

This paper outlines the philosophical background of political processes which makes it possible to compare societal, viz. educational reforms in three Nordic countries, Sweden, Norway and Finland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The most influential philosophers in this context were Immanuel Kant and G.W.F. Hegel. While Denmark can be seen as a link to continental ideas and a philosophical hub, the leading Nordic scholars were also directly educated in German idealistic tradition at German universities. Nation states in Scandinavia were to be established. That process was multifaceted.

From 1860s to beginning of the 1880s major questions in parliaments were military and educational reforms. There was quest for objectivity in societal reforms, as many felt uncertainties of the consequences of the political decisions. Universal military service had been widely implemented in the continental states, especially after Franco-Prussian war 1870-1871. However, that system pushed political rights to new social classes; it was seen against prevailing justice to have duties without corresponding rights.

The European “crazy year” of 1848 was well remembered, and it is worth noting that The International, founded in 1864, had contacts also to Russian revolutionary forces. Many of those leaders lived in exile in neutral Switzerland. Russia had made political reforms during Alexander II, and in 1874 it got conscription system. Even among the most conservative politicians it was evident that the society was changing.

According to Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) the best way to distinguish between right and wrong was to be rational, and not to rely on emotion or faith. He wrote his critique of Pure Reason 1781, the second critique of Practical Reason 1788, and the third critic 1790, the critique of the Power of Judgment. In his later work, Metaphysics of Morals from 1797, he states his idea of moral perfection. His metaphysics of morals especially was influential to ethical thinking in the Nordic Countries. Kant’s categorical imperative can be understood within this context.

That Kantian idea of perfection also gave foundations to political rights in the Nordic countries, and sufficient condition for the rights was attained through education. Swedish philosopher Samuel Grubbe (1786 – 1853) not only based his philosophy on Kant’s thinking, but he also put ideas in practice as a statesman. Kant greatly influenced Norwegian philosopher M.J. Monrad (1816 – 1897). Monrad condemned slavery, being not in accordance with equality of all men. Without freedom it would not be possible to cultivate one’s talents fully, hence no perfection possible. This Kantian idea in the Nordic countries, together with G.W.F. Hegel’s (1770 – 1831) philosophy of Right, notably in Norway and Finland, became the mainstream of political thinking.

Monrad had a long career as professor and writer with broad influence in cultural life. His Swedish colleague Pontus Wikner (1837 – 1888) was appointed to the university of Christiania (since 1924 university of Oslo) and became an important scholarly link between Sweden and Norway. Wikner thought freedom be realized first as an inner freedom, among individuals, this leading to outer freedom, in society, after inner freedom increased. Man could lose his outer freedom, while inner freedom could not be taken away. That was a cornerstone of political participation. Concerning outer freedom, as Hegel’s saying clarifies, in brief, we are not free unless you are free.

After Samuel Grubbe his successor C.J. Boström (1797 – 1866), the father of Swedish idealism and “the Nordic Plato”, molded Swedish society into his philosophical system. There was rivalry between influence of Aristotle and Plato within the Nordic philosophy, as classic education still dominated, and reality was interpreted through concepts like Plato’s dikaiosyne or Aristotelian

ochlocracy. Democracy in that context had a different meaning as it is usually understood, then weighting equality of opportunities. Boström's influence even exceeded that Monrad had in their home countries respectively, not least because the geographical closeness of Norway to Britain and empiricism.

Pontus Wikner, one of the most talented disciples of C.J. Boström, characterized the role of Boström's thinking in Swedish society – among many others - as overwhelming. This “spirit of Uppsala”, named after leading University, was “indoctrinated” to clerks in public administration by Boström's disciples after 1866. Boström did not come from nobility background but was closely related to the royal family. His philosophy was genius, supporting the parliamentary system which existed before 1865-1866 reform. Boström was not leaning so strongly on Kantian ideas as did his teacher Grubbe. Or neither on Hegel's system, as Finnish philosopher Snellman or Norwegian Monrad did. Hegel had its coryphées at the university in Lund, originally Danish studium generale founded in 1425 by the Catholic Church but belonging to Sweden after 1658.

In Finland J.W. Snellman (1806 – 1881) shared same ideas as philosophers in neighboring countries, and he gave direction to Finnish society. He was well acquainted with Samuel Grubbe's views and met Boström in person. First as a publicist and professor, and afterwards, like Grubbe in Sweden, Snellman was active in political life. For all these philosophers the major concern in societal change was education. Not just any education, but education appealing to rationality. According to Boström practical education was private enterprise, and private interests could not be included in the education we are after here. This also was a central element in his state philosophy. We can say that Kantian idea of perfection could be considered elitist, higher education with no practical usefulness wouldn't meet the needs of the majority.

This changed however, as society became more pluralistic. With new occupations in industry and merchandise there arose new needs - the needs of society. This societal change for example brought about technical education. Within existing higher education, the status of the natural sciences, which had hitherto been inferior to classical curriculum, improved. The demand for teachers in natural sciences and technical subjects increased, but parents preferred classical education for their children because of higher status. Institutional barriers hindered societal reforms.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century epistemological questions related to idealism versus realism, and the question of free will were important academic topics. There was method of acquiring knowledge through authorities, and analogies from history broadly used in political argumentation. Wikner et al. used analogues from history of Greece, as his example about freedom above, and Monrad considered western civilization as continuum from Greece through Christianity. Emerging Nordic morality, which has its foundations in German concept *sittlichkeit*, morality understood as a relation between reason and sensuality, leaned on traditional Nordic society without serfdom. This idealism did not exclude empirical method, which became more common through statistics. Social research emerged, and it was included in theoretical framework. However, its role changed to more independent and grew in influence. It was no more just supplying factor to the Hegelian theory of Right but insisted to be equal element in humanity, a pillar by side of traditional rationality.

There was a close relationship between institutions and parliamentary work. Among members of parliaments there were people not just from the Lutheran church, but also from science and military. Ideas of society were anchored to social reality, and idealistic state philosophy included “the starry heaven above me and moral law within me”, with the words of Immanuel Kant. Use of

statistics became common in political debate, for example to make predictions and evaluate consequences of decisions. One broadly used scholar and authority in these three Nordic Countries was English historian Henry Thomas Buckle. English philosopher and economist John Stuart Mill was also widely mentioned, and thoughts Herbert Spencer represented had its supporters. There existed publicly agreed criteria for establishing the facts, but it did not make political decisions much easier.

With Swedish parliamentary reform 1865-1866, a change from four estates to bicameral system, there was a fear that changes could lead to perplexities in society. Not at least because other denominations than Lutheran Christianity could get influence in political life. Consequently, universal military service was put on hold because widening political rights largely to new groups did not have prospect to continue after reform 1865 - 1866.

In Norway, which also had been called poetocracy, societal change got expression in the role of professors in philosophy, from poet and philosopher J.S. Welhaven (1807-1873) to M.J. Monrad. The former considered education as cultivating literary and aesthetic qualities, and the latter, as moral philosopher, to change reality. Within the shelter of Monrad's conservative philosophy and his close relation to the Swedish king these Kantian and Hegelian ideas of freedom became societal fact and the French revolutionary heritage, which also gave birth to the 1814 constitution, advanced. In a new practical era by parliamentary reformers like Johan Sverdrup it led towards the nation state.

Some background information to the paper

Finland became part of Sweden from 13<sup>th</sup> century, and after the Finnish war was ceded to Russia in 1809 as autonomous Grand Duchy. Finland was allowed to keep old Swedish laws. Old Swedish parliamentary system, a Diet of the Four Estates – Nobility, Clergy, Burghers and Peasants – convened again in 1863, it had not happened since 1809.

Denmark – Norway; a union formed after Denmark annexed Norway in 1537 and dissolved after Napoleonic Wars in 1814. Norway in union with Sweden with Swedish king from 1814 to 1905. Norway kept its liberal constitution from 1814. The old Norwegian provinces of Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands remained in Denmark. Many Norwegians were longing for Danish period, and cultural bonds continued with Denmark. Antagonism towards Sweden increased in the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century and almost resulted in war between Norway and Sweden.

Denmark ceded northern provinces to Sweden in 1658, and its southern provinces were ceded to Germany after war in 1864. Denmark's influence had declined while Swedish empire grew in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. After Sweden ceded Finland to Russia in 1809 there were no bigger ambitions in foreign politics within Scandinavia. Some thoughts existed in Sweden during the Crimean war in 1850s, however already then first aspirations of neutrality emerged. Swedish neutrality became a political goal from the 1880s, and the history of the Swedish Empire had been less popular.

