts, terms such as “cultivation,” “formation,” “self-formation,” “edification,” “culture,” and “development process” have often been used, but none of these are sufficient to describe the concept of Bildung. Generally, “Bildung” is used to refer to the development processes of both individuals and societies in
My aim is to articulate the educational significance of the concept of encounter, and clarify its relationship to the humanistic concept of formation (or unfolding; Bildung), so as to establish the tension between Bildung-theory and the existential theory of human formation, and to state in detail Bollnow’s understanding of the special nature of the concept of Bildung in existential educational discourse. I will claim that for a more elaborated understanding of the human educative process, these discontinuous aspects of formation that Bollnow stresses in his work should be taken into account. Especially, the tension between the processes of encounter and Bildung should be seen as the core tension behind the holistic view of becoming human. Also, I will make an analysis of the Anglo-American reception of the concept, a phenomenological view of the encounter as a transcendental aspect of a learning process, in order to gain a wider view on the concise contemporary use of the concept.

The concept of encounter has been widely articulated in various educational discourses, ranging from the theoretical body of work to curriculum studies and intercultural education in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. An especial popularity of the usage of the concept in educational settings happened at the beginning of the twentieth century. Before that, the concept had a particular sense and meaning in religious and philosophical settings, but during the turning of the century, the way in which encounter was seen as a part of human life seemed to change drastically: one could speak of an encounter with art or with another human being, or even with a landscape. An encounter between a teacher and a student would become a particularly interesting and commonly used phrase to refer to the educational reality occurring both in and outside the classroom situations, in both formal and informal educational settings.24 With the obvious which human beings systematically strive toward developing themselves and their socio-cultural environment into something “more humane,” “more enhanced,” and “more developed.” According to Kant, Bildung is the process through which humans become human.

24 When looking at the way the term “encounter” is used in different ways in educational literacy, both in journals and books, one comes to understand the variety of its meaning, building up to a most remarkable ambiguity: encounter refers to the birth of a self in newborn children (Roeper 1995), to more existential aspects of education, such as death, holocaust, and their educational impacts (Burke 2003), the incompatibility of knowledge systems in curriculum policies (Deketelaerea & Kelchtermans 1996), or even paradigm shifts between different study approaches (Ramsden 1989), among which worth mentioning are also more subjective experiences with teachers that have left a lasting impact (Cantey 1990) and the encounter between cultures as a learning experience (Rudduck 1977). One may even refer to encounter both as a subjective, inner mechanism as clarified by Lacanian psychoanalysis and also as a social mechanism functioning in the relationship between individuals and society as clarified through critical theory and intersubjective fundamental ethics.
ambiguity in the usage of the concept, there is also a specific sense to the use of such a concept in educational discourse. It does, despite having a rather bombastic sound to it, refer to and focus on a specific and relevant aspect of educational reality, which has been theoretically clarified by Bollnow. He has already pointed out the problems of plurality of usage, but also the new meanings the concept has gained since the days of its religious undertones in his speech *Begegnung und Bildung* (*Encounter and Education*). In it, he paved a way to understanding encounter with its multiple articulations in such a way that stressed the existential aspects of human development, thus connecting the concept with the formation of a subject, or Bildung: 25 i.e., a human being in process of growth from within through external influence. In this way, Bollnow was able to give a coherent and meaningful understanding of what encounter is as a fundamental part of human life in multiple situations and also give an understanding of its pedagogical significance.

### 3.1.1 Foundations and Elaborations

The decisive experience of encounter (in German, *Begegnung*) evolved in Germany, particularly following the Second World War, and was linked to the feeling of shock expressed by Existentialism. The concept of encounter in education was considered before Bollnow, but less systematically. For instance, Gustav Würtenberg, in his *Existenz und Erziehung: Aufsätze und Abhandlungen zur Pädagogik* (*Being and Education: Essays and Treatises on Pedagogy*, 1949), claimed that what is said about the existence of a man is also applicable to the adolescent (Vandenberg 2002: 590), a contention that indicates a clear lack of awareness of life-phases, which were later shown to be functional by Guardini. The initial meaning of the term denoted an encounter with another person, often a figure from literature or history, or a figure in a work of art. Particular emphasis was placed on theological notions of an encounter with God.

(Todd 1995). There are also some ambiguous poststructuralist readings of the concept, which entail the modestist understanding of the concept with added ambiguous Marxist undertones (Worley 2004). 25 The German term “Bildung” cannot be directly translated into English. In pedagogical texts, such as “cultivation,” “formation,” “self-formation,” “edification,” “culture,” and “development process” have often been used terms, but none of these are sufficient to describe the concept of Bildung. Generally, “Bildung” is used to refer to the developmental processes of both individuals and societies in which human beings systematically strive toward developing themselves and their sociocultural environment into something “more humane,” “more enhanced,” and “more developed.” According to Kant, Bildung is the process through which humans become humans.
At the same time, a phenomenological current was apparent in philosophical anthropology, contributed by Romano Guardini in his work *Die Lebensalter: Ihre Ethische und Pädagogische Bedeutung* (*The Life Stages: Ethical and Educational Meaning*, 1959). Guardini contends that because remembering and foresight are different in different phases of life, the mode of temporalization and of being authentically present in the world is relative to one’s life-phase (Guardini 1959: 12–13). He distinguishes between seven life-phases—pre-natal, childhood, youth, young adulthood, mature adulthood, old age, and senility—that are separated by critical turning points—birth, puberty, practical experience, experiencing the limits, retirement, and helplessness—and describes each life phase, acknowledging sub-phases such as small and large child, male and female, and so on (ibid.: 11). Guardini influenced the phenomenology of education by allotting value to these “life-crisis” in relation to the term *authentic existence*. His thinking was a substantial background influence on Bollnow’s views of the concept of encounter, which are more secular than the dialogic theologian approach.

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26 Authentic existence is a notion closely related to existential philosophy and phenomenology. This notion has been given its pedagogical significance in the works of various thinkers, including Bollnow. The concept is usually considered originating from the works of Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). However, through these contemporary existential formulations of Bildung the concept of reason is closely related to authenticity. This is in indirect contradiction to the various works of existentialist thinkers, although they do not reject the use of reason completely. Enlightened use of reason is Bildung, meaning that through independent use of reason one sets oneself free from the self-inflicted immaturity that one is in. This immaturity is not the result of lack of understanding, but rather the unwillingness to think for oneself. Martin Heidegger describes this opposition to the idea of Bildung with the term “das Man,” everyman. In this, one acts as everyone else does, without any self-consideration and thus hands over the freedom to define oneself independently. On the other hand, one can gain freedom with the use of one’s own reason, one’s own volition and thus gain possibilities for self-definition. This latter state Heidegger calls being “authentic” (see Heidegger 1962 [1927]). Overall, there are certain distinct properties to the modern concept of Bildung that have the source in the classical form of Bildung and in the Heideggerian views, but also even newer reforms of the concept can be seen to reflect them (see Benner 2003, p. 90–106). Bildung can be seen as a creative process, in which one shapes oneself and one’s cultural environment through one’s own free action. Also, the concept contains an idea of exceeding what is, and becoming whole or complete. In other words, in the process of Bildung one pursues an advanced form of life, but this better form is something that cannot and shouldn’t be defined clearly in advance (see Bollnow 1959, 1966).

27 In his early studies of existential philosophy, Bollnow was not interested in encounter. It was in 1955, after being invited to do so, when Bollnow prepared a lecture, “Encounter and Education,” in which he formulated the concept of existential encounter in the context of education. This lecture and a following essay published in the first number of Journal of Pedagogy (Zeitschrift für Pädagogik) were the first systematic approaches to the issue of encounter. From then on, encounter played a profound role in his career in educational philosophy—particularly in formulations of the existential aspects of education and formation. Bollnow had become interested in existentialism as early as the 1940s, and had written *The Nature of Emotions* (*Das Wesen der Stimmungen*, 1956) as early as 1941.
In his formulations, Bollnow departed from the solely Christian views of dialectical theology that culminated in the work of Martin Buber, particularly in his work, *I and Thou (Ich und Du, 1977)*. Bollnow aimed to clarify the concept of encounter, adopting a view different from theological notions that saw encounter between man and God as an unconditionally demanding relationship (Vandenberg 2002: 90). Behind that view of the concept is a dualistic understanding of man—such as made its breakthrough in the existentialist philosophy of the 1920s—that contrasts with a humanist image of man and the classical educational ideal based on that image.

Encounter was adopted in a more general sense to characterize the process by which “I,” usually in an accidental and unexpected fashion, collides with a reality that confronts “me” as other, alien, and resistant to “my” natural life force (Bollnow 1966: 161). In other words, encounter totally displaces a person from his or her natural course of life, and occurs without the possibility for the person to consciously affect the encounter. A displacement from normal, safe, habitable behavior raises existential demands: one must re-evaluate one’s perceptions and general conceptualizations of life. This “secularized” version of encounter does not refer to the relationship between man and God; rather, to the relationship of a subject to what we could call *otherness*, to anything distinguishable from the subject. Encounter may be an encounter with a person, a work of art, a philosophy, the testimonies of religion, or even a landscape (ibid.: 162). Encounter with a different entity, *the other*, can be harmful, potentially violent, or even disastrous. Therefore, existential encounter always comes with the possibility of hazard.

As an idea, encounter is stressed in a manner we may term existential; its sense refers not to any particular acquaintanceship, but to an experience that shakes a person to the core. In this sense, encounter is always an existential experience. A person carried away by enthusiasm in seeking knowledge of something important to the self would still not necessarily be touched deeply in an existential way (Bollnow 1966: 160). It is not enough to spectate: one must

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and *New Security: The Problem of Overcoming Existentialism (Neue Geborgenheit: Das Problem einer Überwindung des Existentialismus)* in 1955. In *Das Wesen der Stimmungen*, Bollnow accepts Heidegger’s philosophical anthropology on “basic moods” (in German, Grundbefindlichkeiten) that have no intentional object because they are states of being. In *Neue Geborgenheit* (1955b), Bollnow argues that “hope” is more primordial than Heidegger’s “care” because care necessarily presupposes hope (Bollnow, 1961,: 271, Vandenberg 2002: 590). Hope, he contends, is more fundamental than caring about one’s own existence; it underlies “negative” aspects of existentialism without asking that we deny the existence of those aspects. In the 1970s, during excursions to Japan, Bollnow continued to lecture on encounter. He did so until the end of the 1980s.
engage oneself fully in the matter at hand by taking a position on it. One must decide for oneself to be either for or against the event. Bollnow aims to understand this engagement, this being-touched-by-something, by referring to it with the concept of existential encounter (ibid.: 161).

For Bollnow, encounter is a fundamental experience in which the subject meets something new, strange, uncontrollable, and (to the subject) incomprehensible. An encounter is a collision with everything outside one’s understanding, not a meeting with the familiar; in Edmund Husserl’s terms, a meeting with something outside one’s “life-world” (*Lebenswelt*). Through this collision with something new, encounter presents a possibility for self-examination. In other words, encountering a force outside subjective understanding results in a change to that subjective understanding; one recognizes an entity that is not understood, and begins to learn. By no means is encounter necessarily a pleasant experience; it affects the subject profoundly, leading to self-examination or reflection and a change in one’s way of living or being.

A significant response to questions of encounter appeared in Bollnow’s “Existential Philosophy and Education: A Treatise on the Discontinuous Forms of Education” (“Existenzphilosophie und Pädagogik: Versuch über unstetige Formen der Erziehung,” 1959), which furnishes a theory of discontinuous education that aims to overcome the phenomenon Heidegger named *falling into the inauthentic*, everyday existence through intermittent awakening.

Bollnow recommended that to motivate a student, instead of praise and blame a teacher should use admonition, which by reminding students of a *failure to complete* helps them to reorient themselves toward fulfilling their own possibilities of being. Admonition looks forward, involves the entire temporal

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28 Bollnow transferred the concept of encounter to a discussion on educational philosophy in his *Encounter and Education*, in a manner provoking considerable controversy and attracting comments from Werner Loch, Josef Derbolav, and Fritz Bohnsack, all of whom worked more or less in the same ground. Derbolav presented the most weighted objection, critiquing Bollnow’s conceptual approach mainly for overly simplifying or narrowing the multidimensional concept. Derbolav distinguishes between three understandings of encounter: firstly, encounter as the working through and assimilation of the other precisely as the other; secondly, encounter as becoming the other in and through the other; and thirdly, encounter as becoming oneself through the other (Bollnow 1966: 162, Derbolav 1954: 6, 16, 18, 135, 175). Bollnow’s reaction to such criticism changed over time, but settled in the 1980s. Recently, Bollnow remarked that his contribution to the theme of encounter consists in recognizing the phenomenon of encounter systematically for the first time. However, he also recognized Derbolav’s contribution to freeing the concept of encounter from a one-sidedness for which dialogical theology and Bollnow’s own drastic narrowing of the issue are to blame. Despite these limitations, Bollnow’s contribution is crucial to pedagogical discussion of the subject even today and particularly in terms of existential psychology (see Jacobssen 2008, Deurzen-Smith 1988).
structure (Bollnow 1959: 63), and respects the pupil’s freedom because it is only a call to conscience (ibid.: 66). In these terms, admonition can cause the pupil to awaken from a state of being-obligated-to-be-nothing (Nicht-so-sein-sollens) to being-obligated-to-be-oneself (Sein-sollens), and from a state of being-in-the-world (In-der-Welt-seins) to being-in–the-truth (In-der-Wahrheit-seins) (ibid.: 47–48).

This awakening may occur also in an educative encounter through the content of a curriculum; Bollnow gives a phenomenological description of such already in Encounter and Education (Begegnung und Bildung) (see Bollnow 1955b, Vandenberg 1971: 158). Indeed, one may have an intellectual encounter with an author or figure of the past or present (Bollnow, 1959: 110, Vandenberg 1971: 159), groups of people, previous times and cultures, works of poetry, and with intellectual truths (ibid.: 93). To distinguish encounter from theoretical interest, Bollnow cites Heidegger’s claim that deficient moods underlie abstract theorizing, but that an educative encounter involves one’s whole being: “one must first of all value and only then can one understand” (ibid.: 108), and, “I understand only insofar as I place myself in question” (ibid.: 110). These citations precede a definition of education as “the intellectual encounter between the generations, or of the educational encounter between the rising generation and the intellectual-historical world” (ibid.: 93). Teachers cannot contrive encounters with students, but they can promote their occurrence through a serious, respectful, engaged treatment of curriculum content (ibid.: 125, 130).

When we consider existential formulations of pedagogy, several problems become apparent. Bollnow’s discontinuous education conflicts with classical notions of formation (Bildung), according to which a human being is cultivated from a human animal and its causal environment, forming a cultural human with intentions that establish its freedoms, namely individuality, the ability to recognize self, and choose for oneself. Along with this individuation one is also the subject of the transmission of the culture. This process of cultivation or Bildung occurs—according to classical notions—by transmitting cultural heritage from the older generation to the new generation via education, which is regarded as a continuous, cumulative process (Bollnow 1959: 11–13, 1986: 2–3). However, Bollnow’s existential understandings of education prompt the statement that the development of a person can neither be continuous nor merely a cumulative process (Bollnow 1986: 4–6). Setbacks, discontinuation, lag, jumps, and leaps are all a visible part of development. Clearly, tensions exist between classical Bildung
theory and existential notions of discontinuity: these tensions will be observed and clarified next.

3.1.2 Encounter and Education, “Bildung”

From the viewpoint of encounter, Bollnow sees human development as discontinuous in nature. Encounter states a tension between the subject, the “I,” and the cultural context this subject does not yet embrace. As encounter discloses things to the self and makes them thus part of its life-world, encounter seems to play a significant role in human formation, or unfolding of inner abilities and powers. Encounter itself is a collision; therefore, human development is possible only through collisions. Bollnow states that this development of human character, namely individuation, and the tension between the individual and its culture, has been referred to from classical hermeneutics to modern pedagogy as formation, or Bildung. Therefore, to Bollnow, the concept of encounter is a very essential adjunct to the notion of Bildung. When formulating his discontinuous forms of education, Bollnow does not refer to contemporary theories of Bildung, but rather, to the classical notions of the concept.

Bollnow presents a new background philosophy for education, beginning with twofold classical notions of education. The following two basic ideas can be regarded as the foundation for all the other variants of educational thinking throughout the history of pedagogy. Bollnow terms the first idea the crafting analogy. According to the crafting analogy, education is craftsmanship: the educator moulds his or her material, the educatee, through an intentional, predetermined plan of action, and the result is a product of the correct and skilful use of methods. From this standpoint, education is action, and the result of the

29 The idea of “Bildung” or formation was born in the Goethean era. The word itself is difficult to translate from German to other languages; for instance, the English translation, “formation,” loses much of the larger context in which the concept was born and developed. The term has a long pre-history and gained a deepened metaphysical sense particularly through German mysticism. In its contemporary meaning, it is a creation of the late eighteenth century only. Johann Gottfried von Herder and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe used Bildung to formulate their own image of the human being in confrontation with the Enlightenment (Bollnow 1966: 95). In Humboldt’s thinking, Bildung found its most mature and carefully weighed-out presentation. That Bildung can be said to have originated from the domain of organic life serves to emphasize the special nature of the organic in contrast to the merely mechanical. In this sense, the concept of Bildung, applied first of all to plant life or to an animal nature, emphasizes the totality, the “Gestalt-formation”—as opposed to a mere summation of elements—and emphasizes the relatedness of all parts to a unitary center (c.f. ibid.: 95). Even in Goethe’s writings, therefore, the word usually means simply the living form of a human being.
action is determined by the educator. Referring to this analogy, Bollnow cites the commonly used interpretation that ethics gives education its aims and goals, and that psychology gives education the tools and methods to achieve these goals (Bollnow 1966). The second analogy Bollnow employs when discussing education is the analogy of organic growth (ibid.: 96). From this standpoint, human growth is not predetermined by outward influence, but is of inward origin, like the growth of a plant or a tree. The process of human growth is regarded as a natural phenomenon that education can at its worst only disturb. The organic growth analogy sees education as supportive action, supportive of the individual process of inward growth. This supportive action or guidance requires certain nurturing skills. Referring to these two analogies—the analogy of crafting and the analogy of organic growth—Bollnow also uses the terms “mechanistic” and “organic.” The former is founded in the era of Enlightenment and the latter in romanticism.

Bollnow starts with a rather simple thought, that in a general sense each life can be characterized as a process of the reciprocal interaction of a living being (organism) with an environing world. And if one extends the viewpoint to include life-history, i.e., bears in mind that life does not remain the same in this interaction but conjointly enlarges and transforms itself from within in the course of time such that it grows, then one must add that this growth itself occurs in the very same way as the reciprocal interaction between the living being and the environment. (Bollnow 1959: 27) This means that this growth takes place in the reciprocal interaction and interpenetration of two necessarily successive, related processes: an unfolding from within, Bildung, and an assimilation from without.

Unfolding, Bildung, as such has its limits, it can progress only so far as to how much “nourishment” it has gained from the environing world. Growth can continue only if it assimilates external matter. This external nourishment is the precondition for growth to occur. Bildung only succeeds and becomes actual growth as long as an individual advances toward a material in the outer world in which the unfolding takes place and that is to a certain degree a kind of intellectual nourishment for the growing person. However, talking of “material” may not be completely appropriate here: Bollnow stresses that the stimulating material should not be considered as generally available material with no relation to the concrete life processes of the individual. In actuality, it becomes nourishment only to the extent it enters into the life-zone of this self-determining, unfolding life. It is not to be seen as something existing in the abstract, but as material actually coming to meet life and appropriate for it. This explains the
concept of the encounter further: it is a process in which a definite actuality steps in to relation to life as one of the materials enabling its expansion, as a kind of intellectual nourishment. And thus the two concepts, Bildung and encounter, characterize the polarity in which everything comes to pass intellectual growth. They are thus reciprocally interdependent. Encounter is not Bildung, and Bildung is not encounter.

However, encounter without synchronous unfolding of human powers would stifle evolution under the mass of received material. Bildung without the confronting encounter would ultimately pass into emptiness (Bollnow 1955b: 33). This allows us to understand an important tension in the history of German educational thought. While in the Era of Enlightenment and with Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) it seemed that organic development meant nothing more than the unfolding of what was already present, the concern broadened with Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) to include the assimilation of encountered, human cultural products. Education (Erziehung) in the full sense of the German classics can be defined from this point on as precisely this balance between assimilated materials and developed powers, with one being able to develop only in conjunction with the other. What Bollnow realizes here is something

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30 Applied particularly to the temporal process, Bildung signifies the quiet, inwardly necessary unfolding of an organism according to its own inherent lawfulness (Bollnow 1966: 96). The images of the unfolding of a blossom and the ripening of fruit best characterize this law of organic formation (c.f. ibid.: 96). From that standpoint, the concept of Bildung is applicable also to the human subject in forms of spiritual development, or more secularly in the cultivation of an individual. Therefore, Bildung necessarily involves the recognition of a human being in his or her individuality. In this connection, German neo-humanism has offered a profound metaphysical interpretation of individuality. That interpretation contends that individuality does not signify the particularity of a being existing for itself; rather, it denotes the character of the human being in its unique configuration (in German Gestalt) (c.f. ibid.: 97–98). Nonetheless, an emphasis on individuality does not mean the dissolution of the individual from humanity. The individual remains linked to humanity: all powers present in humanity as a whole are present in each individual. For that reason also, a variety of individuals understand one another within the greater framework of humanity, but inherently similar powers fit together in varying relative strengths in each individual (c.f. ibid.: 97). In each individual, in other words, the powers of humanity form a unique mixture; individuals are distinguishable through the relative strength of those various powers.

31 Behind this contention lies the profoundly metaphysical theory that humanity can actualize the fullness of its inherent possibilities not in any particular human being, but through the multiplicity of individual possibilities. Only collectively do human beings comprise humanity, which is reflected in each individual in some particular fashion. Each individual version is also necessary, because without it humanity would not be complete: no version can be relinquished. In this lies the entire worth of the individual figure. However, each individuality is also—in the first part—limitation, or contingent and fortuitous particularity (Bollnow 1966: 98). Individuality involves potential realized in one fashion or another; in that sense, individuality is one-sidedness. When, according to the goal of organic formation (Bildung) a human being is supposed to develop into a harmonically balanced form, this
significant to educational theory, and to the view of man behind it: these two processes are crucial to human development, and they are both necessary. But, they do not happen on the same plane of life-world. In reality, encounter lies on a wholly different plane and changes the whole way of thinking so radically that it cannot be added as a supplement to or correction of a way of thinking emerging primarily from an unfolding (Bildung). Thus, these processes can never be put together: where the encounter begins, there Bildung has lost its claim, and conversely: where Bildung defines the human happening, there encounter in the full sense cannot take place (Bollnow 1955b: 36). This tension of the dualism of the educative process of a human being has been lost in time in educational philosophy.

From this understanding, we move to the treatment of educative encounter, an occurrence where these two aforementioned processes are seen together side by side. As stated before, encounter can be described with the metaphor of two ships meeting each other on the sea. These two ships do not encounter each other if, coming from opposite directions, they sail past one another. This separates encounter from other pedagogical processes, as pedagogy itself roots etymologically to “walking beside.” Also, it is not an encounter if a ship encounters a stationary object. By necessity, the two who encounter are in movement. In terms of one human encountering another, they both have their own naturally flowing everyday lives and life-worlds of their own with their own dynamics. An encounter between those is not a meeting of the safest kind, just like an encounter between two ships at a sea is a possible crash course of those two ships moving in opposite directions.

Bollnow describes the therefore necessary features of an educative encounter: there is always a “toward” in the encounter, it is a meeting and, moreover, an impact or a collision of some sort. Encounter always includes the occurrence of development does not occur simply on its own as an undisturbed growth from within. Rather, it is necessary also that the individual broaden the self and compensate for the one-sidedness in his or her own predisposition by entering into community with other individuals, thereby taking into self the entirety of humanity. The single individual develops to a consummate perfected state only insofar as he or she takes in the greatest range of the life-expressions of other humans, and inwardly broadens him- or herself through them (c.f. ibid.: 98). This double-sidedness of development is the kernel of the classical concept of Bildung as articulated by Humboldt in its most mature form (c.f. ibid.: 99). Spranger expressed this formulation in his book on Humboldt entitled Individuality – Universality – Totality (Spranger 1928). However, even these formulations of Bildung—at least, in the form Spranger suggests—have been criticized lately, for instance by Benner (1996). Nonetheless, the classical ideas expressed here underlie the very foundation of the contemporary concept of Bildung.
actual contact. This leads to life-changing events. Also, encounter would not have such a dramatic effect on the life of a human being if it was predictable. Therefore, Bollnow stresses, it is something accidental and unpredictable, which to one’s surprise confronts him or her in the encounter (Bollnow 1955b: 40). Educative encounter is a definitive encounter with a given subject matter, and not a collision of random things on the corner of a street.

Therefore, it is also appropriate to contrast the pedagogic encounter with the category of the transmittal of knowledge in instruction and the education thereby acquired. In instruction, the emphasis is solely on the “objective side,” on the material to be assimilated (Bollnow 1955b: 46). Pedagogical encounter does not happen on the “objective side,” but is a thoroughly subjective experience. Encounter characterizes the personal meeting of the world, and this subjective experience of the fundamental difference between oneself and the world is a precondition to learning from it. Thus, encounter is not about the assimilated material but about the learning subject himself, the person and his developing intellectual powers.

Encounter with an object of study, however, implies that now both sides collide with an equal weight of reality (Bollnow 1955b: 47). In the encounter with an actuality that comes to meet him that does not yield before him, the person in a real sense becomes “shaken.” From this fact, encounter implies dislocation of the natural life-flow, it obtains its characteristic severity, an inexorability and inevitability. Bollnow sums up certain fundamental differences of educational encounter from educational instruction: 1) the material of education is appropriated by the subject and assimilated; it disappears in the subject, as it were, and the subject unfolds himself in this process of assimilation. He emerges enlarged and enriched. 2) The encountered thing, on the other hand, continues in its independence and consequently requires a wholly different attitude from the person. 3) The subject must answer the claim that comes to meet him in the encounter, he must answer in a suitable way, and what counts as suitable is defined not by the subject but by the encountered thing. 4) The material of education as such makes no claims, but the encountered thing steps opposite to him as a challenging thing, and 5) it is a trial of the ultimate intellectual authenticity. In this “shaking up,” the subject must prove himself. He can succeed or fail.

When one speaks of education, it means the well-rounded and harmonious unfolding of human powers, Bildung. It is important for the subject to make contact with as many sides of the materials of education as possible to ensure his
Bildung in all directions. Education is necessarily many-sided (Bollnow 1955b: 50). The rigor of the encounter, however, is characterized opposite to this, for in it all harmonious development loses its meaning. Every encounter is fateful, as it immediately takes hold of the whole person. Many-sided encounter would be a contradiction in terms, for one encounter always excludes any other, and the encounter is the more authentic, the more unconditionally and exclusively it takes hold of the person. Several encounters are possible only at considerable intervals from one another, never at the same time (Bollnow 1955b: 50).

3.1.3 Encounter as a Transcendental, Intrinsic Property of Learning

What we have displayed so far about encounter is revealed to us as something grounded in the fundamental tension between encounter and education as intentional action, but also between encounter and another subjective process, i.e., personal unfolding, Bildung. However, encounter has been defined further in educational theoretical contexts, which emphasize more the phenomenological aspect of the properties of encounter. Maxine Greene has exemplified the transcendental phases of learning in the student’s exploration of the inner and outer horizons of one’s life-world (Greene 1973: 169, 170, Vandenberg 2002b: 325). What makes the transcendental phases of learning specifically transcendental is the fact that they are aspects of the stream of consciousness that are invisible to the external, objective observer. They are irreducible to brain processes because if brain processes always caused the contents of consciousness, all we would have would be dreams and hallucinations. Fortunately, there is praxis, i.e., wide-awake being in the world in which transcendental phases of learning may occur as structurations of the stream of consciousness of things, as moments of being in the world (Vandenberg 1971: 3–10, Greene 1978: 147–157).

Although the explorations of the inner and outer horizons are necessary aspects to any learning by a student with his or her own experiences of inner life and outer world, they are insufficient to grounding the learning of the student in the world, for these horizons indicate the direction of one’s spatializing attentiveness during conscious inquiry, not epistemic sub-units of a learning episode (Vandenberg 2002b: 326). While pointing out the necessary role of phenomenology in educational research and discussing some existential and educational questions through phenomenological inquiry, Greene mentions what would by Vandenberg (2002b) and Harrison (2000) be called the transcendental phases of learning. These phases are (Greene 1997: 171–188): encounter,
awareness, making connections, communion, and enactment. Robyn Harrison (2000) examined the methods of research of Husserl, Heidegger, and Greene to articulate these phases to the fullest, not as phases of a phenomenological method but as of any learning that is grounded in a human being in the world. The phases formulate a distance between the dynamic of each of them and the outer horizon, or the outside world as it is experienced. This distance in the learning episode is what Harrison (2000) calls the spatiality of learning. This, she explains further: “If knowing is a spatializing toward the world, then, this phenomenal characteristic is of fundamental importance to the way learning occurs” (Harrison 2000: 95).

Here, the relevant part of these phases of learning is of course the first one being articulated, i.e., encounter. The first phase of consciously learning something, i.e., becoming aware of an object, event, technique, etc., is to encounter it, to notice its presence, and then to proceed to become aware of it more fully. This encounter can be instantaneous, happening so quickly that one passes immediately into the phase of becoming aware of it in detail, or it may occur slowly, reticently, when one simply lacks “interest.” It can occur with a surprise and sense of wonder, and also with a feeling of awe that makes it wonderful, or perhaps without any awe, being only a matter of interest, which, if sufficiently intense, becomes curiosity. The depth of wonder, interest, and curiosity propels the spatializing transcendence to the thing noticed to become more fully aware of its qualities, aspects, characteristics, properties, etc., that is, of its possibilities (Vandenberg 2002b: 327).

The encounter can be a semi-conscious event; it can even be less than semi-conscious (Vandenberg 2002b: 328). However, encounter is a phenomenal event of subjective consciousness. Encounter sets itself in this way as a surface between the subjective experiences of one’s inner life and the outer world. Through this dynamic, however, encounter does not have to penetrate the conscious self to the fullest. Harrison (1999) says the phase of encounter is characterized by a sense of wakening: “The act of recognizing this encounter is a wakening responsiveness … A wakeful encounter frees learners to project their futures and investigate their outer horizons. Freed from the world as given, the ‘natural attitude,’ a re-constitution of their lived world can be pursued by the learners in pedagogic dialogue with the teacher” (Harrison 2000: 61, 98). There are degrees of intensity of the encounter that the teacher is able to invoke, ranging from the slight awareness that hardly results in a “second look” to the encounter that generates a response like Rainer Maria Rilke’s before the “Archaic Torso of

Vandenberg, Greene, and Harrison all refer the concept of encounter to a phenomenal state that penetrates the consciousness of a learner. Encounter in this respect is a thoroughly mental process, referring to the inner state of one’s mental life and the contradiction it might have with the subjective perception of the outer world. Encounter seems to definitively address an extrinsic property of learning: it is conditionally a possible part of the mental process of learning. Why only extrinsic? An extrinsic property is a property that depends on a thing’s relationship with other things (see Lewis 1983). Vandenberg unintentionally seems to describe encounter as a relational property when describing it as a transcendental phase of learning. Although the phenomenology around the concept is concise, he refers to Johann Friedrich Herbart’s four steps of instruction: clarity, association, system, and method (Vandenberg 2002b: 330, Herbart 1971: 57) and equates these with the transcendental phases, and thus pushes encounter away from the possibility of being an essential property of learning. While doing this, Vandenberg does not seem to stress sufficiently the difference between categories of action and categories of events or processes. Herbart’s steps are instructional steps and as such phases of intentional educative action. This is in contradiction to the transcendental categories, as they do not directly refer to intentional action but subjective experiences of such action or even, to other mental states, i.e., learning. If by chance Vandenberg’s formulation of equating instructional steps with transcendental phases would be considered correct, then the phenomenological encounter is not a necessary, intrinsic property of learning but a relational, conditional property. For Vandenberg, transcendental phases of learning are swappable with categories of instruction, and thus encounter as a transcendental phase cannot be an intrinsic property. However, in comparison to the theoretical foundations of the concept, to our understanding, Vandenberg’s interpretation should be questioned in this sense. Encounter is an intrinsic property of learning: it is the first phenomenal phase of a mental process leading to awakening of the tensions and discrepancies between one’s inner life-world and the outer life-world. It should not, as such, be mixed up with any instructional concepts or intentional educative action other than those, which refer to them through a subjective, experiential filter. Thus, encounter would still hold up to its existential foundations.
3.1.4 Encounter, Learning and Unnaturalness of Human Development

To sum up Bollnow’s account of the concept of encounter, we can say that the encounter is an existential category. Only in this category, as an existential concept, is it at all intelligible. Encounter has its roots in the educational understanding of educational development, the unfolding of a person on a subjective level: that deeply moving experiences are a precondition to effecting genuinely educative assimilation. However, experience is an overly subjectively colored interpretation of what we call here encounter. If we consider the experienced thing as becoming wholly absorbed in the experience within the experiencing person and which we would regard only for the sake of the subjective experience, it would lose its independent significance opposite to the person. Instead, the concept of encounter calls special attention to the unassimilated power of the resistance of actuality.

Thus, educational encounter separates itself from mere educational instruction. Encounter is the sudden, unexpected, and possibly hazardous experience of a meeting with something requiring maximum intellectual powers from the subject. Only in this way can the subject gain something from the experience. The educational concept of Bildung comes close to encounter here: these concepts are to be seen close together. Meeting with something that “shakes a person to the core” and requires all the capacity the person has to overcome this encounter promotes the development and unfolding of personal intellectual powers.

Bollnow refers to Humboldt’s theory of transmission of culture, distinguishing the process of encounter from Bildung. Bildung is a world-relation on a threefold level, on individual, cultural and on the level of humanity as a whole. But regardless of how pristine and crisp our self-understanding is, or our understanding of culture or the humanity per se, the world may still evade us. The moments of “world’s evasive action” from our understanding, are encounters.

Greene, Vandenberg, and Harrison refer to encounter as a transcendental phase of learning (Greene 1997, Vandenberg 2002b, Harrison 2000). This means that encounter is not an objectively observable part of human learning, but a phenomenal and subjective aspect of this process. This definition does not stress a certain factor to the degree it would deserve. We would claim that encounter is not only an extrinsic phase to this transcendental process, but rather an intrinsic property or a necessary condition to it. No learning would occur without an
individual, subjective, phenomenal encounter. This view is in accord with my interpretation of Bollnow’s phenomenology.

In this chapter I have reviewed two ways of referring to encounter: as a subjective experience of an educational process and as a transcendental condition to learning. Encounter in its most concise articulation has therefore two slightly different meanings. When encounter is referred to a) as a subjective experience of the educational process, which, historically speaking, has taken the formulation of Bildung, it is being referred to as an experience of an aspect of intentional action of which the experiencing person is part. There is also a notion of an experience of inner unfolding, or inner growth, to which the encounter is a parallel process. When the concept of encounter is referred to b) as a transcendental phase of learning, it is referred to as a mental state and not as action.

However, in both articulations a) and b), encounter is a subjective experience, i.e., a mental state. In addition, the object of this mental state can be seen in both of these meanings a) and b) in two different ways: firstly, the object the encounter is referring to is an action and a process set forward by this action (learning as action, education as action) and secondly, the object of the mental state is another mental state, i.e., learning (as a mental state) or Bildung (as inner unfolding of competences). The analysis in this thesis shows that if we treat these two separate definitions side by side, it would conclude with the following views.

As, according to Bollnow, encounter is not Bildung, human development as natural unfolding of inner powers, then neither is learning. If we take as granted what Vandenberg (2002b), Greene (1997), and Harrison (2000) state about encounter as being a phase of learning and as such an intrinsic property, then this would be a logical conclusion. Learning has a discontinuous nature, and learning is not fully part of the natural flow of human life and development. This will further my remarks on the meaning of the concept. At a first glance, encounter may not seem to play a significant role in contemporary learning theories. However, as this analysis shows, despite it having a long idea-historical “burden” on its back, as a transcendental phenomenological concept, encounter is a useful theoretical tool in the contemporary formulations of human learning.
3.2 Crisis and Critique: On the Development of the Critical Individual

Bollnow pondered systematically upon the possible connection between crisis and critique, as the terms seem to share at least some linguistic connection. In any case, for Bollnow these concepts seem to share some significance for understanding human development and even what it is to be human in general. In this chapter, I will review his treatment of the connection between these concepts, and assess the pedagogical significance Bollnow articulates for them. I will establish the rather obvious Kantian tone to Bollnow’s treatment of crisis and critique, and make a brief critical examination of the connection between crisis and life-long learning.

In his book, *Krise und Neue Anfang (Crisis and New Beginning 1966)*, Bollnow asks the anthropological question, what does crisis mean in the life of the human being? He reflects upon the idea that crises could belong to human life in a fundamental way. It is in the very nature of life that a crisis exists (Bollnow 1966: 3). At the same time, he asks whether these life-crises have some constituting role in critique and critical attitude (Bollnow 1966: 21). Crises disrupt the natural flow of everyday life. Bollnow describes crises as critical moments, which enable the development of a critical attitude toward the individual’s own world.

3.2.1 On the Connection between Crisis and Critique

From the perspective of existential philosophy, toward which Bollnow leans heavily, crises are not something accidental, but human life, according to its essential nature and in every moment, lies in crisis and can only be conceived through crisis. The human being actualizes his or her authentic existence only in crisis and through crisis (Bollnow 1966: 4–5). Human life does not unfold in a merely “organic” process of growth, but rather only by passing through crises. The word “crisis” characterizes certain processes of individual or communal life. Crisis can occur in an illness as well as in a spiritual development, it can be a marital crisis, an economic crisis, or a crisis in the collective lives of people. Crisis involves processes, which stand out from the steady current of the rest of life. Every crisis means the threat of a catastrophe: illness could lead to death, marital crisis to the abandonment of a life together, political crisis to war, and so forth (Bollnow 1966: 4). The crisis, however, does not necessarily lead to
hazardous outcomes. The illness can introduce a recovery, the marriage may establish itself anew, the economic crisis may lead to new blossoming, the danger of war may pass, and so forth (Bollnow 1966: 4). In each case, the overcoming of the crisis signifies not only the averting of danger but also a purification and elimination of long-active conflicts. Thus, overcoming the crisis means arriving at a new level reachable only by passing through the crisis (Bollnow 1966: 2). Crisis signifies a process that is characterized as critical, and which plays itself out in the events of life.

However, one also characterizes as critical a basic human attitude, in which a person takes up a position toward reality as something not self-evident. In this sense critical is not a reality but rather a human judgment about reality (Bollnow 1966: 22). When being critical, one examines the rightness or correctness of human statements. From this arises the significance of critique as the distinguishing between true and false. One applies critique to a situation, meaning that one discloses the error in it. Critique is, in this sense, an aggressive act (Bollnow 1966: 24). To Bollnow, the crisis, as we experience it, is something that the human being must take hold of and complete in his or her own actions, precisely through this “critical” attitude and behavior. Bollnow also insists that inversely, critique of existing conditions does not itself lead to crisis in these conditions.

3.2.2 Critique as Culture-Critique and Critique of Culture-Critique

One can observe in cultural history typically recurring movements, which can be labeled under the name of “culture-critique,” from Jean-Jacques Rousseau to the era of “Sturm und Drang” (Storm and Stress), to German romanticism and to Nietzsche and his time. To Bollnow, they all share a decisive, foundational idea of culture-critique. This is Rousseau’s claim that the refinements of culture have only made the human being more unfortunate. If we draw together what is common to these often very divergent cultural movements, it is the challenge to confront a trend as unhealthy, to turn back from everything calcified, rigid, and externalized, to turn away from all of the other ways life could miscarry, and to return to the vital origins of life. Culture-critique in this sense means a “way back,” and as such opposes empathically all belief in progress and optimism in progress (Bollnow 1966: 7).

However, a counter movement stands out. Bollnow boils this down to the German conservative sociologist Arnold Gehlen, who opposes Rousseau’s
challenge, “Return to Nature,” with his own antithesis, “Return to Culture.” In his work, Bollnow does not deal with Gehlen’s philosophical anthropology as a whole, but rather exclusively examines this single thesis. Gehlen points out that the belief that one can return to nature rests on an illusion. The human being is, as he expresses it, “by nature a cultural being” (Gehlen 1961: 78). Also, Gehlen teaches that certain social orders, regarded as self-evident and “natural,” can be called into question and seen as merely conventionally determined. These old social orders are contrasted with new forms, until these new forms have themselves become established and have again become taken for granted, so that the process can begin anew from the beginning (Bollnow 1966: 19).

For Gehlen, the call to “return to nature” is dangerous, because the human being is such an instinct-weak and inwardly unstable creature, that it can only survive within a specific culturally determined form of life with certain institutions such as morality, the state, and law, which serve to regulate his behavior. As for Gehlen, culture-critique seems to destroy these institutions; it leads necessarily to a primitivization of the human being, in the sense of a regression to a condition of chaos and impulsiveness. Without taking a position whether Gehlen’s criticism toward Rousseau is correct or merely based on a controversial and possibly misleading understanding of him, for Gehlen, only culture is possible (ibid.: 19).

Although this counter-movement to culture-critique has been formed, for Bollnow it also represent the critical capacity for judgment which has its beginning in the critical moments in the Gestalt of a human life. Thus, not only culture-critique is valuable, but also critique to culture-critique as a manifestation of human capacity for judgment.

3.2.3 Return to the Origin and Education of the Capacity for Judgment

Bollnow’s primary concern is not with the cultural-historical interpretation of culture-critique in its manifold forms, but in the ultimately philosophical-anthropological question: What is the significance for understanding the human being the fact that in the course of history, culture-critique has always emerged in the same or at least very similar forms? Bollnow’s working hypothesis for this is that culture-critique is something meaningful and necessary in the context of human-historical life and not merely an historical accident, and that it will prove rewarding to investigate its meaning, in order to more deeply comprehend human
life. Bollnow notes that man is a being who does not develop along a straight line into the future, in the sense of a naïve belief in progress, but rather in ever-renewed initiatives so that he takes the miscarried development newly back into the origin, and then commences once again in a new beginning (Bollnow 1966: 19). It is in the very nature of human life that these new beginnings happen, and through them life can finally move forward.

In his book, *Existenzphilosophie und Pädagogik* (*Existential Philosophy and Pedagogy* 1959), Bollnow has demonstrated that it is part of the essence of human life that we always remain lagging behind our possibilities, and must seek in renewed initiatives to make up for what was earlier neglected (Bollnow 1959: 15). This insight can be modified and enlarged in light of culture-critique. Whenever developments miscarry and one’s life runs astray, one must turn back and begin anew. And only through this forward and backward process to a new beginning, can life finally move forward. Bollnow calls this process rejuvenation, and it describes well the typically recurring movement of culture-critique, return to the origin (Bollnow 1966: 19).

Culture-critique is ultimately a self-critique of the human being in his or her culture. All critique is, in the end, based in self-critique. In a more general way, we characterize as critique the testing attitude toward the performance or behavior of another person (Bollnow 1966: 21). However, this requires being critical toward oneself, as fundamentally the truth can only be attained through a critical confrontation with already existing opinion. The human being with his previously held opinions falls into difficulties, as he cannot go any farther in life, and these difficulties then lead him to critique.

Truth is thus attainable for the human being only through the strenuous critique of present opinions, which have been previously taken over as self-evident (ibid.: 22–23). Fundamentally, truth is possible after a struggling, ever-repeating process of clarification and purification. Through critique the human being liberates himself from the captivity of unquestioned opinions. Through critique he awakens to his own opinion. Through critique he becomes himself for the first time. In this sense, Bollnow embraces the Enlightenment in its proud Kantian version as the liberation of the human being from an immaturity of his own making. To come of age is then necessarily to have the capacity for critique. Bollnow asks then, what can be done to assist the unfolding of this capacity for critique in the human being, in ourselves and in others (ibid.: 21)?

This capacity to acquire an opinion through critical consideration, and to freely defend this opinion, is described by Bollnow as the *power of judgment*. He
sees the most pressing task of education as the education of human beings for this power of judgment, which must naturally be applied first of all to ourselves as self-education. This power of judgment is, as Kant had already seen, not a purely intellectual faculty, but rather one depending closely on the moral substance of the human being. Bollnow therefore deliberately speaks of the “power of judgment” and not merely of the “capacity of judgment,” in order to emphasize the effort that is necessary for judgment. To form a judgment is always at the same time already a moral act (Bollnow 1966: 25–26). This power of judgment is the same thing that enables the human being to liberate himself from the actions of collective forces, to conduct himself in freedom and thus attain that maturity, which Kant saw as the goal of the Enlightenment (ibid.: 26).

Bollnow emphasizes that the critical attitude signifies a detachment from the medium of collective opinions. The process of development of critique, as a rise from the immaturity of collective opinions to one’s true opinions and thus one’s true self, is similar to Martin Heidegger’s concept of das Man, everyman, or inauthenticity (Uneigentlichkeit) and its struggle to authenticity (Eigentlichkeit). This is no wonder, as Bollnow was Heidegger’s student. Bollnow’s existential conception of critical individual is based on a Kantian understanding of critique as power of judgment, thus as moral decisions. This, however, differs from Heidegger’s concept of authenticity, which to him does not entail moral substance (see Heidegger 1927, Steiner 1997).

Critique is a strenuous and deeply painful process, through which the human being elevates him- or herself from the midst of an irresponsible collectivity and becomes a free, self-sufficient person, that is, a true human being, or authentic being. Critique therefore belongs to the innermost nature of the human being, and without critique the human being cannot be human. Only in the process of painful life experiences, after one has abandoned the original sheltered world of childhood, can the capacity for critique develop. This is directly connected with the crisis-times in one’s being. In this way the cultivation of critique is closely connected to crises in human maturation. Because the human being falls back over and over again into an uncritical state, he can never sustain himself at the heights of a critical vigilante (see Bollnow 1966). A genuine and responsible critique, therefore, can only be attained and sustained through ever-renewed crises. In this fashion, for Bollnow, crisis and critique blend into a whole, in which each side conditions the other, and is in turn conditioned by it (ibid.: 23).
3.2.4 The Concept of Crisis and Life-Long Learning – A Critical Approach

Bollnow’s understanding of crisis and the development of critique, depicted in his formulations of anthropological educational theory, comes very close to an idea of a very different tradition, namely life-long learning. By life-long learning in this context, I am referring to the cumulative forces of educational forms—formal, informal, and non-formal—that motivate personal development across all phases of human development, which more or less have some emancipatory effects on human life (see Field 2006, Crick & Joldersma 2007, Hinchliffe 2006, Nicoll & Fejes 2011, Säfström 2011, Uggla 2008).

However, the idea of life-long learning, masterminded originally in the realm of anthropological perceptions of human development, focuses almost exclusively on the positive, instrumental gain of competences to overcome problems of knowledge and skills. It lacks the essential understanding, founded in Bollnow’s formulation of Bildung, of the discontinuous, regressive forces of human development. The regressive forces of situations or encounters force a person to focus on him- or herself, reconfiguring the self in such a way that the character, through an authentic act of one’s own volition, dismisses any aspects of continuation in his or her development that seem irrelevantly built upon the core of personhood or self, namely existence, or *Dasein*. This sense of development describes a twofold layering: a dualism of classical forms of human development (Bildung) and discontinuous forces of inner unfolding.

Within the developing subject, things not only cumulate to unfold abilities and powers to an even greater and greater extent, but unfolding happens in a disruptive, exhaustive, and cleansing way. Life-long human development consists of episodes of peeling off of knowledge and attitudes. In its classical form, human development concerns individuality versus communal universality, and in the existential notion encompasses existence both as the core of a person (Kantian *a priori* unity of apperception, or Jaspers’ *existence*) and as his or her authenticity of being-in-the-world (in the Heideggerian sense).

The theory of life-long learning does not recognize the significance of the discontinuous forces in human life: they are seen as problems that ought to be overcome with an instrumental use of knowledge and skills that are being acquired in order to do so. However, the problematic disruptive situations themselves have significance beyond mere instrumental rationality. They are what Jaspers would call border-situations (*Grenzsituationen*), which help to articulate
oneself anew or better than before. Life-long learning ought not to be seen merely as a process of instrumental gain of knowledge and skills to overcome problems, but the problems and setbacks in life ought to be considered as a power and a source of better human self-definition and articulation.

3.3 Existential Awakening to “True Self”: Unconcealment of the Individual as the Aim of Pedagogy

Awakening is one of the main concepts of Bollnow’s existential-hermeneutic pedagogy, which obviously and closely refers to Heidegger’s notion of truth as unconcealment. To tear the veil from truth does not mean peeling off layers that disclose an absolute truth, or an essence of truth, even though Bollnow does in fact agree to a level with this neo-Kantian idea, but means disclosure of a situationally appearing aspect of one’s way of being, which could not be disclosed otherwise. Truth about an aspect of oneself is unconcealed only situationally. There is no absolute aspect to the true, authentic Gestalt of a person. Awakening is for Bollnow a concept of subjectivity, and the place for ethics as well. Awakening is not only about truth, but about individual conscience, which needs to be promoted by an appealing existential pedagogy.

3.3.1 Awakening as an Existential Aspect to Being a Critical Individual

The concept of awakening is an old one, going back to Christian theology. The pedagogical meaning and function of the concept has varied through the theoretical discussion, mainly focused on the German-speaking academic discussion, by Eduard Spranger, Josef Debolav, and Bollnow (see Zeitschrift für Pädagogik 1/1968, 4/1965, 6/1967).

What is the concept of awakening? And what is its pedagogical usefulness? Awakening is first and foremost a concept of introversion, but in a different way than as the notion of metacognition, which is a concept for introversion in cognitive psychology. Awakening as “awakening of the soul” or, as Bollnow puts it, awakening to the true self, or in Heideggerian terms, authenticity of one’s own existence, is a concept of self-formation, of relation between the self and its subjective world.

The nature of awakening shows the reason why it is especially an existential concept. Awakening to one’s authentic self is painful and only momentarily,
discontinuously possible. We have a tendency to fall back to “being asleep,” being inauthentic, untrue to ourselves for obvious reasons. Being part of the social world and societal life requires following others and at times hiding the true nature of one’s will: intentions, feelings, or even personality.

Awakening is waking up to truth about oneself and one’s world, and therefore the task of education in the "awakening of the higher self" is the "breakthrough point for the shocks from the metaphysical bounds of the mind.” Awakening is an epistemically painful, but rewarding state. Through awakenings, one gains fundamentally new conceptions of oneself and one’s world. Still, awakening is mostly an ethical concept. It first and foremost works in the ethical sphere of the self and its world, or even in the relation of the self and the unknown within the self. Above all, the ethical sphere, i.e., the development of conscience, is where the term is decisive for Spranger, and he insists emphatically: education is making awakenings happen (Bollnow 1959: 67). Awakening is the awakening of dormant possibilities within, which leads to better self-understanding. As a task for education, this is highly ethical in nature.

Bollnow’s formulation of awakening is a crisis-like state, and suggests something else than adaptability and flexibility in life-course as an instrument toward convenient change against problems in life. Awakening as a task of education and development is not of instrumental nature, it is not for something, be it employment, family life, social activity. Awakenings educate of something, giving awareness of oneself and one’s world as such. The outcome is not an instrument to achieve something, but the outcome is the change in oneself. The nature of reason through awakening is reflection, and thus points back to Bollnow’s connection with the Kantian power of judgment. Reason is a twofold thing: both instrumental and reflective. This twofold nature is seen also in Bollnow’s holistic philosophical-pedagogical anthropology: the development of the individual can be described on two levels, on the level of Bildung, based on German idealism, and on the affective, existential level. Through putting these two levels of description together, we gain new knowledge of being human. This means, however, that we are not supposed to melt these levels of description together as such, as they are not compatible with each other, but to see them as simultaneous aspects of the same phenomenon. Thus, it is possible to consider being critical both as a “return to Origin” and as a process of progression at the same time. But this is not all awakening is. There is in fact a more important aspect to it, which Bollnow points out in his treatise of the concept.
3.3.2 Awakening to Conscience

The notion of awakening must be taken in a strict sense, according to Bollnow. One may speak of the awakening of powers of the mind in the child, for instance technical or artistic ability, but this would not describe the awakening to its fullest. If one takes the concept in a strict sense, a person when asleep is in a state where he or she is not conscious, that is, is not present in a full sense, and is not able to dispose freely of him- or herself (Bollnow 1959: 68). The awakening caused by being woken is a sudden process without gradual transition by which one is brought to oneself again: awakening is an awakening from the previous self to a state that is new and irreducible to the understanding of self one had before.

Awakening can also, according to Bollnow, mean only such a sudden process as the waking of a hidden, dormant nucleus in the person. In this sense, awakening is an originally religious notion, and Bollnow accepts that this religious undertone is always audible when awakening is applied to educational discourse. This notion Bollnow borrows not only from Kant, but also from the existential philosopher and psychiatrist Karl Jaspers, for whom the true existence, the true nucleus of a person is portrayed in the absolute \textit{existence}, which cannot be seen but has to be observed or interpreted indirectly for the person. Here, Jaspers comes close to Hegel’s absolute, but Jaspers’ existence is not grasped with reason. In fact, reason is what distances Dasein from absolute existence. One has to rely on intuition. With this notion, Jaspers refers to Husserl’s transcendental attitude.

However, there is another, perhaps more important aspect to the concept of awakening. If it is taken in its strict sense, it does not refer to individual powers and skills, but “only to the core of a person, the subject-point, which can relate to everything that makes up the content of life, to all acts and omissions, but itself remains indeterminate” (Bollnow 1959: 69). With this indeterminacy, Bollnow refers to his teacher, Heidegger, and his antiessentialistic notion of truth as disclosure. Awakening discloses a truth about the self to itself in a certain situation, and the situationality of this disclosure is unrepeatable and indeterminate, so that this disclosure of a certain truth about the subject-point of a person would not be revealed otherwise. This revealed truth is not in the neo-Kantian sense a disclosure of the nucleus of a fixed, essentialistic self, nor in a

\textsuperscript{32} This notion borrows to a degree from neo-Kantian notions of the self, and also from Hegel’s \textit{Phenomenology of the Spirit}. See Gordon 2008, Schuhmann & Smith 1991.

\textsuperscript{33} Jaspers’ notion of an inauthentic human, which is a very different notion from that of Heidegger’s.
Hegelian sense a disclosure of the Absolute. This is a one-time, momentary lapse of the system of liabilities covering one’s understanding of oneself. Awakening is thus a temporal, sudden, and unrepeatable, i.e., situational and context-sensitive moment of tearing the veils away of a specific truthful notion of the self that exists in a specific way. The self in this sense is not a Kantian philosophical self, capable of reaching transcendental unity of apperception, nor a temporal aspect of absolute rationality, but a specific way of being, a being-there or Dasein.

Moreover, awakening is not only the awakening of a certain truth about oneself, but there is a more ethically relevant aspect to this disclosure: awakening is at the start always awakening of the conscience, and it is in education for conscience that education attains its zenith (Bollnow 1959: 42). But how can education achieve this awakening of conscience, and what is this conscience? Bollnow notes that conscience has received little attention in modern educational theory. Finding it awkward, people have attempted to explain it away with psychological theories and thus dispose of it. The conscience was seen as nothing but the "internalization" of requirements made by society. According to this, the conscience does not originate in the self, but a person adopts the requirements made of him by society so thoroughly as to feel them to be his own. This view, however, as Spranger (1928 [1909]) stressed, is refuted by the mere fact that the conscience can also resist the requirements made by society. In one’s conscience, a person feels a demand, which, by its absolute nature, is distinct from all other requirements made of him, and to which he must justify himself in his life. The voice of conscience is a metaphysical experience, and to be able to hear it is the guarantee of the metaphysical nature of human life (Bollnow 1959: 42).

The demands of conscience are in general in harmony with the morality in the society. However, this is the case as long as a person finds himself in typically patterned situations. The difficulties arise when a person finds him- or herself in situations for which the predominant morality provides no solutions (Bollnow 1959: 50). These situations Bollnow might mention as being existential. In those situations, one’s conscience places upon oneself the responsibility for making decisions for which there are no precedents. The person is all on his own. One may even have to reject the demands made on one by society and perceive them to be wrong. His conscience challenges him to resist, with the result that he exposes himself to the repressions of his environment (ibid.: 51). In this way, that which emerges from the call of conscience may be distinguished from arbitrary offences against prevailing norms. Bollnow follows here the Kantian notion of deontological ethics: the conscience of a person is not a result of the society itself,
but a notion of the person himself and is attainable by rational enterprise of the subject himself. There are rational principles, which the person may follow even in contrast to the norms of the society. Fundamentally, awakening to conscience can be interpreted to boil down to Kant’s universal law of morality: following one’s conscience in treating other people and oneself as an end and never as a means. This Kantian core is suppressed by an obvious subjectively responsible approach to consciousness in a way that refers to Kierkegaardian subjectivity.

This notion of awakening to conscience provides the answer to how the education of the conscience, or rather education for conscience, is possible:

*The conscience cannot be "made" in the sense of the view of education as craftsmanship. Nor can it be transmitted to a young person by teaching. It can only be awakened by appealing to the conscience of a person*34 (Bollnow 1959: 52).

This is a good description of the role and the limit of existential aspects of education: education as craftsmanship, which is determined by the laws of organic growth, cannot produce such a conscience. The emergence of conscience rests on the freedom of a young person. Whether he follows the appeal to his conscience or not is a matter for his own free choice, and that cannot be forced on him by education of any kind (Bollnow 1959: 52).

This leads, on the other hand, to the duty of restraint on the part of the educator. He can appeal to the conscience, but he must not anticipate the decision. He must really release his pupil to the freedom in which he alone can realize his innermost self. This appellative education (Appellierende Pädagogik) to which Bollnow refers here, comes straight from Karl Jaspers’ writings on pedagogy. And here lie the fundamental practical possibilities and restrictions of existential pedagogy.

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34 "Dabein wird sich im allgemeinen an diesen Vorgang der plötzlichen Umkehr eine Zeit des Beharrens im Wach-sein oder sogar eine Zeit des wachstums der durch die Erweckung freigelegten Kräfte anschließen. Doch lassen wir diese Frage am besten vorläufig noch offen. An sich liegt in der mit der Erweckung verbundenen Bewusstmachung ein Hinweis auf die Einmaligkeit; denn das, was dem Menschen einmal – meist erschreckend – zum Bewußtsein kommt, kann dann nicht wieder rückgängig gemacht werden" (Bollnow 1959: 52).
3.4 Why Isn’t Existentialism Supposed to Work?

Many would argue that the early twentieth-century existential theory of education and the hermeneutic pedagogical tradition—ranging from the age of Romanticism to the modern age—have both lain buried since critical theory arrived after the Second World War. This burial or disappearance is noticeable particularly with regard to Bollnow’s existential-hermeneutic theory, compelled straight to the periphery after a brief blossoming in the German educational discourse of the 1950s and 1960s. Perhaps because of the radical change in educational theory, with the arrival of critical educational theory, we contend that Bollnow’s thinking has not been taken as seriously as an interpretation of a subjectivist account of educational reality, as the later theories have, and rightly so, having claimed the primacy of societal viewpoints and emancipatory approaches to defining education theoretically. To remind and reconstruct Bollnow’s existential-hermeneutic thinking briefly, the core concepts, namely the existential concept encounter and the hermeneutic concept Bildung become valuable. Bollnow knits encounter and Bildung—concepts in an interpretation of the latter with the help of the former—in an existential attitude that builds up a whole that understands human formation as discontinuous and irregular in nature.

Martin Heidegger’s fundamental ontology was a necessary background for this Bollnow’s existential-hermeneutic philosophy of education. Bollnow agreed with Heidegger’s idea that man faces continuous, existential demands to make individual choices, choices influenced solely by the individual’s own volition at critical, existential moments of encountering that which is alien to self. Such choices form a pathway to authenticity (in German, Eigentlichkeit): they constitute an attempt to become an authentic being, a being-in-the-truth, as seen in a process of individuation. However, in Bollnow’s philosophy, existential truthfulness to self is unattainable in a manner resulting in a linear progression of human cultivation. Authenticity is present only for a moment; the same authenticity may appear again only on another, similar occasion. As a manner of being, inauthenticity means following or borrowing the will of the mass—a necessity if one wishes to live as part of a society and play by its rules. Only rare occasions of encounter or “life-crises” reveal the authentic nature of the individual and allow one to tear free from the inauthentic burden of common volition for a moment before that burden returns and one cloaks oneself in it.

Bollnow and other existential educational philosophers—namely, Theodor Ballauf and Eberhard Grisebach—have attempted to formulate existential ideas of
education (Wehner 2002: 21). Seen as a highly subjective, anarchistic philosophy, however, existentialism is difficult to imagine as providing a fruitful or sturdy basis for educational thinking or offering any hopeful understanding into the possibilities of human development. Armed with an understanding of pure existentialism inherited from the French movement, one quickly declares that no real possibility exists to implement existentialism in educational theory (ibid.: 116). In fact, Bollnow openly criticized the French existentialist movement for what he saw as its overly subjective nihilism and social pathology, for emotionally abandoning reason, and for taking despair as an unconditional premise to philosophize (see Bollnow 1966: 156–158, Bollnow 1955c). Bollnow also saw the French movement as potentially misinterpreting Heidegger’s fundamental ontology. Stressing the concept of hope over despair, Bollnow spoke of the “end of existentialism” (Bollnow 1955b).

Authentic existence expects radical freedom; existential philosophy allows little space for education, an intentional attempt to influence individual processes of Bildung. Existence requires freedom of choice and from institutions, including educational institutions. A person acting by the rules of an institution cannot pursue his or her own existential authenticity, an authenticity that is mainly subjective and not inter-subjective in nature. Humankind exists on two levels in Bollnow’s philosophy: firstly as an existential being and secondly as a historically contextualized, cultural being. Education can work on the historically contextualized level, but the level of a person’s existential being remains mainly untouched. From a strictly existential perspective therefore, education cannot affect the core of human existence in any fashion: it is presented in that sense as mostly a hopeless task (Bollnow 1959: 16).

For good reason, then, existentialism is a difficult chunk for pedagogy to swallow. The existential philosophical thesis—that a person can grasp the authenticity of existence only in the moment and cannot preserve it beyond the compass of the moment—seems to call into question the possibility of pedagogy in general, because pedagogy cannot exist without assumed lasting influence, or Bildung (Bollnow 1959: 14–16, Siljander 1988: 97). It seems understandable therefore that the two sides—pedagogy and existential philosophy—hardly knew how to deal with each other. Representatives of existential philosophy entertained no relationship with pedagogy; for pedagogy, existential philosophy remained a menacing foreign body (Bollnow 1966: 158). Criticism of the notions of progression or even of the concept of Bildung in pedagogy was not uncommon, however, especially after the Second World War (Bollnow 1966: 102–110). New,
pessimistic interpretations of education and formation could be nurtured instead of particularly positive views of everlasting influence (Siljander 1988: 96). Bollnow envisaged, through the possibility to re-evaluate Bildung, a possibility for German existentialism to function as a reflection theory or background philosophy for the formulation of a new existential-hermeneutic theory of education and formation. Subjective existence does not reveal itself fully or constantly in the mode of being-in-the-truth or of authenticity, he theorized; the cultivation of true understanding of oneself is possible only irregularly, on a discontinuous basis in which encounter plays a central role.

3.4.1 The Problem of Existentialism and Educability

In Bollnow’s existential notions of authentic subject, educability is already given, and is not to be allocated to the educatee by the educator. In an existentially subjective sense, the true self, the goal of the attempt toward authentic being, is in fact already potentially present in the subject and not to be articulated in a pedagogical interaction. Therefore, in a sense, everyone has the ability to gain that state of being through disruptive life-forces. Bildsamkeit, in the classical sense, as stated by Johann Friedrich Herbart, means that in order for one to be educated, one must assume or interpret a certain ability in order for this educative action to take place (Bollnow 1959: 39). The educator must assume the potentiality of a not-yet-human becoming a cultural human being (ibid.: 40). Without this assumption, education and human cultivation are logically impossible. If Bildsamkeit or educability—or rather the capability for education—is already given in education, is something interpreted by the educator from the educatee, what is it in particular that the educator interprets? The answer is concretizations of the ability to use one’s own rationality and the capability to practice one’s own free will separately of someone else’s views or without pressure from the mass; in other words, a higher self-awareness and ability for autonomous action and choices, namely authenticity, if interpreted in Heideggerian terms. If it is really the authentic qualities of the educatee that is translated through Bildsamkeit to the educator, however, it would seem that a functioning education presupposes the potentiality for authenticity in an individual, as authenticity can be seen as the aim of education. It would seem also that the potentiality of authentic being is a presupposition for the process of formation, or Bildung.
Educability is also seen as the adaptability, plasticity, or flexibility of the rationality of an individual. From this perspective, rationality is instrumental in nature. Bollnow’s formulation suggests something other than adaptability and flexibility as an instrument of change in the course of a life. He suggests changes for the worse as cultivation themselves. For Bollnow, education and development is not instrumental in nature, is not for something, be that employment, family life, or social activity. Bollnow’s discontinuous forms of education educate in something. The outcome is not an instrument for achievement; rather, the outcome changes the self. The regressive, re-definitive forces of existential moments—in other words, encounters with an “other” potentially hostile and harmful to us—make the developing person focus on self. Forced by an existential moment, the developing person reconfigures the self through an authentic act of personal volition, dismissing anything that seems built irrelevantly on the core of personhood or self, namely existence or Dasein. Discontinuous forms of education concern rationality itself, and concern facing the irrationality of otherness (see Koerrenz 2004).

3.4.2 Is there a Workaround? Subjectivity and the Phenomenal Nature of Existential Education

Bollnow has made the most explicit attempt to formulate an existential theory of education and formation. His theory is an implication of the postmetaphysics, in educational terms, that Nietzsche and Heidegger superimposed on the traditional views of pedagogy. The result is a collection of concepts, such as encounter, crisis and awakening, to promote the interpretation of the discontinuous aspects of human life as having educational function. This formulation has also been read, and not without reason, as an essentialistic neo-Kantian theory, maintaining most of the aspects of the nature of the process of formation, overcoming the problems existential aspects of Bollnow’s theory present in terms established in modern Bildung-theory. Both of these interpretations can be seen as ending in grave problems: the first one, explicitly intended by Bollnow to be combined in modular fashion with a hermeneutic (Geisteswissenschaftliche) theory of education, is brought to a halt by the conclusion that existential education is incompatible with the notion of “a lasting effect,” as promoted by the modern educational concept of educability (Bildsamkeit). Heidegger’s authentic being, an idea that is in great debt to Kierkegaard, an authority Heidegger scarcely refers to in Being and Time, is always already a complete way of being, and thus requires
no pedagogical influence from any outside force to be perfected. In fact, such an influence is in contradiction to the idea of authenticity, and instead can be seen as a description of the other way of a human being, namely inauthenticity, or *das Man*, everyman.

The other interpretation of existentialist educational theory, the neo-Kantian, offers nothing profoundly new to the theory of education and formation. Instead, for instance the concept of awakening can be shown to be just a logical conclusion from the Kantian way of formulating the transcendental unity of apperception, or as a derivation of disclosing Hegelian absolute rationality in human cultivation, that is, Bildung. Thus, both of these interpretations have been set aside in mainstream educational theory after a tumultuous change of thought in the German discourse of educational theory, as reflected in the *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik (Journal of Pedagogy)* around 1950. After that, existentialism was forgotten as an incompatible theory for the purposes of educational thinking, a curiosity on the periphery of a long tradition of Bildung-theory, floating in the steady current of the Western tradition of rationality from Plato to the Enlightenment and thus modernity. The only fruit that the combination of existential conceptions with hermeneutics has brought forth is a hermeneutic-phenomenological method for the purposes of philosophical-anthropological pedagogy, dealing with the question of being human as an open question to all the possible essentialistically theoretical definitions of a human being. This approach, however, has also gradually been replaced by the more coherent anthropological educational theory, which is boiled down to Bollnow’s formulation of philosophical-pedagogical anthropology.

I will attempt here, however, a more subjectivist, or perhaps phenomenological, interpretation that would overcome all the contradictions and conflicts that have been considered as the obstacles of existential pedagogy so far. One could claim this to be a Kierkegaardian reading of Bollnow’s discontinuous forms of education, and thus showing a new explicitly subjectivist foundation, clearly enough emphasized by Bollnow himself in his writings. Bollnow is close to the general ideas of existentialism, a tradition that itself suffers from a lack of coherence both in thought and in its authorities, but that clearly has influenced the psyche and thought of the Western individual since the beginning of the twentieth century. Kierkegaard himself has been considered as the “grandfather” of existentialism, and the main ideas and concepts defining existentialism can be traced back to his philosophy and theology.
Superimposing Bollnow’s discontinuous education on the subject of the process of Bildung, we come around to these concepts: encounter, crisis, and awakening, on Kierkegaard’s three existential levels of being. I will show the compatibility of the theories and thus evade the problems, which occur through the standard interpretation of existential pedagogy from the perspective of rationalistic theories of education and formation.

Existentially, Bildung can be seen to be differentiated according to how the individual is in the world via three categories from contemporary existential psychotherapy (see Yalom 1980, van Deurtzen-Smith 1988, Jacobssen 2008). These three categories are Umwelt, the objective and physical world, the world of things and ideas, the environment to which one must make a relation; Mitwelt, social dimension, the societal world, the world of laws and morals and how one relates to other people; and Eigenwelt, the subjective world, the psychological dimension, the relation to oneself, how we understand who we are. Bollnow’s existential ideas have been taken firmly as a background theory for therapeutic purposes in dealing with these world relations; the therapeutic is foremost in the existential understanding of Bildung, which lays its eggs in one’s own subjective world.

Existential Bildung is mostly concerned with the subjective dimension of one’s relation to oneself. Encounters with that which is alien to us cause us to redefine ourselves, but redefinition does not always alter how we “should” or “could” act in the societal world, or how the objective world is set out as being. Existential education and formation are about self-relation, which transcends in critical ways the historical formation of the subject. This does not mean that our existential and cultural sides remain distant and unknown to each other: the existential and cultural touch through those existential moments in which the existential surfaces form the cultural. However, contact occurs only momentarily. The existential in us dives back under the thick layer of the cultural and societal aspects of our manner of being, only to return in a different setting and moment of encounter. To describe Bildung through the metaphor of transference or transmission does not account for its existential aspects, therefore. A better depiction is of “peeling off” cultural layers that seem inauthentic and discordant with the truth about ourselves as existential beings. This “peeling off,” not in a Hegelian way of disclosing the absolute, but in a Heideggerian understanding of truth, is a fundamental idea in Bollnow’s formulations. His main concepts, encounter and awakening, rely on this notion of truth as disclosure. It is a phenomenal change in the understanding of oneself that a new situation offers to
the person. There, truths cannot be superimposed on the educated subject by force. Thus, Bollnow refers to admonition (Ermahnung) (Bollnow 1959: 67), as the foundational role of educating an existential subject. Thus, this means that education is seen from the viewpoint of the educated subject in a phenomenal way: how education appears to someone who is being educated but does not necessarily have or is not attuned to the rationality of the fundamental principles of education as intentional action. Education, in these terms, offers a description of a phenomenological kind, or a subjective conscious experience from the perspective that does not entail the interaction or the rationality of cultivation, transmission of culture etc., but merely the experience of being educated on a foundational, existential level of one’s way of being in the world.

I claim that through this reading, existential educational theory will seem as perhaps the only fruitful formulation of educational philosophy that we could boldly refer to as being anti-essentialistic in principle. This indicates that there is no objective, abstract, and rationalistic notion of human that is preconditioned or pre-inflicted to the subjective experience of being a human being. This existential level of description on education is what is offered in Bollnow’s philosophical-pedagogical anthropology, which follows the strictly categorical intuition described in Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology. Thus, intuition cannot be reduced to a Kantian transcendental unity of apperception, as that entails that a priori knowledge is attainable through deduction. Husserl’s method of knowledge on a categorical level is intuition, and Bollnow builds his anthropology, either consciously or unconsciously, on this notion. Thus, strictly speaking, Bollnow’s existential notions of education display a phenomenal description of education.

Descartes’ methodological scepticism argues, that the only thing we can be sure of is our conscious states. Kant continues in the cartesian spirit in his epistemology. When we experience things, they are experienced through our unquestionable unity of consciousness. They are laid before us as mental representations. But the link between these representations and the objects themselves is however questioned. We can never be sure, that what we’ve experienced is the real thing, that we are dealing with the objects themselves as they really are. Our dealing with things themselves is mediated through the aptitude of our metal powers which organise the experiences we have of the expected object of perception. Kant makes a distinction between a) our representations of things achieved through perceptions and mental preconditions to deal with those experiences, a set of conceptual tools, and b) the things themselves. Phenomenology differs from this view. One is still dealing with the
world as experienced though the apriori preconditions of our consciousness, but that these experienced things are the things themselves. I perceive a glass in front of me, I drink from it and I wash it for later use. This glass I am engaged with in my experienced life-world, is the real thing. Phenomenology thus, makes no distinction between the object of representation and the things themselves.

Bollnow presents us with a sense of education that can be best described as the subjective, phenomenally experienced form of education. It is in this sense that education takes a different form from the previously rendered notions of education. Education has been seen as cultivation of culture and as cultivation of a subject that is the outcome of this culture. What Bollnow describes in his discontinuous forms of education, is an educational reality that is best described as cultivation of consciousness, and the subject that inhabits this consciousness, as Sartre would say in his L'être et le néant (Being and Nothingness, 1943) and La transcendance de l’ego (Transcendence of the Ego, 1937). Bollnow’s educational reality is the experienced, mental reality, which is however engaged with the world. In the true phenomenological sense, this notion of education is however not a mere mental ‘representation’ of education. It does not mean that true education as object itself is different from this ‘representation’. This discontinuous form of education is education itself. It is in fact, that what one must do with the previous ‘real’ senses of education, is that one must bracket them. Education, say, in the Humboldtian sense is to be bracketed, it is in no way truer sense of education than that of Bollnow’s.

This may not be what Bollnow articulates best in his work, but I believe this is the core issue of his articulation of educational reality, which comes implicitly through from his treatment of phenomenological matters.
4 Applying Existential Educational Theory

Bollnow’s existential educational theory may be applied in various ways. In this chapter, have collected some fruitful points of departure for further theoretical developments on the issue. Treatments here are by no means definitive, but instead, illustrate the potentiality and possibilities the theoretical framework established so far in this book may realize. They are possible pathways and should be treated as such, but at the same time it should be noted that there could be many other themes, which may be as fruitful starting points as those mentioned here in this chapter.

4.1 Existential Encounter and facing the Other – On the Fundamentality of Pedagogical Relationship in Bollnow and Levinas

This sub-chapter evaluates the conceptual connection between Bollnow’s concept of encounter and Emmanuel Levinas’ (1906–1995) facing the other. I contend that the fundamental grounds for the pedagogical relationship between the conscious subject acting in his or her world and everything outside the realm of this subject and his or her understanding of the world can be established through existential notions of pedagogy, and through the ethical relationship, that gives a foundation to the pedagogical process. Theories of existentialism in education typically view education and existentialism as two separate realms of humanity; many theorists argue that education, though part of human life, is not linked to the “core essence” of human existence. I aim to demonstrate that education, by supporting the subjective changes of how one perceives oneself and the world, transcends the mere societal. In other words, education demands the existential. The social and existential should be seen not as separate realms of reality, but as intertwined and part of the same subjective life world.

Educational theory typically sets the societal first and neglects existential aspects of human life. I demonstrate—through connections between the thinking of Bollnow and Levinas—that the existential and ethical are not separate but are parts of the same structure. Therefore, the fundamental tension of pedagogy lies not in overcoming cultural and societal determination, but between the epistemic and ethical relations of the self and its world and everything outside the subjective, intentional, and understandable.
Why deal with Bollnow and Levinas together? Lotz (1999) has documented the two meeting in 1929 at the Davos Conference, where Martin Heidegger and Ernst Cassirer exchanged thoughts and criticism on each other. Speculation that Bollnow and Levinas were aware of each other’s work seems justified. Though separated in life by the Second World War—Levinas’ entire family was lost in the Holocaust and Bollnow was a member of the Nazi party—it does not follow that they differed substantially in their theoretical thinking. Both were familiar with Martin Buber’s dialogue philosophy and founded their thinking partly on Buber’s *I and Thou* (Buber 1972). For Bollnow, Buber’s theological notion of encounter was the starting point for his own formulations; for Levinas, Buber’s dialogical thinking was crucial to his fundamental ethics, to the concept of facing the other.

While both men are part of continental existential philosophy shortly after the Second World War, Levinas is undoubtedly more widely known. His ethics provide an interesting turn in philosophical focus after Martin Heidegger’s fundamental ontology. Opposing Heidegger’s formulations, Levinas establishes a view of ethics by which ethics are more fundamental than ontology. We are first and foremost ethical in our understanding of being and in our way of being with others, Levinas states. The relationship between me and the Other is an ethical relationship, and only after that may be considered in its ontological nature. Facing the Other as an entity distinguishable from self is in this manner a moral action. Where Levinas came to be known for his formulation of fundamental ethics founded on the theoretical basis of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, Bollnow influenced the existential theory of education and anthropology of education, a project continued by his students and their successors.

Both thinkers declined in popularity when critical theory, a new theoretical system, appeared in Frankfurt. Bollnow, though not widely popular outside the German-speaking world, is a significant part of the hermeneutic tradition in philosophy and educational theory. His work on existential educational ideas links to the modern hermeneutic tradition of theorizing education, a tradition that constructs its theoretical framework on the concept of the pedagogical relationship between the educator or parent and the educatee or child. Bollnow can be seen as one of the last noteworthy names in this hermeneutic tradition. After Bollnow, the development of critical theory changed the palette of European educational theorizing so that little room was left for existential theories in a hermeneutic pedagogical context. The pedagogical relationship came to be viewed as a relationship of suppression rather than emancipation (see Lockenvitz 2007).
Encounter, a concept central to Bollnow’s existential notions of hermeneutic philosophy of education, looks to establish the nature of education and the formation of a human being as discontinuous. The process of education requires encounters with entities—something or someone—different from what “I” consider myself to be. Moreover, Bollnow argues that encounters with that which is fundamentally different than self enables individual growth and development. Encounter causes one to reconfigure how one understands oneself and how that relates to the world: this, Bollnow contends, is learning and development itself.

Bollnow’s 1955 lecture Begegnung und Bildung (Encounter and Formation), which formulates existential encounter in the context of education, and a following essay published in the first issue of the Zeitschrift für Pädagogik (Journal of Pedagogy 1955), were the first systematic approaches to encounter to depart from dialectical theology. They also concentrated principally on the work of Martin Buber. At the same time, a phenomenological current in philosophical anthropology was visible, a current contributed by Romano Guardini’s Die Lebensalter: Ihre Ethische und Pädagogische Bedeutung (The Life Stages: Ethical and Educational Meaning) (Guardini 1959). Guardini contends that because remembering and foresight are different in different phases of life, the mode of being in a certain time and being authentically present in the world are relative to one’s life-phase (Guardini 1959: 12–13). He distinguishes between seven life-phases—“pre-natal,” “childhood,” “youth,” “young adulthood,” “mature adulthood,” “old age,” and “senility”—separated by critical turning points, namely “birth,” “puberty,” “practical experience,” “experiencing the limits,” “retirement,” and “helplessness.” He also describes each phase, acknowledging sub-phases such as small and large child, male and female, and so on (ibid.: 11). Guardini influenced the phenomenology of education by giving value to life crises in relation to the term authentic existence. Guardini—more than the dialogic theological approach presented by Buber— influenced Bollnow’s more secular view of the concept of encounter. Bollnow set out to clarify the concept of encounter, and in doing so adopted a view somewhat different from theological notions of the concept.

Those theological notions saw encounter between man and God as an unconditionally demanding relationship. Subsequently, the concept was adopted in a more general sense to characterize the process in which “I” collide with a reality that confronts “me” as something other, alien, and resistant to “my” natural life force, usually in an accidental and unexpected fashion (Bollnow 1966: 161). In other words, encounter means the total displacement of a person from his or
her natural course of life; this happens without the possibility for the person to consciously affect the encounter. Moreover, a displacement from normal, safe, habitable behavior raises existential demands for one to revaluate one’s perception of life and conceptualizations of life in general. This secularized version of the concept of encounter does not refer to the relationship between man and God, rather to the relationship of a subject to otherness, to anything distinguishable from the subject. Encounter may be an encounter with a person, with a work of art or philosophy, with the testimonies of religion, or perhaps even with a landscape (ibid.: 162).

Bollnow’s speech *Begegnung und Bildung* provoked extensive discussion. Derbolav presented the firmest objection, critiquing Bollnow’s conceptual approach mainly for over-simplifying or narrowing the multidimensional concept. Derbolav distinguished between three concepts of encounter: firstly, encounter as working through and assimilating the other precisely as the other; secondly, becoming the other in and through the other; and thirdly, encounter as becoming oneself through the other (Bollnow 1966: 162). Bollnow’s reaction to this criticism changed throughout the years. On his own contribution to the theme of encounter, he remarks that he recognized the phenomenon of encounter systematically for the first time in academic discourse. Bollnow also recognizes Derbolav’s contribution to freeing the concept from a one-sidedness for which dialogical theology is partly to blame, along with Bollnow himself. Bollnow’s general contribution is nonetheless crucial to pedagogical discussion of the subject, even today.

A special kind of encounter exists between individuals. According to Bollnow, encounter between individuals is educational in a broad sense and not as normative practice; it occurs in a pedagogical relationship between the educator and the educatee. This relationship may be understood as any interaction between two individuals resulting in a change in understanding, a change in the manner of being of at least one of the two individuals. This means that a pedagogical relationship is not only—or even mainly—an educational relationship in terms of intentional teaching of qualifications or usable practical skills for some exact purpose, but a relationship of human cultivation, or *Bildung*. This relationship causes changes in an individual’s relations to the world.

A suitable example of this type of encounter is an encounter between parent and child in which a child is being taught the meaning of rules and obedience, or a situation when a parent teaches a child a particular for the first time that changes his or her understanding of the world and his or her life in a drastic way—such as
in a case of the inevitability of death for all living things. These are harsh examples, but smaller, less drastic encounters occur throughout the pedagogical relationship between—for example—a parent and a child or a teacher and a pupil. What is the fundamental nature of this relationship? Pedagogical action is action between individuals; the form and the content of this action is dictated by the culture and society. Or does something occur in this pedagogical relationship that exceeds even the transition from a societal or cultural determination to a pedagogical determination (Mollenhauer 1983: 22–52, Benner 1994: 306–310)? The fundamental nature of this relationship is best grasped through the existential nature of its fundamental component, the encounter. This nature of encounter does not concern epistemic interests only, nor is it about the asymmetric assumption of pedagogical communication—for the reason that encounter exceeds and precedes communication; that is, if communication is understood in the manner of Jürgen Habermas’ theory of communicative action (Habermas 1973, McCarthy 1978). Encounter instead has a pivotal ethicality that does not constitute a power game between two individuals, but something else. Without this ethicality, encounter would not have the pedagogical significance it has. I will deal with the fundamentality of pedagogical and ethical encounter next.

4.1.1 Emmanuel Levinas and the Fundamentality of Ethics

To Emmanuel Levinas, the first philosophy is ethics. The concept of first philosophy dates to Aristotle, according to whom first philosophy is the philosophy that builds a foundation for all the other forms of philosophy. Aristotle’s metaphysics deal with the idea of first philosophy in terms of being in its most universal form, namely existing and specifically what exists and what its qualities are. To Aristotle, the first philosophy is ontology. Therefore, when Levinas claims ethics as the first philosophy, he opposes a long Western tradition of philosophy in which ethics have been seen as an extension or application of ontology, a more fundamental form of philosophy. Levinas contends that the presupposition of the philosophical understanding of being and existence is what he entitles the ethical relationship to otherness, specifically to other human beings (Levinas 1979: 33–37). This relationship is fundamentally unschematizable; it cannot even be taken into account by a philosophy aiming to understand questions of being and existence. To Levinas, ethics are not just one part of philosophical inquiry or a branch of practicing philosophy: they are a
Levinas’ philosophy stems from the thinking of Edmund Husserl and particularly from the thinking of Martin Heidegger, who influenced Bollnow’s thinking significantly as well. While Levinas leans heavily toward Husserl and Heidegger, his philosophy frees itself from these two authorities, similarly to Bollnow. In terms of Levinas’ thinking, both Husserl and Heidegger focus on a sense of otherness, on something other than what “I” am. However, as Husserl and Heidegger’s manner of seeing that otherness raises entirely new questions, these questions do not seem simple and unproblematic to Levinas. Husserl’s intentional consciousness focuses on otherness grasped as a meaning understood by the consciousness itself. Through this act of understanding, the otherness, the other, becomes less other; it loses its otherness and becomes the same. Similarly, Dasein focuses on a world that is always Dasein’s own world, the world Dasein acts in and upon. In a sense, no world can be seen to be without Dasein: being-in-the-world is a way of being-there, a way for Dasein to be. According to Levinas’ view, Husserl and Heidegger make up a continuous line of thought that defines the whole Western, Hellenistic tradition of philosophy. In Levinas’ philosophical thinking, the Same (le Même) always defines the Other (l’Autre), but the Other can never define the Same (Levinas 1979: 79, 1987: 151–159).

Levinas’ understanding of “the Same” refers to the experiencing subject and to the object or the world that the experiencing subject is experiencing. “The Other” refers to the otherness that differs from the subject, the otherness alien to the subject that the subject intends and pursues to assimilate as a part of his or her living world, a world understandable to the subject (Levinas 1987: 156–157). In other words, this otherness is not yet grasped by the subject, but the subject intends to take it under control as his or her own. In this sense, the history of western philosophy is defined by an attempt toward totality in which the Same controls everything and leaves nothing outside of itself. To break with this totality, one must change how one views the relationship toward the Other to an interpretation in which the Other remains in its otherness and maintains its otherness. For Levinas, opening oneself to the otherness—which remains out of reach of the totality of subjective consciousness—enables the non-intentional and non-cognitive encounter of another person, a concrete, personal other (autrui) (Hand 1989: 66–67, Pönni 1996: 13). Bollnow has similarly theorized about encounter, but a point of departure has happened in the background. The terms Levinas uses, “the Same”, “the Other”, infinity and totality, represent a break
from the primacy of epistemology in western thinking, whereas Bollnow’s
collection of the encounter with the irrational and strangeness is being
conducted by a background commitment to this very primacy. But the relationship
of the two thinkers is more complicated and more profoundly connected than
might seem at first.

It is also true that in the analyses of Heidegger, the relation of Dasein to
another person plays an important role. Dasein’s manner of being-in-the-world
depends in many ways on being-with-others (Mitsein). Dasein is not alone in its
world: its being-in-the-world is being with others. Even though Mitsein would
seem to allow room for a new kind of ethics, Heidegger never develops that
potential further. In fact, Heidegger states explicitly that his thinking should not
be interpreted ethically. He is above all interested in how Mitsein helps one to
understand Dasein’s own being and, through that understanding, the question of
the meaning of others in general. To Heidegger, the question of being is
fundamental, not the others. It is at this point that Levinas lays his critique on
Heidegger in Totalité et infini. Heidegger’s ontology stresses the fundamentality
of existence in relation to existents and by doing so defines the nature of
philosophy, and this nature is adopted by Bollnow to a significant degree,
especially in his pedagogical thinking. To Levinas, that ontology suppresses and
diminishes the relation to someone who exists behind the fundamentality of the
existence of the existents (Levinas 1987: 81–83). In other words, Levinas
criticizes Heidegger for placing the epistemic before the ethical. To Levinas, the
relationship to others comes first: ethics is the fundamental philosophy. Does this
separate Bollnow and Levinas for good? No, but it is in fact a very serious
starting point for comparing the two.

Published for the first time in Justifications de l’éthique, Levinas’ “Ethics as
first Philosophy” is a clear, powerful summary of the author’s methodical, radical
departure from Husserl’s transcendental idealism and Heidegger’s hermeneutics
toward the ethical question of the meaning of being as presented in a face-to-face
relation (Levinas 1984: 41–51). Beginning with the phenomenological legacy that
reveals knowledge as built on intentionality in contact with concrete reality.
Levinas quickly brings us to a point at which we must recognize the closed and
circular nature of self-conscious awareness. Intentionality reduces wisdom to an
idea of increasing self-consciousness in which anything non-identical is absorbed
by the identical. In this manner, self-consciousness affirms itself as absolute being.
For Levinas, however, the non-intentional subsists in duration itself, which cannot
be controlled by will. This non-intentionality is an unhappy consciousness that
exists without attributes or aims (Levinas 1996: 109–129). As a result of the passivity of this unhappy conscience, one affirms one’s being by having to respond to one’s right to be.

This response means that responsibility for the Other pre-exists any self-consciousness: from the beginning of any face-to-face relation, the question of being involves the right to be. This is what Levinas means when he mentions the face of the Other: I do not grasp the other to dominate; I respond instead to the face’s epiphany. As such, what is produced in a concrete form is infinity rather than totality. This relationship, metaphysical in nature, precedes any ontological programme. Prior to the state-of-mind in which one finds oneself, therefore, the infinite vigilance we display with regards to the other—suspending all notion of totality—is that which founds and justifies being as the very being of being. To contrast this, and to connect with it ultimately, Bollnow proposes implicitly, by connecting with Heideggerian ontology, that self-consciousness does not play such a huge role in the theorizing of the two-way constitution of the world and the existent thinking being. Both the world and human being are epistemologically constituted “being there” by a bipolar relation between each other. This is true also between people. This presents a possible foundational critique towards the primacy of ethical. In order for a self-conscious being to be responsible for other consciousnesses, this being must categorically accept an a priori possibility of these potential other consciousnesses of which this being is to be ethically responsible of. Bollnow concludes, that an existential encounter with another person is ultimately an encounter with the infinity of the irrational, or in another words, the possibility of never knowing the Other. Only after this realization, does the ethical responsibility for the other come into play. And it is in this very sense that pedagogical relationship becomes meaningfully constituted. I will elaborate these realizations further next, by first looking at Levinas’ train of though, and then articulating Bollnowian counter-argument and further elaboration to Levinasian foundation to ethical, pedagogical relationship.

35 Infinity means for Levinas the unreachable “distance” between the different subject-points of self-consciousnesses.
4.1.2 From the Logic of Otherness to the Foundation of Education

Axel Honneth’s ethics of recognition argue that the value and self-respect of a subject are preconditioned by how the developing subject is encountered and treated (Honneth 1996). According to Honneth, if the subject has a right to value self and to self-respect, the educator should act according to that right. In other words, the norms of education stand on the rights of the educatee. The ethics of Emmanuel Levinas display a different manner of understanding responsibility; notably, Levinas does not articulate his ethics in an educational context. Nonetheless, the notion of ethics as first philosophy may be implemented when questioning the fundamental nature of education. Levinas contends that the western philosophy of the subject—from Hellenistic philosophy to Descartes, from Husserl to Heidegger—defines the relationship of the “I” to the Other in such a way that the Other is always seen as subordinate to the “I.”

Levinas begins with Heidegger’s critique of Husserl’s phenomenology, specifically Heidegger’s contention that—somewhat unlike Husserl’s concept intentionality by which “I” constitutes the meaning of a person’s world—Dasein is being and acting in the world, but constituted by the world. However, while both Husserl and Heidegger begin their conceptual programmes with the primacy of the “I,” Levinas views the relationship between the self and the Other as asymmetric: the self is always subordinate to the Other. Moreover, Levinas argues that the subordination of the self to the Other is ethical, not epistemic. The subordination of the self to the Other is the responsibility for the Other, and the self becomes aware of that responsibility by articulating the Other’s presence. The face of the Other awakens the self to that responsibility; it questions the self and demands that the self—the “I”—open itself to the Other without ever reaching or “owning” otherness. The self chooses to welcome the Other, a choice that

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56 The relation between ethics and education may be approached in two ways. Firstly, educational action may be defined as relating to ethics through a normative relationship: ethics provides values and education puts them into practice. In this understanding, education becomes technology. Secondly, the relation between ethics and education may be understood via the question of the educator’s responsibility to the educatee, a question developed by asking what this responsibility consists of and how it is built. Education is commonly viewed—for instance—as an asymmetric power relation from which the educatee must be freed. Habermas argues that this process of escape might occur through universalistic, rational, ideal communication (Habermas 2003, 1973, McCarthy 1978: 272–291). Foucault, on the other hand, finds separation from power impossible, but contends that we may become conscious of the power game and power relations with which we are occupied (Uljens 2006). A consciousness of power relations allows us to play the “power game” so that it is diminished to a point at which it seems practically “powerless” (Foucault 1997).
encompasses both welcoming the Other and according it room. The Other remains distant at all times and fundamentally alien to the self.

Levinas defines the process of welcoming the order as constituting the Other. The Other presents itself as a demand without articulating any real demands on the self. Therefore, the presence of the Other should be seen as a gift rather than as a task or function of the Other. The face of the Other does not function as a pedagogical demand that the self act independently. Instead, the self is awakened to the choice and responsibility by articulating the Other. The subject is therefore originally and fundamentally free (Levinas 1979: 42), and without freedom, it is impossible to consider the subject as “waking up” to responsibility for the Other. In this idea of freedom lies the difficulty of Levinas’ philosophy. If the subject is free, it follows that the subject chooses whether to welcome the Other or not. It also follows that if the subject can make such a choice, he or she is also already competent to make an ethical decision and does not become responsible solely through the presence of the Other.

Evaluating the significance of Levinas on educational thinking is not an easy task. His philosophy might be interpreted as both analyzing the ethical responsibility and genesis of the temporal self as a Bildung process—a process of formation of the self but in relation to the Other—and as enforcing as a precondition a conscious competence of decision in the genesis of this original, fundamental, infinite responsibility. Levinas sees the temporal subject, or the self becoming a subject, as finding the temporality of the self. The search for temporality may be thought of as happening through encounters. Experience in its temporality is preconditioned by the fact that the subject already, before its consciousness, begins to deal with the Other (Pönni 1996: 16). At this point one may interpret Levinas as accepting both the fundamentality of intersubjectivity and the tradition of the philosophy of the subject as simultaneous preconditions (Uljens 2006). Levinas does appear therefore to articulate something of Bildsamkeit, the capability or potentiality for self-formation. Can his thinking be interpreted in terms of pedagogical action, however, in terms of the development of the empirical responsible self through teaching and instruction?

Michael Uljens (2006) offers several interpretations on the issue. Uljens views pedagogical action as a way to welcome the Other, to answer the need for responsibility that the Other in its “needlessness” demands of us. Notably, according to Levinas, the educator is reminded of his or her infinite responsibility to answer to the presence of the Other, and of how one should react and relate to the Other. However, this “reminding” already constitutes reflection on taking
responsibility and consciously attempting to understand being-in-the-world (Dasein), a concept that Levinas himself thematizes. Uljens attempts to understand the genesis of the original and fundamental responsibility and give grounds therefore to the idea of being-in-the-world. Modern pedagogical theory, particularly the Herbartian tradition, regards the morality of the subject commonly as a consequence of education. According to Herbart, moral freedom follows a reflected will, not conventions of reaction based on emotions. Teaching must focus the educatee’s attention on his or her will so as to justify it and cause the educatee to evaluate it—and its acceptability—against the will of others. The goal is the stable development of a conscious will in a changing world; education of the will educates one to evaluate one’s own judgment. The demands of the educator are essential, as is the ability to make judgments in relation to desires and responsibilities. One may perhaps state that, in Herbartian theory, while the Other is the precondition for the responsibility of the self, the self is the precondition for the development of moral thought in the Other, through the idea of demand in education.

In the theoretical tradition, which may be distilled to the concepts of recognition and demand, the Other is subordinate to the self, whereas in Levinas’ “philosophy of responsibility” the self is subordinate to the Other. However, the modern tradition, while self-centered, recognizes otherness in a twofold manner. The views of both Fichte and Herbart recognize the original freedom of the Other (Wulf 2002: 30). For Fichte, the freedom of the self and the freedom of the Other are reciprocally dependent: the self cannot assume its own freedom without the recognition of the freedom of the Other. The principle of Bildsamkeit also actualizes this recognition of the radical Other. We cannot comprehend where the pedagogical process leads, as it is dependent on the Other, which we cannot control. The otherness of the Other is present not only in its starting point, but in the fact that the otherness of the Other results from the Other’s own relation to itself and to the subject. Therefore, educational reality may be understood through the idea of the self-recognition of the principal otherness of the Other while seeing the self as the other to the Other. According to this understanding, the self is defined by how the Other understands the self of the self, which the Other cannot grasp fully. This conceptualization contends that, when the problem of Otherness is regarded from the perspective of the Bildung process or the process of formation, Levinas’ thinking may be accepted as the fundamental constitution of educational thinking. However, educational reality also contains, in itself, a
moment that forces the self to reflect upon itself and its otherness from the perspective of the Other.

4.1.3 Bollnow and the Fundamentality of Pedagogy

Bollnow’s concept of encounter seems to present Levinas’ notion of facing the Other. Encounter is a moment face-to-face with an entity other than the subject; a “being-touched-by-something” (Bollnow 1959, 1966). For Bollnow, this subject is clearly reminiscent of Husserl’s intentional, conscious subject, but it may also be articulated in Dasein’s terms as an active participant in his or her own world. Where then do these encounters lead the subject? In terms of Heidegger’s hermeneutics, the answer is toward authenticity. For Heidegger this authenticity is not ethical or normative. The subject cannot grasp authenticity fully; it may be glimpsed, however, in existential encounters with otherness, with a non-intentionality outside the subject’s own world—in German, Lebenswelt. Does this mean that existential moments such as encounter with the Other are outside the societal realm, a realm that is even for Heidegger ethical and normative in his concept of inauthenticity, or das Man?

Bollnow’s understanding of authenticity differs from that of Heidegger. Bollnow’s authenticity is an ethical notion, a normative concept not free of societal boundaries or of an ethical relation to the Other. In Bollnow’s anthropological pedagogy, the aim of the subjective process of Bildung or formation and the cultivation of the subject is authenticity or being-in-the-truth that does not transcend the Lebenswelt or societal realms. The so-called “true self” is in accord with the Gestalt of a person: one is in harmony with all aspects of human life, even the discontinuous or existential. For Bollnow, it seems that the foundation of Bildung, namely individual self-realization, development, and formation, resides in the Other, or specifically in the inter-subjective relation that redefines the subject toward a cultivation of the authentic in self and actions. This relationship through encounter seems cognitive at first. However, the concept of authenticity appears to have an ethnical quality for Bollnow that differs from Heidegger’s view of the constitution of authenticity. Interpreting Levinas’ first philosophy, the encounters of Bollnow can be seen therefore to possess an ethical nature. Moreover, the process of Bildung as a whole appears not merely “disrupted” by sudden existential moments; rather, existential aspects of life are a crucial part of the process of development, and sudden existential moments cannot be separated from the fabric of human self-realization. We return at this
point to Wilhelm von Humboldt’s classical concept of Bildung as self-realization that of itself seems possible also through the Other, through society (Bollnow 1966: 98).

Bollnow contends that the existential separation of societal institutions represents the inauthentic whereas existential moments present possibilities for pursuing authenticity, or in Bollnow’s terms, “the true self.” However, through the filter of Levinas’ ethics, existence and the societal individual cannot be separated. Both the Humboldtian cultivation of self through the face of society and existential moments of cultivation of the authentic are to be seen as part of the same process, whose aim is—again—Bollnow’s idea of true self. Bollnow’s self-realization is therefore intersubjective in nature, and that intersubjectivity presupposes human development, particularly when interpreted from the perspective of Levinas’ ethics.

Levinas separates himself from Heidegger’s thinking in his article, “Is Ontology Fundamental?” (Levinas 1996). Koerrenz (2004) insists on an interpretation according to which Bollnow was attracted to Heidegger’s fundamental ontology. However, how closely can Heidegger be seen influencing the basic nature of Bollnow’s thinking? It is clear that Bollnow’s philosophical contact with the so-called dialogical philosophy of Martin Buber and Romano Guardini, among others, is very strong. Without that contact, Bollnow would not have come to focus on the concept of encounter. Above all, it appears that Levinas’ concept of otherness as an ethical question is followed throughout by Bollnow’s conceptualizations of encounter and through his other existential pedagogical concepts—such as crisis. At first glance, Bollnow’s philosophy has the same epistemic nature as Heidegger’s philosophy. However, through the pedagogical aspects of this philosophy, the ethical emerges as the fundamental concern. Bollnow contends for instance that the concept of authenticity is ethical, that authenticity faces the otherness. Without authenticity, Bollnow argues, no human development or formation is possible. For Heidegger, authenticity does not have ethical connotations; rather, it penetrates the entire assumption of a person as a societal being. Nonetheless, inauthenticity for Heidegger seems to preserve the understanding of subject with his or her humanity lost—or das Man—in his full societal nature. Bollnow’s encounter may be a constitutive idea that plays out between the self and his or her world, but if encounter encapsulates an attempt to become the true self, it appears to become an ethical enterprise.

In summary, then, to what extent may we state that Bollnow’s encounter is ethical? Without understanding encounter as encounter with another human being,
Bollnow’s delineation of the term does not seem to entail any aspects other than the epistemic. Nothing ethical exists in encountering a hot cup of coffee with one’s brand-new trousers. However, when focusing on encounter with other human beings in a pedagogical relationship, the ethical clearly emerges. Bollnow does not, however, articulate the ethics of encounter clearly, if at all. For Bollnow, encounter seems intellectual in nature, not ethical. Nonetheless, one should regard the ethical as a fundamental presupposition to encounter as a structure between two cognizant human beings, and as culminating in Levinas’ philosophy of the Other.

At this point, another question appears pertinent. What is the ultimate aim of existential ideas of education; what do encounters cause? To Bollnow, encounters seem to cause the existential character of a person to overcome everything else in the Gestalt of a person; in other words, the person becomes more authentic and “true-to-self.” In a sense, the growth of the existential character of a person returns the person to a state more fundamental to the societal or cultural characteristics one gains throughout one’s cultural cultivation. The German understanding of Bildung is of human development resulting from a tension between individuality and culture. In this respect, Bildung is a “critical” concept: it criticizes the prevailing society and culture. Moreover, the core of this concept has remained more or less the same since the era of the Enlightenment. Bildung remains a conception of eventual progress. However, existentialist views of the nature of Bildung criticize and reformulate the fundamental nature of the process of Bildung itself in its entirety, questioning the idea of progress (Bollnow 1986: 243–252). While the existential has a pedagogical effect, it does not follow that the pedagogical has an existential effect. A pedagogical, ethical relationship can nonetheless be regarded as the fundamental structure of being there, and therefore as exceeding any epistemic reviews.

Ultimately, we must begin to ask the fundamental anthropological question; namely, what is it to be human? Bollnow raises this question above all others in his philosophical writings. When reviewing the fundamental conditions of the pedagogical relationship, one must begin with the human manner of being in the world. Heidegger and Bollnow contend that being in the world is not passive, but an active enterprise that discloses the essence of oneself. This disclosure occurs through facing the Other, by having encounters with those set apart from the self; therefore, any relationship causing encounters can be seen as pedagogical. This does not necessarily mean an educational relationship, but a relationship that produces a change in one’s way of being in the world and promotes one’s Bildung.
process. At this point, another pedagogical question is pertinent: when having an encounter in a pedagogical relationship, one must always ask the question, “must I educate?” By asking this question, the entire relationship presents itself as ethical.

4.1.4 Does the Ethical Really Come First?

The anthropology of education promoted fundamentally by Bollnow asks, “what is it to be human?” in a setting in which a human is understood as a cultural being and as a product of education (see Wulf 2002: 2, Bollnow 1974). Bollnow’s anthropology understands being human through a process of cultivation (Bildung) and through a cultivating pedagogical relationship. Being human—via this process and this relationship—exceeds a mere cultural link to the world and highlights an underlying existential basis. Moreover, not only the ethnical relation is existential in the nature of the pedagogical relationship. Through the existential understanding presented by Bollnow’s anthropology, the pedagogical appears both epistemic and ethical, but one can question whether it appears ethical above all.

Pedagogical responsibility has been a firm part of the discussion in the hermeneutic tradition of educational science. Bollnow’s existential line of thought, which focuses attention on the developing subject, seems to avoid dealing with pedagogical responsibility; however, as the logic of otherness shared by Levinas and Bollnow makes clear, this avoidance is artificial. In the logic of otherness, the fundamental ethical aspect stresses that an intellectual encounter between two people is fundamentally ethical in nature: one person takes responsibility for the other in order for the epistemic relationship to occur. To redefine oneself through the other, the other must take responsibility for the self, and the self must take responsibility for the other. The responsibility cannot be avoided: it comes with the encounter.

But, in order for someone to be responsible for the other in general, having never even known the other, it would require fundamental knowledge of the (ability of) general existence of the other in the first place. Thus, Levinas’ fundamentality of ethics is refutable for the benefit of the fundamentality of knowledge of things being in the world, and even so, this knowledge is necessarily Kantian a priori knowledge: if we can in principle find ourselves ethically responsible for the other, it requires a necessary presupposition of the a priori knowledge of the other in the first place. In my interpretation, this is the
view Bollnow subscribes to, and which makes a pedagogical relationship existentially meaningful.

4.2 On Cultural Relativism, Moral Relativism and Encountering the Other – Preliminary Critical Remarks on Cultural Relativism in Educational Philosophy

In this chapter, my intention is to critically examine cultural relativism, a theory addressing questions on values and knowledge in a multi-cultural setup. In a general sense, cultural relativism has been referred to as a theory of what should be valued and what is the relation of these different value-systems, when one is facing the pluralism of so-called “domestic” values, which differ from culture to culture. Through this understanding, the possibility of universal values is being questioned; there can be no values that transcend cultural setups. Cultural relativism is also, and perhaps more so, an epistemological theory of what is known, can be known, and how one comes to know it in culturally pluralistic setups, and especially, how these different “knowledges” in different cultures should be understood in relation to each other.

I will question the principles of moral relativism and critically examine cultural relativism by analyzing its fundamental epistemological claims, and by introducing the concept of encounter as an elaborate counter-argument. By “encounter” I will not mean the Levinasian “encountering the Other” as an ethical concept referring to the priority of ethical over epistemological, but, rather, I will describe an epistemological, existential encounter, as formulated by Bollnow.

The basis for cultural relativism is in the principle that an individual human’s beliefs and activities should be understood in terms of his or her own culture: ideas and conceptions are true only in one’s own cultural setup. This methodological and heuristic principle came to be understood in its popularized version rather as a doctrine than a method. Cultural relativism has often been misinterpreted to mean that all cultures are both separate and equal, and that all value systems are equally valid. Thus, people have often come to use the phrase "cultural relativism" erroneously to signify normative moral relativism; meaning that there is no universal moral standard by which to judge others, and therefore we ought to tolerate the behavior of others even when it runs counter to our personal or cultural moral standards. This conclusion can be thought to be unbearable. The generalized version of the principle of moral relativism, “one should not judge others,” is in itself already a normative ethical judgment, and
thus makes relativism questionable on a fundamental level. Also, such a moral principle seems to lack engagement with the world: if no value system can be critically assessed by another value system, this leads to a certain cultural/moral solipsism, isolation of thought, values, and action. Also, if one follows the principle of moral relativism in a situation, where another culture does not follow the same principle, but instead escalates to a destructive behavior toward one’s culture, one would not be morally justified to defend one’s own culture, for defense is a moral judgment toward the invading culture and its values. Omission, therefore, is to be seen as the only solution in all possible, even unbearable situations, to uphold moral relativism. This, ultimately, leads to total disengagement from the world.

Cultural relativism was introduced as an epistemological theory by anthropologist Franz Boas, who was influenced by the thought of Kant, Herder, and von Humboldt, and argued that one's culture may mediate and thus limit one's perceptions in less than obvious ways. Boas understood "culture" to include the totality of the mental and physical reactions and activities that characterize the behavior of the individuals comprising a social group collectively and individually in relation to their natural environment, to other groups, to members of the group itself, and of each individual to him- or herself (Boas 1963: 149). Therefore, knowledge is not only historically limited, but rather, the cultural environment mediates the way an individual comes to deal with knowledge. This understanding of culture confronts us with two problems: first, how to escape the unconscious bonds of one's own culture, which inevitably biases our perceptions of the world and reactions to it, and second, how to make sense of an unfamiliar culture. The answer to this is the relativistic attitude toward cultures and knowledge in these cultures. No essentially common structures of knowledge, or as German anthropologist Adolf Bastian put it, “Elementargedanken,” elemental ideas binding different cultures, can be found. Only, again by Bastian, “Volkergedanken,” folk ideas, can be found.

The epistemological deductions that led to the development of such cultural relativism have their origins in the German Enlightenment. The philosopher Immanuel Kant argued that human beings are not capable of direct, unmediated knowledge of the world. All of our experiences of the world are mediated through the human mind, which universally structures perceptions according to a priori concepts of time and space. Although Kant considered these mediating structures universal, his student Johann Gottfried Herder argued that human creativity, evidenced by the great variety in national cultures, revealed that human
experience was mediated not only by universal structures, but by particular cultural structures as well.

The philosopher and linguist, Wilhelm von Humboldt, called for an anthropology that would synthesize Kant and Herder's ideas. This anthropology stated the formation of a subject in a threefold relation with individuality, totality, and universality. The subject becomes individual through assimilating cultural values and knowledge as one's own in his or her own cultural setting. However, the individual also refines and redefines the culture by overcoming all that has been transferred to him or her. And thus, the individual is not only a part of the development of the totality of a culture, but also refines and redefines the universal conception of humanity.

Humboldt’s anthropology did not, therefore, develop a relativistic epistemology as such, but rather a dialogue between particular, historical knowledge and the Kantian universal notion. The circle is a circle everywhere, regardless of the culturally added meanings it has gained historically in different locations of human habitat, as a symbol of womb, fertility, femininity, soul, god, time, and so forth. No perfectly round circle can empirically be found in the world, and still, we all have an understanding of a perfectly round circle. And when we think of a circle, we do not think of any particular circle we have seen, but rather of a generalization, or an idea of a circle. And we recognize a circle in the world to be a circle by our perception of it, combined with a priori knowledge of a perfect circle that guides that perception. Kant himself saw the history of mankind being conducted by these certain universal structures he described. Still, Kant understood in his writings that the history we have may not, however, be the best of all possible histories. This shows a sophisticated understanding of dialogue between universality and historicality, often oversimplified by critics of Kant.

A very notable feature of the relativistic principles in both cultural relativism and moral relativism is the attempt to obscure the idea of “the Other.” Cultural relativism, in its most radical state, seems to lead us to epistemological solipsism: I can only say about my knowledge, I cannot say anything about anyone else’s knowledge, for saying is a judgment of the state of what is. No judgment on the progression of other cultures can be made, no judgment of “the other knowledge” can be made, even if the relativistic principle of equality of knowledge is being questioned. And in fact, this principle of epistemological equality as the foundation of relativism itself enables the possibility of the emergence of latent power hierarchies among cultures. Ultimately, therefore, in any case of relativism, no genuine dialogue can happen, no progress can happen.
Instead of such relativism, Bollnow suggests the concept of *encounter* as the basis for intercultural thinking. One is always facing something alien to oneself, and this facing the other is a presupposition of both personal and cultural cultivation. Encountering is not only a possibility to define the otherness, but also a way to better self-definition. This means a critical attitude toward the other *and* simultaneously toward oneself. One’s understanding of the other and even of oneself is never complete. The processes of individuation and acculturation are always open. There is always room for further self-cultivation and better self-definition. In this open-endedness, the otherness is a necessary regulative principle for thinking of a decent relationship between cultures.

So, when one meets something radically new, it is an epistemological encounter. One is facing something different and is conscious of the presence of something previously unknown to him or her. By studying this situation one has been previously unaware of or has never encountered before, one tries to understand the new unknown with one’s own knowledge, and therefore make sense of it to the best of one’s capabilities. One tries to recognize anything familiar in the new. A theoretical chance, that one’s knowledge and the knowledge of and from the otherness could happen to be uniform and similar, is being left here. One is trying to know more. And knowing is “saying,” which reveals the ultimate nature of knowing: it is a judgment of the object of knowing, of what is being said about something, what it is and what it isn’t, and what is its relation to other things. One is making judgments of the other from one’s own perspective, from the point of view of his or her knowledge, by trying to understand, to assess, and to engage oneself.

However, one’s knowledge may not be enough, and one is at the same time open to the possibility of new knowledge that the encounter may reveal from the Other or of the Other. One is to make judgments of the Other, but at the same time, one has to be open for judgments toward one’s own knowledge, toward oneself. For one’s own knowledge may be proven wrong by the encounter, as much as the knowledge the Other represents as well. Only through this kind of encounter can something fruitful happen, re-constitutions of mutual and separate knowledge. Why mutual? Because Bollnow’s re-constitution of one’s own knowledge in relation to otherness leaves open the possibility of mutual, and even universal, knowledge, without diminishing the value of the “local” knowledges.

However, Bollnow reminds us, even though these encounters can be the source of self-cultivation, they are also potentially hazardous. There is always the possibility that the critical examination of others may escalate into conflicts. This
reveals to us that for Bollnow, encounter is an existential concept, implying the ultimate difference and separateness of my and your existences. Everyone is not the same, but rather we are all fundamentally different. This is not in contradiction to Kantian universalism, at least for Bollnow. There is the possibility open for universal epistemological structures that connect our ways of knowing, but still we cannot change the fact that I am I and you are you, whether we are made of the same hydrocarbon compounds and both understand the concept of a perfectly round circle. One is fundamentally separated from everything else, and thus the otherness remains a necessary part of a dualism in one’s world. This dualism does not, however, mean that the exchange of knowledge or critical examination of common knowledge would be impossible. Bollnow is an existentialist, but also at the same time, and perhaps even more, a neo-Kantian.

In conclusion, Bollnow stresses that the Other, or otherness is a precondition to cultural and self-development. One is never complete, there are always some unknown aspects, strangeness, and otherness to the world. But this incompleteness is not an excuse to refuse to practice a critical attitude toward the Other, or the unknown. At the same time, because of this self-incompleteness one is necessitated by it to be critical toward oneself and to be open to critical assessments from others. This, therefore, to my understanding, could be one possible foundation for a fruitful and honest intercultural dialogue.

4.3 Fear as Unconcealment in Educative Processes

When one thinks of fear, what comes to mind is that it is a negative feeling. With fear, one easily associates threat. Threat may take many different forms: isolation, destruction of something essential, or even death. The negativity of fear is, however, not only dealing with the cause of fear, but the state of fear as well. Fear is a reaction to encounters that are disruptive of the powers of everyday life (Bollnow 1959: 51). Fear plays a reason-given role for the subject who is in fear: it is a reaction to threats, an inner state that changes one’s behavior to preserve oneself from these outer threats. What also is notable when it comes to fear is that it is easy to consider that when one is in fear, one is considered to remain in a lie about oneself. What is intuitively deduced is that fear indicates being in a lie: when one is fearful, he or she is not being true to all the capacities a person has, therefore is not being true to oneself. But when one is not fearful, one is able to live to the fullest of one’s capabilities.
But not all things that cause fear are necessarily destructive, even though they are considered threats at first. An encounter with something that a person has never encountered before can result in a new knowledge, even though the encounter may first cause anxiety and fear. Also, what we propose in this presentation is that fear is not to be understood in educational settings as a concealment of oneself under the inability to act or to understand to the fullest. But in fact what we propose is that fear is a possibility to unconcealment of truths that would not be accessible otherwise. Fear results in an initial assessment of what is encountered, and without this fear a necessary and inherent aspect of the encountered would remains unknown.

*Martin Heidegger’s truth as unconcealment means that there is not at the outset a situation of some sort of unknowing from which one then begins unrestrictedly to build knowledge or acquire truth. Rather, at the outset there is the situation of concealment and one must wrest the truth from it in an explicit exertion. One must tear the veil from truth.* (Bollnow 1974a: 8).

This holds both for the truth about external things and for the inner truthfulness of the man himself. Heidegger speaks of the “error” in which man always finds himself and which belongs to the inner constitution of his Dasein (Heidegger 1962 [1927], 1943: 23). Fear, thus, as a mode in Dasein’s being, seems to remind or reveal this inherent “error” or incapability in Dasein, in a being that is capable of asking questions about its own way of being, i.e., a human person.

*The real opposite, therefore, to truth is not lie. The lie is secondary: there must first be a truth before one can consciously hide it in a lie. The real opposite of truth is the deceptive appearance whose indeterminateness, like a thick fog, hides the true essence of things.* (Bollnow 1974: 9).

This deceptive appearance Heidegger allocates to the world of chatter and ambiguity: everything is understood in an approximate manner such that absolutely nothing is doubtful (Heidegger 1927, 1943). The path to truth, therefore, consists in conquering deceptive appearance. When a person is in fear, he does not rely his way of being to chatter and ambiguity, but is looking for sustainable grounds for his knowledge. Through knowledge of the true nature of things does one get relief from fear.

For Heidegger (1962 [1927]: 180), what fearing is can be categorized in three parts: a) to that which itself is considered *fearsome,* b) *fearing* as such, and c) *that about which* we fear. In the face of that which we fear, the “fearsome,” is in every
case something that we encounter within-the-world and that may have either readiness-to-hand, presence-at-hand, or Dasein-with as its kind of Being (ibid.: 180). Fearsome involves itself, and thus what we encounter is detrimental in character. What is encountered shows itself within a context of involvements. That which is detrimental, as something that threatens us, is not yet within striking distance, but it is coming close (ibid.: 181). In fearing as such, what we have characterized as threatening is freed and allowed to matter to us. Fear can look at the fearsome explicitly, and “make it clear” to itself (ibid.: 181). Fear therefore un conceals that which is feared, the fearsome.

However, the deceptive appearance is not untruth in the sense of it being consciously distorted. It is an unproblematic condition instead, in which man is estranged from the question about the real truth. “Truth is not gained in a neutral process of knowledge; it requires the cancellation of a deceptive but pacifying appearance. This process is, however, always a painful process, which touches a man in his inmost depth” (Bollnow 1957: 142, 1947: 9, Heidegger 1927: 34).

If truth can never begin from the beginning without presuppositions, if truth always consists in conquering a given intelligibility which is deceptive, if truth means lifting something out of concealment into the light of full visibility, then this means that the path to truth can never consist in building from the bottom up; rather, it must consist in the circular procedure known to us from the methodology of the humanities: it is where that the universally fruitful path to truth is revealed. (Bollnow 1974a: 9).

One should not therefore overlook the epistemic possibilities of fear as unconcealment either in educational processes, as those processes are first and foremost processes of understanding described by Bollnow as those processes, which follow the methodology of the humanities, the method of understanding. Bollnow uses the term encounter to characterize the process in which one experiences being struck by the resistance of the subject-matter when something is being given to us in our conscious experience. Bollnow limits the term to the ultimate, decisive experiences when “one is in the true sense ‘shaken’ and thrown off course by the power of the reality, which confronts oneself. The ‘wholly other’ confronts man, demanding and frightening” (Bollnow 1959: 54). While encounter with the overpowering defines the ultimate quality of the interpretive process in the humanities, it also permeates the details of its everyday work, such as in educational processes. “To a certain extent every truth is characterized by the fearful, encountered reality as something independent of the subject, and this is
what is meaningfully called objectivity, that is, verification in the object” (Bollnow 1974: 11).
5 Conclusion: Phenomenological Critique and Evaluation of Bollnow’s Pedagogical Project

The starting point for existential philosophical pedagogy has been considered to be its connection to hermeneutics (Tschamler 1983: 145). Both of the mentioned traditions assume a certain anthropocentrism, where the human being and his or her existence are at the focus point. This core thought is, however, shared in varied ways among existential philosophers. Such thinkers as Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, and Jean-Paul Sartre share a significant and drastic difference in their existential views, for example (Tschamler 1983: 145).

For this heterogeneity, the core intention of existential philosophy does not come across as relevant to pedagogy. Instead of influencing pedagogical theories directly, existential philosophy is more closely connected to developing anthropological theories, where the human being, the human condition is being brought to the center of focus. The human being in his or her historical-contextual structure of meanings and condition of self-actualization is brought to the array of pedagogical thinking, alongside with the constitution of the world through this human condition. This is exactly what is considered to be Bollnow’s focus point in his discontinuous forms of education.

According to Bollnow, the task of philosophical anthropology is to ask questions about the human being as a whole. Pedagogy takes these questions and transforms them to serve the educational reality. In the center, a question lies:

*I can appoint a specific phenomenon which I am interested in for a reason and which I am a necessary part of. This phenomenon is sensible and a necessary condition to humanity. How should the humanity and being human be understood in order to see this phenomenon as a reasonable and sensible, necessary part of the human condition?*37 (Bollnow 1969: 46).

In this question lies Bollnow’s view of pedagogy (Tschamler 1983: 146). It is not about seeing unique phenomena, but about seeing them as uniquely significant to the human condition as a whole. This directedness toward the whole as a whole of meaning (*Sinnganze*) is, however, only experienced if hermeneutics are understood as the interpretation of human Dasein (Tschamler 1983: 146). The methodical grounds for this science of interpretation are constituted on advancing

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37 "Wie muß das Ganze des Menschenseins beschaffen sein, damit ich in ihm diese bestimmte einzelne Erscheinung, für die ich mich aus irgendeinem Grunde interessiere, darin als sinnvolles und notwendiges Glied begreifen kann?" (Bollnow 1969: 46).
from the whole to its parts and from the distinctive parts to the whole (ibid.: 146). Bollnow’s method of description borrows from the “refined and sophisticated art of seeing of phenomenology” (Bollnow 1966: 139). I will return to this connection to phenomenology later in this closing chapter. It is extremely important to note this connection, for the performative powers of my own claims.

According to Bollnow, pedagogy is an anthropological science, as “anthropology is the key to every pedagogical system” (Bollnow 1965: 16). The history of pedagogy is therefore the history of human interpretation. However, science has dispersed to sub-fields, scattering the research of the human condition to subprojects with different intentions. Bollnow insists on philosophical anthropology, which is directed toward its object of research in a twofold manner: on the other hand, it should take the results of these special disciplines as its foundational knowledge, which, however, needs to be thought through again on the basis of philosophical practice. On the other hand, however, philosophical anthropology should be aimed at showing the immediate understanding of the life of a human being, where the immediate being of a human being is given in the experience of being. Through its claims, philosophical anthropology should always express its relationship to this life-reality, and this is established through the usage of a phenomenological method based on Husserl’s work. In the midst of this twofold task, hermeneutics is also a modular set of practices of understanding (Tschamler 1983: 147), showing the “circular motion of every relationship of the particular to the whole, and the whole to the particular” (Bollnow 1965: 58). What is to be stressed here is that Bollnow finds philosophical anthropology as a foundational science, which methodically constitutes itself in a modular fashion, based on the philosophical attitude of Husserl’s phenomenology and the circular motion of the practice of understanding in hermeneutics. This net between hermeneutics and life-philosophy is compatible with the view that pedagogy is an anthropological science, according to Tschamler (1983: 146) and Bollnow (1974b). However, as I hope I have pointed out in this work, even if Bollnow’s modular architecture of philosophical-pedagogical anthropology clears its way from the epistemological-methodical problems of connecting hermeneutics with life-philosophy and existentialism, it considers these problems as inexistent too harshly. What Bollnow does not consider is the fundamental methodical difference between Husserl’s phenomenology and hermeneutics, upon which the architecture collapses. Bollnow is keen on the hermeneutic notion of understanding, even understanding-better-than. This is also shared with Bollnow’s treatment of Heidegger’s existential-hermeneutic notion of truth as
unconcealment. However, Husserl’s phenomenology functions on a different logic. It does not try to understand its object of interest, like hermeneutics, nor does it try to explain the object like empirical-analytical science does. Phenomenology aims only at showing, describing, making categories of the objects of human natural attitude, human life condition. This makes the architecture in its methodical form most vulnerable to incompatibility issues.

Bollnow stands against the demands of empirical-analytical science by defining his concept of experience in a drastically different way than the concept has been defined in the empirical-analytical tradition. He demands a clear distinction between experience and *empiria*. In the concept of “empirical” Bollnow sees the attitude of active planning-in-advance coming through more powerfully than in the concept “experience” (*Erfahrung*), which resonates more powerfully with the passive flow of something involuntarily aimed at oneself, which has to be endured (Bollnow 1964: 236). Because of this distinction he does not talk of experiential sciences but empirical sciences. He does not deny the legitimation of empirical sciences, but sees them as being insignificant to the task of the pedagogy he has outlined here. The task of pedagogy is to examine the complete educational reality, including the intersubjective, subjective, and phenomenal, “thus making hermeneutics necessary” (Tschamler 1983: 252). However, the necessity of hermeneutics for the phenomenological method can be questioned, between the lines of argument set out in the previous paragraph.

In his philosophical-pedagogical anthropology, Bollnow ends up with the categorical analysis of educational reality, which is developed to different plains of “reality.” In this “system of phases,” each of the phases of educational reality is based on the previous phase, and presupposes those underlying planes of educational reality. Bollnow divides educational reality into five distinguishable planes/stages (Bollnow 1966: 140, 1974b, Tschamler 1983):

1. child rearing and care in both the physical and intellectual sense;
2. functional education, which involves an automatic and spontaneously occurring adaptation of society;
3. instruction and teaching through a planned out and regulated transmission of pieces of knowledge and skills;
4. *Bildung* in the sense of an organic shaping and of a closely connected plant-like growth from within; and
5. the “pedagogy which appeals” in the existential sense.
These levels of categorical description are defined so that each of them acts and can be organized according to their own propositional system. This order of propositional forms is related to scientific theories and hypothetical propositions of a specific science or subdiscipline. Bollnow does not give, however, a thorough account of why and how these levels have been structured and how they have come to be in such a relation to each other other than relating them to previous philosophical and pedagogical traditions. The levels are, however, for Bollnow something that have been categorically *deduced*, in contradiction to Husserlian epistemology (Tschamler 1983: 253).

Two of the last stages form a territory of continuous and discontinuous forms of education. The continuous forms of education are constituted by the traditional concept of Bildung, or Formation, which is based on organistic thinking. Bildung is described in this as the holistic and harmonious unfolding of human powers and capabilities (Bollnow 1959: 121). This articulation can be deduced, according to Bollnow, from the classical Humboldtian concept of Bildung. According to the concept, what is intrinsically conditioned in this notion is the experience of the Other. This Other is, however, not a stranger or unknown to the subject him- or herself, but alternatively something that in an objective sense is already known and from them formed in a lasting sense. Through Bildung, a person is able to find one’s existence again. The task of this continuous and lasting formation of a person is to unfold all the powers and capabilities of a person in a distinct whole, which is made possible by an authentic encounter (*Begegnung*) (ibid.: 124). The concept of encounter constitutes the core notion of the discontinuous or irregular forms of education. Through it, one is facing certain crises or critical moments through which the natural flow of everyday life is disrupted and one is set against the unconditional demands of the strange and irrational, unknown Other.

According to the discontinuous forms of education, human life is a series of decisive moments where one has to make authentic choices in order to be faithful to one’s own way of being. This view is clearly visible in the set of concepts Bollnow brings forth in his formulations: crisis (*Krise*), encounter (*Begegnung*), awakening (*Erweckung*), admonition (*Ermahnung*), guidance (*Beratung*), venture (*Wagnis*), and failure (*Scheitern*). The discontinuous forms of education do not mean that the other levels of description are worthless or invaluable. They are part of the same totality, what Bollnow refers to as the object of research in his formulation of philosophical-pedagogical anthropology as the totality of being human, which in the end is methodologically and essentially left as an open question.

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This categorical structure of educational reality shows that Bollnow takes a significant amount of influence from existential philosophy and phenomenology. He does not, however, leave unnoted the holistic context in which these aspects are to be seen. Bollnow’s structural notion of educational reality has to be seen as a phenomenological description of *a priori* structures. However, it is criticizable on which basis this structure is formed. As mentioned, Bollnow follows the Kantian notion of deduction, and thus separates himself from the framework of phenomenological theory to one of the modular theories within this framework, namely neo-Kantianism. Bollnow gives a significant amount of effort to making sure that the modular theories within the overall framework of philosophical-pedagogical anthropology, namely existential-phenomenology and hermeneutics, are set in a way that they would not contradict each other or the overall project.

This claim of mine obviously shows how close Bollnow’s project in the end is to neo-Kantianism, even more than Bollnow’s own description of his project would lead one to understand. Bollnow’s modular notion of epistemology is also peculiar, in the sense that it combines both existential views and neo-Kantianism in a way that does not contradict each other: this is possible through Bollnow’s use of Jaspers’ notion of existence.

However, in this dissertation, I have attempted to claim that Bollnow does not, however, remain faithful to the fullest capability to this overall framework methodology, namely phenomenology. Bollnow does not refer explicitly in a significant manner to Husserl, but it is notable from the overall framework that he is formulating the project in close connection to transcendental phenomenology, even though he makes a good amount of use of Heidegger’s existential hermeneutics. I claim that Bollnow’s structural view of educational reality should be understood as a phenomenological description of *a priori* categorical structures, which are formed on the basis of Husserl’s categorical intuition rather than the Kantian notion of deduction as a means of attaining transcendental unity of apperception (Cobb-Stevens 1990). Both the methods are philosophical methods, but the former does not contradict necessarily with the existential antessentialism of the being-in-truth in terms of disclosure.

In this study I’ve attempted to show, that Bollnow’s *unstetige formen der Erziehung*, discontinuous forms of education are not resulted from an interpretation of hermeneutic educational reality. In fact, one could not derive

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38 However, the possible role of neo-Kantianism in Bollnow’s theoretical construction hasn’t been dealt with in this study. This would perhaps provide a fruitful grounds for further research projects.
such a view from mere hermeneutics. I have claimed, instead, that these discontinuous forms are the products of phenomenological reduction. They are derived from the direct experience within consciousness, from the essence of what is experienced, from the very nature of what is it like to be in a process of becoming human\textsuperscript{39}. This view is the foundation to existential-phenomenological reading of pedagogy.

\textsuperscript{39} This thought can be captured in a somewhat similar fashion in the overall idea by Thomas Nagel (1974).
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