

# Education for maturity and responsibility

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*Adorno:* The demand for maturity and responsibility [*Mündigkeit*<sup>1</sup>] seems to be entirely natural in a democracy. To clarify this I should just like to refer to the start of Kant's very brief treatise entitled 'An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?'<sup>2</sup> He there defines 'tutelage' – immaturity and irresponsibility [*Unmündigkeit*] – and thus also by implication maturity and responsibility, by saying that this tutelage is one's own fault if it originates not in a lack of understanding, but rather in the lack of the resolution and courage to rely on oneself without the guidance of another. 'Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage.' This project of Kant's – which no one, even with the worst will in the world, can accuse of being unclear – seems to me to remain extraordinarily up-to-date. Democracy is founded on the education of each individual in political, social and moral awareness, as embodied in the institution of the representative vote. If this process is not to result in irrationality, then a prerequisite must be the capacity and courage of each individual to make full use of his reasoning power. If we do not keep hold of that then all talk of Kant's greatness becomes empty talk, lip-service; as if, for example, someone were to draw our attention to the Great Elector<sup>3</sup> while walking down the *Siegesallee*. If the concept of a German intellectual tradition is to be taken at all seriously, then this is what we must work against above all, and with the utmost energy.

*Becker:* It seems to me that we can show clearly in the whole education system we have had up till now in Germany that we really are not educated

for maturity. You can see that a certain inherent immaturity is already presupposed in it if you get clear in your mind the quite simple fact of the tripartite nature of our education system, divided into schools for so-called high-ability pupils, schools for so-called average-ability pupils, and an awful lot of schools for those who are clearly of low ability. I believe that we will not do justice to the whole question of maturity unless, by a process of systematic reflection, we can, right from the word go, get rid of the false concept of ability that conditions our education system. As many listeners may already know, we have recently published a volume of reports on behalf of the German *Bildungsrat*<sup>4</sup> entitled 'Ability and Learning'. Using 14 reports by psychologists and sociologists, we tried to make clear that ability in humans is not predetermined, but rather its development depends on the challenges to which the individual is exposed. That means that it is possible to 'en-able' someone. This opens up the possibility of inspiring in each individual 'learning through motivation', a special form of the development of maturity.

Of course this demands a school system which does not perpetuate class-specific inequalities in its very structure. Instead, by overcoming class-specific obstacles from early childhood on, we can practically facilitate the development towards maturity through motivation, based on offering the most widely varied educational opportunities possible. Put into current jargon, that does not mean maturity via comprehensive schools, but rather via the dismantling of our outmoded tripartite structure and offering in its place a highly differentiated, multi-faceted education at all levels, from pre-school through to continuing education, as a way to develop the maturity of the individual. A process made all the more important by the fact that this individual has to try to hang on to his sense of his own maturity in a world which seems to programme him, especially by telling him how to think.

*Adorno*: I should like to support the ideas which you have just put forward, from a completely different point of view, in relation to one of the most important educational problems in Germany. After all, the point of our conversation is less to argue about something where there is no absolute certainty we disagree, but more that we are touching on and exploring the same questions from our own respective areas of expertise to see what may emerge from that. It has been my experience, if I may say something entirely personal, that the influence of my own work, in as far as it has had any, truly has absolutely nothing to do with individual ability, intelligence and similar categories, but rather with several strokes of good fortune, on which I can in no way pride myself and to which I contributed nothing at all. These strokes of luck meant I was not exposed in my own education to the control mechanisms of science, as would normally be the case. As a result, I still dare to think unguarded thoughts, which people are usually 'cured' of by the all-powerful control

mechanism, known as ‘the university’, above all during their time as *Assistenten*,<sup>5</sup> as the post is called. What this reveals is that knowledge itself, in the widest range of fields, becomes so castrated and sterilized by these control mechanisms, that the very thing it frowns on is what it needs in order even to survive. If this is true then it would dismantle the fetish we make of ability, which is of course still very closely connected with the old romantic belief in genius. This also accords with the findings of psychodynamic theory that ability is not due in any way to natural predisposition, although in saying that we would perhaps also have to concede a residual element of heredity – we must definitely not be dogmatic about this – but rather that ability, as we see it, for example, in relation to speech, to articulateness, and all such things, is pre-eminently a function of social conditions, so that even the basic requirements for the maturity on which a free society depends are governed by the lack of freedom in society.

*Becker*: I don’t really want to go over the ground again now in every detail. But it must be said that everything which Basil Bernstein, for example, established about the linguistic development of the small child in the lower classes, and which Oevermann then developed further for us in Germany, shows quite clearly that the conditions for lifelong tutelage can be set from the very start of socialization. Incidentally, I just listened with some amusement to your autobiographical remarks, because it may not just be chance that today we are both involved in the academic world, although we don’t have a typical *curriculum vitae* within that world, and are for that very reason in a position to discuss the concept of *Mündigkeit*.

*Adorno*: Yes, but really the remarkable thing about the problem of maturity, if we actually centre it on issues of teaching and learning, is that even in the literature on education – and this really is something truly frightening and very German – we find no sign of that uncompromising support for education for maturity, which we should be able to take for granted.

With some friendly assistance, I have taken a little look at the literature on education which deals with the issue of maturity. And in the place of maturity we find there a concept of authority, of commitment, or whatever other name these hideosities are given, which is decorated and veiled by existential-ontological arguments which sabotage the idea of maturity. In so doing they work, not just implicitly but quite openly, against the basic conditions required for a democracy. I am of the opinion that these things should at last be demystified, and we should show the extent to which, in Germany, even a question like that of maturity, which apparently belongs so clearly to the realm of *Geist*,<sup>6</sup> may still be left in a state of antiquated mustiness.

For example, in a book by Ernst Lichtenstein, called ‘Education, Authority, Responsibility – Towards a Pedagogical Ethic’, which – if my information

is correct – exerted a very major influence especially in the discussion of the nature of compulsory education in the *Volksschule*,<sup>7</sup> there is a passage which reads: ‘Are we not plagued precisely by the fact of a massive and rapid decay in the feeling for authority, respect, trust, belief in a valid order, readiness for commitment in all areas of life, so that sometimes any kind of positive, constructive, fundamental education seems endangered.’ I do not want to dwell at all on the phrases which Lichtenstein offers here. The point of interest which arises, and the one which maybe our listeners should note too, is that he is not here speaking, for example, about commitment on the basis of a position whose objective truth we accept or have any reason to accept, as was the case, for instance, in medieval Thomism, based on the contemporary understanding of *Geist*; but rather that here, for some reason or other, order and commitment are being advocated and seen as good in themselves, with a total lack of concern about how things stand with regard to autonomy, and therefore to maturity. Lichtenstein adds, 30 or 40 pages later: ‘What exactly does “autonomy” mean? Literally legitimacy based on the individual’s own self. This in itself is confusing.’ Confusing for whom, we might ask? ‘Because unavoidably attached to this concept is the idea of Reason, sovereign and with absolute law-giving power, which would therefore lay claim to being the only yardstick in education too. This premise of the “autonomous person” is for the Christian unrealizable.’ Well, Kant was a Christian after all. ‘But historical reflection showed too that the idea of a pedagogy based on pure Reason is simply false. Educational goals are never posited by thought, never rationally conclusive, generally valid.’ I believe that the concept of absolute reason can certainly be criticized philosophically, as can the illusion that the world is the product of ‘absolute spirit’. However, it would be wrong to use that argument to claim that there is any way of defining what should really be done, real praxis, other than by thinking, and in fact by unwavering and insistent thinking. And the idea that here philosophical criticism of idealism is simply amalgamated with the denunciation of thought I find to be an atrocious sophism which should be exposed in order finally to put a spark to all this antiquated mustiness, which may even blow it apart.

*Becker*: I don’t know for certain whether the mustiness can be blown apart, but . . .

*Adorno*: I think it is possible chemically. But whether it’s possible socially, I don’t know.

*Becker*: The question does now extend significantly beyond Germany and German thinking. A few years ago the good news spread through the American press that Caroline Kennedy was becoming ‘a more and more well-adapted child’. That the achievement of adaptation should count as the main

success of education in early childhood is a fact which should make us stop and think, because that kind of pedagogy has developed in a society which is thoroughly isolated from the effects of German idealism.

*Adorno:* More shaped by Darwinism than by Heidegger. But the results are very similar.

*Becker:* That's exactly what I was driving at. I believe that, strictly speaking, the question of maturity is a global problem. I visited schools in the Soviet Union over the course of several weeks. What I found enormously interesting was to see the way in which, in a country which long ago implemented changes in the relations of production, there has been remarkably little change in the non-education of children for maturity, and that those schools continue to be dominated by a completely authoritarian teaching style. It really is an interesting phenomenon to see how education for tutelage still rules the world, although the age of enlightenment has been under way for some time, and although you could certainly find not only in Kant's works but also in Karl Marx's the odd criticism of this education for tutelage.

Now in the quotation which you gave earlier, I was struck by something special: that was the conclusion that the concept of the autonomous human being is unrealizable for the Christian. It is, after all, interesting to note that the whole Christian reform movement from the Confessional Church<sup>8</sup> to the Council has revolved increasingly around the so-called responsible [*mündig*] Christian. We certainly cannot include the theological problems here. However, it is definitely possible to ascertain that in both Churches there exists today a theological interpretation which takes the idea of maturity and responsibility just as seriously as it is taken by Kant, and therefore calls massively into question the traditional structure of both Churches.

*Adorno:* That certainly is the case. Kant's own short text, by talking explicitly about it, testifies to the fact that within the Church of his own day there did exist possibilities for maturity as he envisaged it. But you are certainly right in this respect: the problem of maturity is not just a German problem, but rather an international one. And, one might add, one which reaches out far beyond the boundaries of different political systems. As in America, where it really is the case that over this issue two different demands clash head on: on the one hand, that of a powerful individualism, which will not be dictated to in any way, on the other, the idea of adaptation, derived from Darwinism via Spencer, precisely that 'adjustment' which, as you know, was virtually a magic word some 20 to 30 years ago in America, and which both binds and cuts back the very independence which in the same breath it proclaims. Which is, by the way, a paradox which runs through the entire history of the middle classes. The fact that ideologies with natures as different as the

pragmatic vulgar ideology in America and Heidegger's philosophy in Germany can agree over precisely the same issue, namely the glorification of heteronomy, is a confirmation of the theory of ideologies, to the extent that even mental constructs which contradict one another violently in terms of content, can then also suddenly agree in their social context, that is, through the very thing which they wish to support or defend. Just as generally there is a quite alarming correspondence between Western positivism and what still remains of metaphysics in Germany. Really these correspondences amount to a declaration of the bankruptcy of philosophy itself.

*Becker:* Incidentally, something else occurred to me in the passage you read out. Is it actually correct that we should juxtapose this concept of autonomy with that of authority? Should we not think about this relationship in rather a different way?

*Adorno:* I believe anyway that the whole concept of authority has been set up as some kind of mischief. As the person in the end largely responsible for the 'Authoritarian Personality' – not, I hasten to add, for the phenomenon dealt with there – I think I have a certain right to point this out. In the first place, authority is itself an essentially social-psychological concept, which we cannot automatically assume captures social reality itself. Another factor which must not simply be brushed aside lightly is that something like expert authority also exists – that is the fact that one person really understands more about a subject than another. The point is that the concept of authority gains its standing within the social context in which it comes up.

But I'd like to add a more specific thought, as you have just raised the issue of authority; it has to do with the socialization process in early childhood, and therefore, I'd almost say, with the point at which social, educational and psychological categories intersect. The way in which the individual – psychologically speaking – becomes an autonomous, and therefore mature, responsible person, is not simply to kick against every kind of authority. Empirical research in America such as that carried out by my late colleague, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, has shown precisely the opposite, namely that so-called good children were more likely, as adults, to become autonomous people, prepared to take a stand; unlike more refractory children, who later, as adults, immediately met up with their teachers in the pub and began to talk big just like them. But in fact the process – described by Freud as normal development – is that children generally identify with a father figure, that is, with an authority, internalize it, make it their own, and then learn in a very painful process, which is never successful without leaving scars, that the father, the father figure, does not match the ego-ideal that they have learned from him. In so doing, they detach themselves from it, and only in this way do they ever become mature, responsible people. As a causal factor, the factor

of authority is, in my opinion, the precondition for the whole process of maturation [*Mündigwerden*]. However, this stage, in turn, should not be glorified and clung to at any price, because if this is done, if the process stops there, it results not only in psychological deformity, but also – and we can see the evidence for this everywhere all about us – in daily examples of immaturity, in the sense that people are made or kept unnaturally stupid.

*Becker*: I believe it is important that we emphasize, at this point, that of course the process of detachment from this authority is necessary; however, that it is also impossible to find one's identity without an encounter with authority. This has a whole series of very complex and apparently contradictory consequences for the organization of our education system. It means that there can be no meaningful schools without teachers but that, on the other hand, teachers must be clear in their own minds that their main task consists of making themselves superfluous. The reason this juxtaposition is so difficult is that there is a danger in the current controversy that teachers will conduct themselves in an authoritarian way and students will just turn their backs on them. As a result, to put it another way, this whole process as you have just outlined it is, in practice, destroyed by taking up false, entrenched positions. The outcome is then a pseudo-maturity [*Scheinmündigkeit*] among students, which results in superstition and in dependency on all kinds of manipulations – the one impossible outcome is maturity.

*Adorno*: I agree with that entirely. Perhaps we could look at the problem of tutelage today from an entirely different angle, which may be much less well known. Generally speaking, society is said, in Riesman's terms, to be 'other directed', heteronomous, and we simply assume by this, as Kant also argues very similarly in that paper, that people, more or less without offering any resistance, will swallow anything that's put in front of them and rammed down their throats by the powers that be, as if the way things just happen to be is the way they have to be.

I said previously that the mechanisms of identification and detachment never occur without leaving scars. I would also like to emphasize the applicability of this notion to the concept of identification itself. Our listeners will certainly all have heard something about the concept of role, which – following Merton and especially since Talcott Parsons – plays such an important part in present-day sociology. However, it is not generally perceived that in the very concept of role itself, which is after all taken from the theatre, the individual's non-identity with himself is maintained. This means that when role is made into a social yardstick, what is also perpetuated is the idea that people are not themselves the people they just are, that they are therefore without identity. I find the normative use of the concept of role revolting, and we must fight it with every available form of criticism. But from a

phenomenological point of view, that is, as a description of what's actually happening, there is something to it. My strong impression is that the super-ego identifications that most people make and cannot escape are at the same time always botched and incomplete. That, for instance, countless individuals internalize an oppressive, brutal and overpowering father, but without being able to work through this identification, just because the resistances to it are so powerful. And precisely because the identification fails for them, because there are innumerable adults who are actually only playing the adult which they have never quite become, what they have to do where possible is to overact and to exaggerate their identification with such models, puffing themselves up, talking endlessly in adult tones, merely in order to make credible to themselves and to others the role in which they have in fact failed. I believe that it is precisely this mechanism – which leads to tutelage – that we find among certain intellectuals.

*Becker:* Not only among intellectuals, I'd say. If we were to apply the concept of role across the whole spectrum of society, we would come across quite similar phenomena at all levels of society. Take, for example, the situation in a business where it's just when they are *not* satisfied with their circumstances that individual workers, apprentices or employees play roles, roles which come from all kinds of possible contexts. If we draw the conclusions which derive from seeing maturity as essential to the entire work process, I believe that we shall very quickly recognize the need for very radical changes to our whole vocational training system. I'd like here to refer again to the *Bildungsrat* and to the recently published recommendations for apprenticeships. The fact that in Germany we still have apprenticeships which – if we leave aside a few exceptional large firms – really originate in a pre-industrial age, actually leads to our perpetuating forms of immaturity and to a type of education in the workplace, the whole so-called 'on the job training',<sup>9</sup> which results for all practical purposes in a form of drill. At least this is very often the case. For example, in the current round of retraining from agriculture and mining, etc., which involves large numbers of people, we face the difficulty that while we do indeed offer certain forms of technical education, we continually fail with this offering, because we are not capable of bringing about, at the same time, self-motivated, independent behaviour, or at least we do not do so. For instance, a man who has hitherto done only book-keeping and has now been made redundant by appropriate machinery and is to be prepared for work, perhaps as a programmer, needs not only to learn what he has to do there, but also to be provided with what you might call a new framework in which to orientate himself, a new way of thinking. For this, it might be necessary for him, say, to learn a foreign language, although he might not need it at all, because by doing so a new horizon of experience can emerge for him. This combination of specific job training with



the development of a new mental framework is something which is still virtually non-existent in our whole system of vocational education and training. There are two reasons why I regard this as so important: first, because, in a world like today's, the call for maturity can almost act as a smoke-screen obscuring the fact that we are kept immature, and second, because it is very important to translate the possibility of maturity into concrete realities in education and training.

*Adorno:* Yes, that is certainly a factor which has a role to play. Without claiming to be able to give a reliable judgement about this particular field, I'd like nonetheless to bring in the idea that maturity requires a certain strength of the ego, of ego-bonding, as it is developed in the model of the middle-class individual. The possibility of adapting oneself to constantly changing situations, rather than developing a strong ego, a possibility which is often demanded today and which is – I admit – unavoidable, matches, in a really most problematic way, if I'm not mistaken, the phenomena of ego-weakness, which we know from psychology. I would like to leave a question open here, at least as a problem to be worked on: whether people who no longer have any clear idea of their own job or vocation, and who are therefore said to be able to adapt themselves and get used to a new area of work with relative ease, whether this really promotes maturity for them, or whether, by losing their heads on the sports field on Sundays, they do not actually prove themselves to be immature.

*Becker:* I don't think I need to draw your attention to the dialectic of enlightenment, rather I'd just like to say that of course the same process which makes maturity possible through emancipation can in turn also put at risk the results of that emancipation, if we take into account ego-weakness or the threat of ego-weakness.

*Adorno:* Yes, that danger is extraordinarily serious. I believe that here we really come to the critical point of our whole discussion. In Kant's paper, with which I started, the answer he gives to the question 'Do we live in an enlightened age?' is "No", but we do live in an age of enlightenment'. By this he defines maturity, with logical consistency, not as static but as dynamic, as in a state of becoming not being. Whether today we can still say in the same way that we live in an age of enlightenment must be questionable in the light of the enormous pressure which is exerted on people simply through the way the external world is arranged and also through the methodical control of the whole inner world by the culture industry in its widest sense. If we don't want to use the notion of *Mündigkeit* in an empty way ourselves, and just as shallowly as those others talk of commitment in relation to maturity, then we really must start by recognizing the enormous difficulties blocking maturity

in the very way our world is arranged. And I think we really ought to say something about this.

The underlying cause is, of course, the contradiction in our society that the social arrangements under which we live remain heteronomous, which means that no individual in today's society can, on their own, determine the nature of their own existence; that as long as this remains the case, society will continue to mould people through a vast number of different structures and processes, in such a way that, living within this heteronomous framework, they swallow and accept everything, without its true nature even being available to their consciousnesses. This does, of course, extend into our institutions, into discussion of political education and other such questions. The real problem of maturity today is whether and how one can work against this – and who this 'one' is, is a major question in its own right too.

*Becker:* It seems to me that in this context one of the most important tasks for school improvement is the dissolution of an education system based on a fixed canon, and the replacement of this canon by a very varied curriculum; that is, a school – to use the technical terms – with widely differentiated choice and extensive inner differentiation within the individual subjects. All the 'playing around with maturity' as it has occurred in such things as the recent types of student council will gain a whole new status if students themselves, as individuals or as members of a group, are involved in defining their own curriculum and selecting their own syllabus and are, in this way, not only better motivated to learn but are also accustomed to events in school being the result of their own decisions and not just predetermined. I am quite clear in my own mind that this system could, of course, also be set up as a mere façade; and, if it were used in this way, could in reality be made into one element of a technocratic selection process. I do not believe, however, that it has to be used in that way. It seems to me that in the often abstruse manifestations of student opposition today, there is a healthy core, which we should – I don't want to say 'take over' – but which we should give the right answer to, by giving those students who want to participate the chance to participate directly in practical decisions about their own school careers.

*Adorno:* My impression is that however much we should strive for all that, it does remain rather too much within the framework of the institution, particularly of the school. At the risk of being accused by you of philosophizing, which, of course, is just what I do, I would say that the way in which maturity could be put into concrete form today – and it is a form which can in no way be taken for granted because it would still have to be established everywhere, really in every single aspect of our lives – that the only real concrete form of maturity would consist of those few people who are of a mind to do so working with all their energies towards making education an

education for protest and for resistance. I could imagine, for example, that the senior classes of secondary schools could be taken as a group to commercially produced films, and that the students could quite simply be shown what a con is being presented, how hypocritical it all is. In a similar way, they could be immunized against certain morning broadcasts, such as still exist on the radio, where on Sunday mornings cheerful music is played to them, as though we live in a so-called 'ideal world' – a dreadful thought it must be said. Or a magazine could be read with them, and they could be shown how, by having their own inner needs and desires exploited, they are being taken for a ride. Or a music teacher, who for once has not been brought up on a diet of 'music for young people',<sup>10</sup> could analyse pop music with them and show them why a hit or, if you like, any piece of 'music for young people', considered objectively, is so incomparably worse than a movement from a Mozart or Beethoven quartet or a really authentic piece of modern music. So that, to begin with, all we try to do is simply to open people's minds to the fact that they are constantly being deceived, because the mechanism of tutelage has been raised to the status of a universal *mundus vult decipi*: the world wants to be deceived. Making everyone aware of these connections could perhaps be achieved in the spirit of an immanent critique, because there can be no normal democracy which could afford to be explicitly against an enlightenment of this kind. Although I can well imagine how a lobby from something like the film industry would immediately lodge a complaint in Bonn if such a thing were attempted, and they would explain that what we wanted to do was, on the one hand, to push one-sided ideological propaganda and, on the other, to damage the economic interests of the film industry, which are so very important for the German balance of payments. All of these things would have to be included in any genuine process for the promotion of maturity.

*Becker*: Which raises a question we still just do not know the answer to, as to whether films which have been exposed in this way might not exert a considerable power of attraction, for subterranean motives which are well known to you, so that for its part the film industry might be more inclined to consider this process of exposure as a form of advertising than to want to get rid of it from the start.

*Adorno*: But it is possible to knock something in young people's eyes. Every age produces the expressions which are appropriate to it. And many of these expressions, such as 'schmaltz' or 'knocking something' are very good. I would advocate most strongly this kind of education for 'knocking things down'.

*Becker*: I'd like to touch on one other question which continually disturbs

me in this connection. Let us imagine, for a moment, that we did everything which we have just been discussing here. We would have a differentiated school system in which the breadth of the curriculum offered would generate a corresponding level of motivation to learn. A system which would not be selective, based on false concepts of ability, but rather encouraging, through such things as compensatory education, designed to overcome social handicaps. And in this way we might be able to clarify certain basic prerequisites for maturity and we would do similar things in vocational training. Even if all this were to happen, it is still an open question whether the individual, enlightened and made critically aware in this manner, might not still in his behaviour be open to manipulation and control in some way, and despite his apparent maturity might not be autonomous in the sense in which it was originally conceived in the early days of the Enlightenment. I certainly don't believe that this is an objection to everything that we have been discussing. But it is, as it were, a warning to beware of the optimism which could possibly arise out of it. All I want to say is that this mature, responsible individual still runs the constant risk of becoming immature and irresponsible – you suggested as much yourself earlier.

*Adorno*: I would like to emphasize this risk most strongly. And that is for a quite simple reason. Not only does society, as it is presently structured, keep people immature but every serious attempt to shift it – I'm avoiding the word 'educate' deliberately – to shift it towards maturity is immediately met with indescribable resistances, and all the evil in the world at once finds its most eloquent advocates, who will prove to you that the very thing you are attempting to achieve has either long been overtaken or is utopian or is no longer relevant. What I'd really like to leave our listeners to think about is a particular phenomenon, which is all too often pushed aside in the enthusiasm which accompanies the desire to change things – that is, that any serious attempts to intervene in order to alter our world in any specific area immediately come up against the overwhelming force of inertia in the prevailing situation, and seem condemned to impotence. Anyone who wishes to bring about change can probably only do so at all, by turning that very impotence, and their own impotence, into an active ingredient in their own thinking and maybe in their own actions too.

## NOTES

- 1 *Mündigkeit*: here and in the title, we have translated *Mündigkeit* as 'maturity and responsibility'. The use of two words in English for one in German highlights the fact that there is no exact equivalent in English for the noun *Mündigkeit* or for its opposite *Unmündigkeit*, or for the adjectives *mündig* and *unmündig*. However,

for ease of reading, we have for the most part used ‘maturity’ on its own in the main body of the text (and ‘immaturity’, ‘mature’, etc.), even though it does not capture the full sense of *Mündigkeit*. The *Collins German Dictionary* gives for *mündig* ‘of age’, adding the ‘figurative’ meanings ‘mature, responsible’. As an example of its usage, the semi-technical phrase *mündig werden* is included, meaning ‘to come of age, to reach or attain one’s majority’. In its etymology, *mündig* is related to the Latin *manus* (= hand), reflecting the ancient, traditional idea of the hand offered for protection. Thus, *mündig* contains the idea of receiving protection or guardianship, a *Vormund* (= guardian) being ‘the legal representative for those who are still minors (under age) or declared by law to be incapable of managing their own affairs’: *vor* (= before) + *manus* (from the Duden *Herkunftswörterbuch*). See also the Introduction in this issue: ‘Maturity and Education, Citizenship and Enlightenment’ [4].

- 2 Translated in Lewis Henry Beck (ed. and tr.), *Kant on History* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Press, 1963).
- 3 The Great Elector (*der Große Kurfürst*): Frederick William (1620–88) of Brandenburg. This image, which has the flavour of a popular saying, is an invention of Adorno’s to indicate something blindingly obvious and yet so familiar, so much a part of the fabric of everyday life, that it is invisible. The *Siegesallee* (Victory Avenue), formerly a thoroughfare in central Berlin, with its broad carriageway and stately trees, led to the Victory Column (subsequently moved) and was constructed to commemorate the achievements of the *Kurfürst*. To point him out is therefore to miss the point.
- 4 *Bildungsrat*: Der Deutsche Bildungsrat was set up in 1965 (and disbanded in 1975) by the Federal Government and its Länder to plan educational provision nationally, and comprised experts and members of different educational and political groupings. They published 61 reports and 15 recommendations that often integrated heterogeneous politico-educational concepts. Frequently their suggestions were used as models for the work of the Bund-Länder-Kommission für Bildungsplanung und Forschung. The *Bildungsrat* exercised considerable influence, and the whole educational policy of the early 1970s was founded on their ‘*Strukturplan für das Bildungswesen*’.
- 5 *Assistent*: a junior academic, who works as an assistant lecturer in a university or research institute. *Assistenten* often receive a practical introduction into a complete field of study or a career area, and the qualification for future independent work, e.g. as a university teacher. Such posts are limited to three years.
- 6 *Geist*: there is no single translation for the word *Geist*, which can mean ‘mind’, ‘intellect’, or ‘spirit’. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* includes an entry for *Geist*, giving its meanings as ‘mind; reason; intellect’ (but omitting the idea of ‘spirit’ – cf. English ‘ghost’, which has the same derivation). A quotation from Matthew Arnold is included, which reinforces the fact that this one word contains a range of meanings unavailable to us in English: ‘I do exhort . . . England to get . . . “Geist”; to search and not rest till it sees things more as they really are’ (cf. *Zeitgeist*, which has also been taken into English).
- 7 *Volksschule*: There is no direct equivalent in English, the nearest being, perhaps, the ‘elementary school’, a school providing basic primary and secondary education. Since the end of the 18th century the term *Volksschule* has been closely

connected with the demand for equal education for all classes, and with compulsory school attendance for all children. Only from 1920 onwards, however, did four years of primary school become obligatory.

- 8 Confessional Church: *die Bekennende Kirche* – an alliance of Protestant Christians after 1933 to oppose the suppression of the Church by the Nazis and their Protestant '*Reichskirche*'.
- 9 'on the job training': the early editions of the interview contain at this point, in inverted commas, the English phrase 'on the dope training'. We can only assume that the expression had been misunderstood either by Becker or by the editor. However, it could reveal, through a kind of Freudian slip, Becker's view of such training as the opium of the work-force – producing 'dopes'!
- 10 'music for young people': this is a very free translation of the German *die Jugendmusikbewegung*. The *Jugendmusikbewegung* (literally, 'youth music movement'; or *Singbewegung*, 'singing movement') was part of the German Youth Movement around the turn of the century. It was a neo-romantic movement mainly supported by parents of middle-class youth. They were looking for a new life, rooted in truth and simplicity, which gave folk dance and folk song political significance.