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From Germany with Love: Circulating *Formale Bildung* in the Early Nineteenth Century

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ABSTRACT

The article traces the circulation of the pedagogical notion of *formale Bildung* from Germany to Sweden during the first decades of the nineteenth century. At that time, educators and scholars agreed that the goal of secondary education was not to provide practical knowledge, but to train the mind and cultivate moral character. This notion, formulated in full by Friedrich Gedike in the late eighteenth century, proved resilient and shaped Swedish educational policies for much of the century. Yet Gedike was never identified as the source, not by his contemporaries nor by later historians. Moreover, the questions of how, when and why this knowledge appeared in Sweden and how it became part of a general consensus have never been explored. In this essay, it is argued that an important node of circulation between Germany and Sweden was influential educator Carl Ulric Broocman and that the concept of circulation offers a means of revealing previously obscured patterns of knowledge.

So I accepted the tenets of these old school teachers that urged not the quantity of knowledge, but its thoroughness; so I followed, by my conviction, the teachings of a new didactic program that placed formal education of the soul as the main goal of youth education.

—Carl Ulric Broocman (1809)¹

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the arguably most widely circulated tenet of the humanities in Scandinavia was the theory of formal education and its intrinsic value.² With few exceptions, Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian scholars and schoolmen,

1. “Minne af Carl Ulric Broocman,” 68. All translations are my own.

2. Hammar, “Conflict, Consensus, and Circulation,” 31.

inspired by German doctrine, supported the notion that the goal of education was to cultivate the mind by developing what was referred to as the “faculties of the soul.”³ This consensus permeated public, academic, and political discourse, and the validity of the theory was accepted by scholars in the humanities and natural scientists alike.⁴ While mostly forgotten today, this principle had a profound and lasting impact on the conditions for scholarly knowledge, ordering both lower and secondary education. Despite its prominence at the time, however, the historical trajectory of this concept remains obscure, neglected in the annals of the history of the humanities.

As pointed out by several scholars in recent years, it is worthwhile to look upon the study of knowledge circulation as an opportunity to reevaluate disproven, ridiculed, forgotten, and overlooked forms of knowledge, thereby illuminating tensions that fuel the ebb and flow of hierarchies of knowledge.⁵ Historical patterns previously hidden can thereby be uncovered.⁶ Formal education is a prominent case in point. There is no firm narrative in place regarding the origins of this pedagogical theory, the identity of the historical agents who enabled the idea to flourish, or the circumstances that allowed it to become essentially uncontested.⁷ Formal education seems like a universal idea, old and new at the same time, that spontaneously exploded into the sphere of education at the turn of the century without tangible moorings in historical actors or institutions.⁸ However, while there are no simple answers readily available in the scholarly literature, there are traces in the historical sources that, as I attempt to demonstrate, can connect the dots into an illuminating pattern. In this article, I argue that the circulation of this knowledge from Germany to Sweden hinged on two people of contemporary and subsequent renown who later came to lose some of their historiographical luster. First, I point to the influence of German philologist, minister, and educational reformer Friedrich Gedike as a main wellspring of the theory itself and,

3. For Sweden, see Sjöstrand, *Den formella bildningens och medövningens*, 36–53. For Denmark, see Møller Jørgensen, *Humanistisk videnskab*. For Norway, see Dahl, *Klassisisme og realisme*.

4. Hammar, “Conflict among Geniuses.” See in general Phillips, *Acolytes of Nature*; Daum, *Wissenschaftspopularisierung im 19. Jahrhundert*, 51–64. See also Nilehn, *Nyhumanism och medborgarfostran*, 69–71; and Riis Larsen, *Naturvidenskab og dannelse*.

5. For recent arguments, see Marchand, “How Much Knowledge Is Worth Knowing?,” 137; and Dupré and Somsen, “The History of Knowledge and the Future of Knowledge Societies,” 191. See also Daston, “History of Science and the History of Knowledge,” 145.

6. See Lässig, “The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda,” 40, 45.

7. See Jacob, “*Lieux de savoir*,” 92; Lässig, “The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda,” 38, 43.

8. See Lehmsick, *Die Theorie der formalen Bildung*, 6.

second, to Swedish educator Carl Ulric Broocman as a key catalyst for its circulation across national borders and into Sweden.

TRACING FORMALE BILDUNG

The notion of formal education—like all things scientific and pedagogical at the time—came to Sweden from Germany. Around the turn of the century, *formale Bildung*, or formal education, became the pedagogical logic enabling classical studies to maintain their supremacy in school curriculums for the better part of the nineteenth century.⁹ By 1800, few if any German *Schulmänner* or academics disputed the dogma that the main aim of any pedagogical effort should be *formale Bildung*.¹⁰ The theory, in short, was based on the belief that the innate powers (*Kräfte*) residing in a person should be harmoniously developed to achieve the coveted realization of the individual's potential.¹¹ These separate faculties, which included mind, memory, wit, ingenuity, imagination, judgment, and taste, ought to be trained just like one's muscles. The origins of the idea of mental faculties itself are rather complex and stretch back to antiquity. Philosophical discussions on the topic can be found in the writings of Locke and Leibnitz. Further fuel was offered by Christian Wolf, who emphasized mathematical learning, in turn subsequently developed by Nicolai Tetens and Immanuel Kant. Here, we focus on the role played by Friedrich Gedike, who proposed that rigorous training in classical languages was the best tool for achieving the goal of harmonious self-cultivation.

An enigmatic figure, Friedrich Gedike was one of the most influential educators of late eighteenth-century Germany.¹² After becoming a rector of the Friedrichwerdisches Gymnasium in Berlin in 1779, he was soon included in the circle of ministers tasked with supervising the educational reform of the Prussian state. The apex of his meteoric rise within the ranks of the German educational system was his inclusion in the newly formed Oberschulkollegium, where he was one of the principal agents of the Prussian examination form known as *Abitur*. Despite Gedike's influence at the time, his legacy in the history of education seems to have faded significantly during the twentieth

9. I have previously argued that the consensus regarding formal education was circulated as part of the overall conflict over the educational reforms in Sweden and its neighboring countries. See Hammar, "Conflict, Consensus, and Circulation."

10. Bommel, *Classical Humanism and the Challenge of Modernity*, 124–25, 155; Lehmensick, *Die Theorie der formalen Bildung*, 3.

11. For an overview, see, e.g., La Vopa, *Grace, Talent, and Merit*, 264–72.

12. On Gedike, see, e.g., Scholtz, "Friedrich Gedike"; and Tosch, *Friedrich Gedike (1754–1803) und das moderne Gymnasium*. For Gedike's influence, see also Clark, *Academic Charisma*, esp. chaps. 4 and 10.

century, only to be somewhat rediscovered in recent years.¹³ Moreover, he is only occasionally recognized as one of the men behind the theory of formal education.¹⁴

One reason for this could be that Gedike's role with regard to the formation and circulation of *formale Bildung* as a concept is somewhat elusive. First of all, he was not the only one among his contemporaries to believe in the link between studying classical languages and mental development. Moreover, his contribution to the discourse of formal education, albeit valuable as discussed below, was neither radically framed nor neatly packaged. Instead, it was presented incrementally over the course of two decades, consequently making it hard to gauge what kind of recognition he was awarded by his contemporaries. Nevertheless, the idea of formal education, especially in the characteristic form later found unchallenged in both Germany and Scandinavia, seems to have crystalized with Gedike.¹⁵ Perhaps one would do best to follow Erich Lehmensick in arguing that Gedike was the first to put forward "a pedagogical theory of the formal usefulness of language study."¹⁶ More recently, Bas van Bommel has convincingly pointed to Gedike's role with regard to *formale Bildung*, arguing that with this concept, he "attempted to redefine the importance of classical education in a contemporary fashion," something that "proved extremely successful."¹⁷

Formale Bildung was a response to increasing demands for practical and vocational education voiced with increasing fervor in the late eighteenth century. In a series of texts published in the early 1780s, Gedike first outlined his perspective on the value of a classical education. Crucially, he emphasized the importance of pursuing formal usefulness (*formellen Nutzen*) rather than material aims, the former understood as "stimulation, guiding and cultivation" (*Bildung*) of the various *Seelenfähigkeiten*, or faculties of the soul.¹⁸ While not denying such formal usefulness in other subjects, Gedike believed that the study of classical languages surpassed any other method in its ability to "awaken and spur" dormant *Geisteskräfte* (mental powers) and that *humanistischen Studien* thus constituted the best preparation for the pursuit of *Wissenschaft*.¹⁹

Piece by piece, this notion gained clarity and prominence through circulation in the public sphere. In 1783, Gedike responded to critique leveled by his colleague Johann

13. Fritsch, "Friedrich Gedike als Lateindidaktiker," 166–67.

14. See, however, Fritsch, "Zweck und Methode"; Hüllen et al., *Sprachen der Bildung*, 63. Cf. Sjöstrand, *Den formella bildningens och medövningens*, 41. See also Leonhardt, *Latin*, 268.

15. Fritsch, "Friedrich Gedike als Lateindidaktiker," 46.

16. "eine pädagogische Theorie des formellen Nutzens des Sprachunterrichts" (Lehmensick, *Die Theorie der formalen Bildung*, 11).

17. Bommel, *Classical Humanism*, 124.

18. Gedike, *Praktischer Beitrag*, 62 (also published in *Gesammelte Schulschriften*, 118).

19. Gedike, *Gesammelte Schulschriften*, 23–24.

Stuve regarding the usefulness of classical education in either life or industry by emphasizing that Latin exercises had a “psychological usefulness for the education of youth” and, by the virtue of being difficult, strengthened the student’s judgment (*Urteilkraft*).²⁰ Later, in 1799, he wrote about *formellen Nutzen*, arguing that far from sufficient care was given to the *Gymnastik der Seele*—the gymnastics of the soul—and strengthening mental capacity (*Fassungskraft*).²¹ The main goal of education, he stipulated, was the sharpening of the *Geisteskräfte*. What was arguably his most defined effort was published in 1802, asserting that there was no faculty of the soul (*Seelenkraft*) that was not nourished by classical studies, be it mind (*Verstand*), wit (*Witz*), ingenuity (*Scharfsinn*), imagination (*Einbildungskraft*), memory (*Gedächtnis*), judgment (*Beurteilungskraft*), or taste (*Geschmack*). Furthermore, Gedike maintained that the study of the moral vigor of Romans and Greeks helped cultivate (*gebildet*) the student’s character.²² The full outline of what was to become Gedike’s contribution took two decades to materialize.

Although presented in fragments in different forms of publication, in agreement and disagreement with peers and over a long period, Gedike tenaciously rejuvenated the notion for German purposes, providing an effective argument for classicists in the battle over the curriculum. While the notion of formal education was in some shape or form shared even by philanthropists such as Johann Bernhard Basedow and Christian Gotthilf Salzmann, Gedike’s insistence that classical education was a valuable form of formal education—which only later became the *most* valuable—proved significant for the ensuing debates. This was Gedike’s great trick: presenting an unassuming yet radically effective argument. As pointed out by Bas van Bommel, by recasting utility (*Nutzen*) as formal rather than as material/practical, Gedike found a way of defending classical education that left its critics powerless, while essentially reaffirming its traditional form and creed.²³

However, here lies also a historiographical conundrum. If Gedike was indeed the principal agent behind the concept of *formale Bildung* (at least in its characteristic form) and the principle that a humanities education spearheaded by Latin was the best way for achieving this, he has seldom been recognized as such in either German or Swedish scholarship or, more importantly for present purposes, by Scandinavian schoolmen at the time.²⁴ In the first half of the nineteenth century, one finds astonishing agreement over both formal education in principle and—at a slightly more varying

20. “psychologischen Nutzen für die Ausbildung der Jugend” (*ibid.*, 314).

21. Gedike, *Über den Begriff einer Bürgerschule*, 5.

22. Gedike, *Über den Begriff einer gelehrten Schule*, 18, and see also 32.

23. Bommel, *Classical Humanism*, 125. Cf. Fritsch, “Gedike als Lateindidaktier,” 59.

24. Leonhardt, *Latin*, 268.

degree—Latin as the premier tool for accomplishing it. Moreover, the same schoolmen professed their belief in the moral value of studying Greek and Roman texts, just as Gedike had stipulated. But his apostles did not overtly identify Gedike as their source of inspiration. Likewise, a great many Swedish studies have repeated the history of the theory of formal education, whereas few—if any—of these even mention Gedike by name. Thus, we are left with the question of how Gedike’s ideas reached the Swedish academic sphere without his name being imprinted on them.

A GERMAN FROM SWEDEN

His premature death denied me the pleasure of finding him in Berlin, and thereby gaining much pedagogical cultivation from a man, whose writings have always bore the stamp of the most intellectual Pedagogue.

—Carl Ulric Broocman (1805)²⁵

Clearly, the notion of *formale Bildung* did circulate, bearing several distinguishing features of Gedike’s arguments. It is equally obvious that there is no clear pattern to this transfer. How then can our chosen perspective on the circulation of knowledge aid us in solving this riddle? While origin and originality have traditionally been a main focus for historians, we can begin by approaching circulation as a method for tracing nonlinear or erratic patterns of knowledge movement.²⁶ For instance, if Gedike had written the first distinct treatise on *formale Bildung*, he would likely have been credited with the notion, both by his contemporaries and by later scholars. Perhaps, recognition would have been awarded had he adopted a more aggressive and divergent public stance. We might also suspect that if a canonical authority had attributed formal education to him, his name would have been linked to it. However, what interests us here is the lack of such solid chains of knowledge transfer. I argue that this oblique circulation can be traced by approaching one name in particular as a catalyst.

Carl Ulric Broocman is a curious *Wissensaktör* in the annals of the Swedish history of education. His stellar career was cut short by illness and subsequent death at the age of twenty-nine, but his influence lingered on for the decades after his demise. At that time of his death, he was rector of the German National Lyceum in Stockholm but had also become an influential and frequent voice in the national debates over the Swedish school system, where his crowning achievement was that he had been called to the

25. Broocman, *Relation om Tyskland i pedagogiskt hänseende*, reprinted in Wiberg, *Carl Ulric Broocman*, 529.

26. See Secord, “Knowledge in Transit,” 662; Bod et al., “A New Field,” 2.

state-appointed committee tasked with reforming it. Prior to this, he had launched the first pedagogical scientific journal in Sweden and introduced several pedagogical theories to his peers.²⁷

Broocman made his mark with his travels around Germany, which were made possible by a royal stipend for the purpose of cataloging the German school system. In 1804 and 1805, his itinerary included Berlin, Halle, Leipzig, Zürich, Frankfurt, Göttingen, Braunschweig, and Hamburg, where he met with such famous pedagogues as Niemeyer, Campe, Salzmann, and Pestalozzi. Upon completing his travels, Broocman submitted his official report (*Relation om Tyskland i pedagogiskt hänseende*) to the governing body, Kanslersgillet. A few years later, he completed a monograph for the general public, published in two parts in 1807 and 1808 (*Berättelse om Tysklands Undervisningsverk ifrån dess äldsta intill närvarande tider*). Referred to as “Sweden’s first general history of education,” this is an influential account still considered useful by twentieth-century scholars for its thorough depiction of Germany’s pedagogical debates.²⁸

On November 14, 1804, Carl Ulric Broocman wrote a letter to his benefactor in which he in detail described his month-long visit to Berlin. He lamented having missed the opportunity to meet Friedrich Gedike in person. Nevertheless, the young Swedish educator remarked that his good spirit still lingered over his institution to the enduring benefit of society.²⁹ In fact, when Broocman arrived in Berlin on September 30, 1804, Gedike had been dead for well over a year, but his seminar at the Berlinisch-Köllnisches Gymnasium was nonetheless of main interest to Broocman. His familiarity with the German educator was substantial, as he had presented a Swedish translation of Gedike’s textbook *Französisches Lesebuch für Anfänger* just two years prior. As a student, he had also familiarized himself with Gedike through a book called *Einige Gedanken über deutsche Sprach- und Stilübungen*, published by Gedike in 1793.³⁰ As compensation for having missed the opportunity to meet him in person, Broocman purchased two works where Gedike outlined his pedagogical theories, *Aristoteles und Basedow* and *Gesammelte Schulschriften*.³¹ Especially the latter was a main source for Gedike’s doctrines regarding *formale Bildung*. Broocman also demonstrated a profound knowledge of Gedike and the debate he was engaged in, referencing his defense of Latin as a response to the above-mentioned criticism launched by Stuve in 1783.

27. I discuss Broocman in more detail in Hammar, “Immortal Beloved.”

28. Sjöstrand, *Pedagogikens historia*, 122. For the influence of Broocman’s monograph, see Neidenmark, *Pedagogiska imperativ och sociala nätverk*, 117.

29. Letter to Gjörwell (reprinted in Wiberg, *Carl Ulric Broocman*, 562). Broocman also lauded Gedike’s school system in a letter the following year.

30. As it is referenced in Broocman’s dissertation *De publica educatione* from 1804.

31. Wiberg, *Carl Ulric Broocman*, 106.

Broocman's respect for Gedike was palpable in both versions of his travelogue, the official report as well as the public monograph. In the latter, Broocman begins his portrayal of Gedike by emphasizing his influence, "through his powerful texts and instruction" and as having gained a "decisive" influence over the German school system.³² Moreover, Broocman outlined Gedike's views on *formale Bildung* for his Swedish audiences. In the official report submitted by Broocman, he wrote, "A learned school . . . should according to [Gedike] be an institution for the education of all of those members of state that require a higher cultivation of the soul, through which, if so needed, they are also prepared for the University. In this cultivation [*bildning*], [Gedike] includes a trained mental capacity and that general form of knowledge which allows one to see the world for what it is; not such as that are preparation for a particular order of society, solely for theologians, lawyers, etc., but such that is useful to all."³³ Broocman went on to emphasize that for Gedike, the most important thing was the training and development of the faculties of the soul (*själskrafterna*; cf. *Seelenkräfte*), a task to which ancient literature should contribute. By reading Roman and Greek authors, the faculties of mind, wit, ingenuity, memory, judgment, and taste would be harmoniously cultivated (*bildas*; cf. *gebildet*) and refined. Furthermore, studying ancient texts on a daily basis ought to be beneficial for the development (*bildning*; cf. *Bildung*) of the student's character.³⁴ These passages bear a strong resemblance to Gedike's own formulations. Furthermore, Broocman wrote, "The many difficulties, inherent in this study [of classical languages], the numerous often subtle grammatical inquiries, Gedike considered to be an excellent preparation for life's many hardships, and the reading of the Poets would introduce an ideal world, whence one in the future could gather many a refreshing flower for the real one."³⁵ Upon further scrutiny, Broocman's two accounts of Gedike's contribution to *formale Bildung* differ slightly but perhaps significantly. The monograph, although in essence a more detailed version of the report, excluded crucial passages where Gedike's views on *formale Bildung* were described in more detail. Instead, Broocman presents a more general impression of his contributions. For instance, he writes that Gedike defended the value of *Humaniora* (the humanities) with intensity and that he hoped to make elementary instruction in Latin "useful for all."³⁶ Broocman, who like his German counterpart often expressed concern that vocational and practical

32. Broocman, *Berättelse om Tysklands undervisningsverk*, 96.

33. Broocman, *Relation om Tyskland i pedagogiskt hänseende*, reprinted in Wiberg *Carl Ulric Broocman*, 529. Cf. La Vopa, "Specialists against Specialization," 32.

34. Broocman, *Relation om Tyskland i pedagogiskt hänseende*, reprinted in Wiberg *Carl Ulric Broocman*, 529.

35. *Ibid.*, 530.

36. Broocman, *Berättelse om Tysklands undervisningsverk*, 77, 79.

education might promote self-interest and egotism, also chose to repeat Gedike's assertion that placing knowledge on "the scale pan of cameralism" was extremely detrimental for the "cultivation of the soul," thus valuing it only by its immediate use and mercantile profit. Moreover, Gedike restricted true study in *Humaniora* to higher learning, "not as empty words and phrases of two dead languages, but as the awakening of the noblest faculties of the soul."³⁷ While this clearly refers to the theory of formal education, it is noteworthy that Broocman refrains from enumerating individual faculties or pointing out Gedike's insistence on the training of these as the overarching purpose of education.

Another passage from the monograph points in the same direction: "With a sense of everything beautiful, noble and grand that reside with the Ancients, the teacher ought to interpret, their historians, poets and philosophers, as well as let the young man himself find the order of their thoughts, the firmness, the meticulousness, the vividness of their expression, the aptness of their judgments, the correctness of their conclusions, their exceptional and elevated frame of mind, their patriotism, their freedom of thought, their reverence for what is holy and in this manner, through the Authorities provide a true human cultivation."³⁸ Broocman would keep using such general, more expressive phrases regarding the value of classical study in his later, more programmatic texts. But whereas he in the official report documented (1) Gedike's insistence that the main goal was developing the faculties of the soul, (2) his enumeration of these faculties, and (3) his belief in the moral value of classical study—all three tenets typically found in Swedish sources from the first part of the nineteenth century—in the longer monograph version, which was more widely circulated to the public and peers, these tenets were obscured in favor of more general, albeit admiring, phrasings.

The later significance of these variations notwithstanding, a more glaring "omission" is the question of Gedike's originality, something we have seen is still hard to establish. Consequently, it is unclear whether Broocman was fundamentally aware of Gedike's role in the formation of *formale Bildung* as a theory or whether or not he considered him as any kind of founder of this concept. Broocman, like his peers, seems to treat the tenets of the theory of formal education as common knowledge. In fact, it is unclear whether either Gedike or Broocman considered *formale Bildung* a "new concept" at the time. If so, this seems to have left limited traces in the sources. Instead, ironically considering how *formale Bildung* ultimately became the classicists' strongest weapon in the hardening battle over the curriculum, Broocman did explicitly credit Gedike with having found a middle ground between the extremes of philanthropism and classicism.

37. Ibid., 100.

38. Ibid.

Scholars have suggested that Broocman's monograph was influential in the ensuing conflict over educational reform in Sweden.³⁹ Moreover, his analysis lived on in the secondary literature. For instance, his depiction of Gedike as an intermediary between philanthropism and "humanism" (later dubbed neohumanism by Paulsen) can be found in scholarly accounts. Up until the mid-twentieth century, a handful of Swedish scholars were aware of the link between Gedike and Broocman, even going as far as pointing out the influence of the former on the latter.⁴⁰ However, as far as I have been able to determine, only one of these authors, Wilhelm Sjöstrand, identified Gedike as having developed the concept and terminology regarding formal education.⁴¹ Curiously, in later passages in his work on formal education in Sweden, Sjöstrand also went on to point out the difficulty in ascertaining "how and to what extent" Swedish pedagogical thinking was subject to foreign influence at the beginning of the nineteenth century, suggesting that Broocman's travels and writings had perhaps been overlooked.⁴² Yet he never connected the dots between Broocman and Gedike, instead noting that the former had created a "personal synthesis" of everything he had learned in Germany.⁴³

CONCLUSION

Broocman's personal synthesis might very well have obscured Gedike's importance for the Swedish discourse of education, both in the short and long term. So too might Gedike's reluctance to exclude the formal value of subjects other than classical studies, which later came to be a more rigid and unrelenting quality of the Swedish public conflicts.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, as I have shown, Broocman can be seen as a principal agent in the circulation of fundamental tenets of *formale Bildung* clearly identified as having been expressed by the German reformer. Distinguishing features permeating a later consensus regarding the value of the humanities in Sweden can be traced back to Gedike—via Broocman's influential works on German pedagogy. Following the flow of this circulation is complicated since it involved a lot of moving parts. Time-honored philosophical theories on the faculties of the soul merged with fashionable pedagogical methods,

39. Larsson, "Reformtänkar i svensk skolpolitik," 181; Sjöstrand, *Den formella bildningens och medövningens*, 51; Neidenmark, *Pedagogiska imperativ och sociala nätverk*, 111–12, 117.

40. Especially as regarded Broocman's vision of how to reorganize the Swedish school system. See Rodhe, *Kyrka och skola*, 54; Larsson, "Pedagogisk realism," 36, 135, and "Reformtänkar," 181. See also Wiberg, "Broocmans projekterade realskola," 18–19, and *Carl Ulric Broocman*, 378. However Wiberg also feels that the "apprenticeship" to Gedike has been exaggerated, see 392.

41. Sjöstrand, *Den formella bildningens och medövningens*, 41.

42. *Ibid.*, 51–52.

43. *Ibid.*, 52.

44. See Sjöstrand, *Den formella bildningen*, 45.

making *formale Bildung* less of a distinctive doctrine and more of an amalgamation of humanistic principles and values.

With this in mind, it might seem less of a paradox of knowledge dissemination that the influence of Gedike was arguably greater in both countries than that of many of his more renowned peers. Ostensibly, the fact that there was no distinct individual author and source of the concept of *formale Bildung* imbued it with a quality of “common knowledge,” thereby increasing its circulation. If so, this is a feature of circulation worth pursuing more systematically.

One might argue that the purpose of a complex analysis of the circulation of knowledge is less about discovering definite and unambiguous transmission but rather to embrace and tease out its incomplete, erratic, and enigmatic flowcharts. Indeed, circulation as a concept belies linear, uncomplicated communication. Yet, one must be open to both. I believe that the Gedike/Broocman scenario demonstrates the value of pursuing previously obscured links of knowledge circulation by adopting a broader approach to the attempt to disentangle its links and pathways toward “currency and credibility” or lack thereof.⁴⁵ However, by taking a closer look at the circulation of *formale Bildung*, one also discovers more or less traditional modes of transmission (travel, translation, adaptation) hitherto undetected. It is, to follow Simone Lässig and Sven Steinberg, “a history written in invisible ink” revealed by a focus on the circulation of knowledge.⁴⁶ Despite having no clear origin, no original or principal actor, *formale Bildung* became a surging knowledge, infused in key areas of both German and Scandinavian societies for well over half a century. Gedike and Broocman never met, exchanged ideas, or formulated grand and original theories. Nevertheless, as I hope to have convincingly shown, they were instrumental in the circulation of *formale Bildung*.

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45. Marchand, “How Much Knowledge Is Worth Knowing?” 137.

46. Lässig and Steinberg, “Knowledge on the Move,” 320.

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