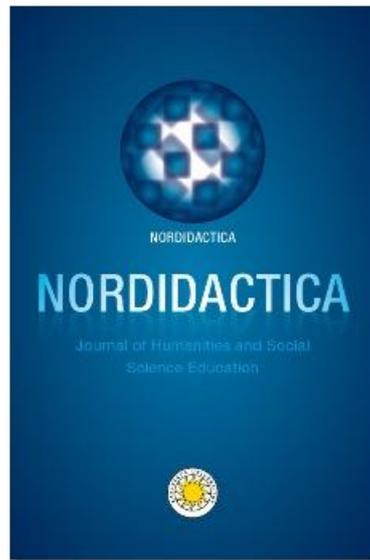


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**Nordidactica**

**- Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education**

**2019:4**

Nordidactica – Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education

Nordidactica 2019:4

ISSN 2000-9879

The online version of this paper can be found at: [www.kau.se/nordidactica](http://www.kau.se/nordidactica)

## **Digital ethical *Bildung* as a proactive educational approach against cyberbullying, with Aristotle, Løgstrup and Barad as sources for a philosophical framework**

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*Abstract: This article discusses three different theoretical approaches to deal with cyberbullying in education in ethics. The first approach is Tom Harrison's fostering of "cyber-phronesis", based on Aristotelian virtue ethics. The second one is K. E. Løgstrup's ontological ethics which focuses on self-evident ethical demands emerging when people get entangled with each other. The third is Karen Barad's agential realism, which also focuses on entanglements but includes more than humans in what matters as entangled agents. This opens for the inclusion of cyberspace in both technical, material and social manners as ethical agents. The author finds all three approaches viable and believes that they can be combined. Digital ethical Bildung (close to 'cyber-phronesis') of children is important in order to refrain from bullying others and to sustain bullying. Face-to-face entanglements is a better environment to become ethically addressed than online in order to enhance one's phronesis. Considering non-human ethical agents is viable in order to be aware of and enhance one's digital ethical Bildung further.*

KEYWORDS: CYBERBULLYING, ICT, ETHICS, ARISTOTLE, LØGSTRUP, KAREN BARAD, EDUCATION

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Ethics<sup>1</sup> is a core element in the curriculum of the education of pre-school teachers in Norway. One of the seven main issues carries the name “Society, religion, life views and ethics”.

Cyberbullying is a challenge for a lot of children and youngsters. Schools have tried to counteract offline bullying for years and later also cyberbullying. Much research on the phenomenon is undertaken from psychological and media perspective, whereas an ethical point of departure seems rather seldom, at least in scientific articles. This article outlines and combines three somewhat different theorists to address the problem proactively, using Aristotle's *phrónēsis*-concept, Løgstrup's ontological ethics and Barad's agential realism. The concept 'digital ethical *Bildung*' contains favourable characters, and Løgstrup's and Barad's entanglement widen the focus to include more than human actors, of which the very structure and management of the Internet are vital to take into considerations.

## Introduction

Our contemporary life seems to be lived more and more in front of a screen, whether it is a smartphone, a tablet or a full-scale computer. One negative side of this online life is cyberbullying, which has become an increasing problem on social media in the last decade or so, with severe problems, even fatal (van Laer, 2014: 85). Bullying is a challenge for young people in particular (Medietilsynet, 2010: 59; Medietilsynet, 2018: 73). Media may exaggerate the number of children and youth being cyberbullied (Olweus, 2012: 520; Wendelborg, 2019), but are severe enough for those exposed for such bullying.

How should society counteract cyberbullying? Since children and adolescents are particularly affected, the education institutions have for an extended period tried to meet offline bullying with various anti-bullying programmes (Olweus, 2005). The point of departure for research on this general phenomenon of bullying is mainly from a psychological point of view. Since bullying has gone online, media studies have contributed in later years (Kofoed and Staksrud, 2019: 1013-1014), and the concepts 'digital competence' and 'digital literacy' have emerged. Bullying is, however, a moral problem, so this is actually an ethical problem, and surprisingly few scientific papers deal with cyberbullying from an ethical point of departure. Digital literacy<sup>2</sup> seems to be that part of educational topics that should include ethics on the use of cyberspace. This paper tries to add to this scarce discussion from an ethical point of view by focusing on what I later in this paper call 'digital ethical *Bildung*', a specification of 'digital literacy/competence'.

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<sup>1</sup> I use 'ethics' in this first paragraph less specific than ordinary in scholarly papers, where the concept is generally restricted to reflection on what is (un)moral actions, whereas 'moral' is the ethical quality of concrete actions.

<sup>2</sup> In Norway, the topic 'digital judgment' ("digital dømmekraft") contains ethics (Kelentric et al., 2017: 6), which prof. Staksrud link to the English concept 'digital literacy' (Staksrud, 2017: 170).

The structure of this paper is thus to start with a focus on research on cyberbullying, turn to the concepts ‘digital competence’ and ‘digital literacy’, and connect on these concepts a discussion employing ethical theory, to end up with some possible consequences for education. As a companion and interlocutor, I use one of the few papers on cyberbullying and ethics, Tom Harrison’s “Cultivating cyber-phronesis: a new educational approach to tackle cyberbullying”.

## Research on cyberbullying

It has been researched for a couple of decades on both bullying in general and cyberbullying (Kowalski et al., 2014; Cantone et al., 2015; Reed et al., 2016; Heerde and Hemphill, 2019). One discussion is whether offline bullying and cyberbullying are the same or different phenomena? Is the difference only use of different means, are they similar under certain conditions, or should they be regarded as two distinctly different phenomena (Antoniadou and Kokkinos, 2015; Hemphill et al., 2015)? Most papers dealing with cyberbullying seem to see at least some connection between the two. Another discussion is about definitions, methods and theories used in research on both kinds of bullying. What, e.g. Kofoed and Staksrud calls the “dominant research paradigm” and “Olweus-informed” (2019: 1007) focus on the bully, the victim, and sometimes also on the bystander, and search for predictors (e.g. individual traits) for becoming bully or victim (Hemphill et al., 2015; Thornberg and Jungert, 2017; McHugh and Howard, 2017; Heerde and Hemphill, 2019: 354). This binary model focusing on bully vs victim has, however, been challenged and criticized to be too narrow. One such challenge came from Dorte Marie Søndergaard who claimed to “develop a new conceptual framework” (Søndergaard, 2012: 355) where she explains bullying by “social exclusion anxiety and social panic” (2012: 356) and thus introducing “a non-individualising thinking technology” (2012: 370).<sup>3</sup> She draws on Karen Barad’s concept intra-activity and entanglement (Barad, 2007) to expand possible actors in bullying phenomena. Various other oppositions to the Olweus-paradigm have emerged, so many that Robert Thornberg tries to negotiate between them and suggest a dialogue, and admits that there is a “complex interplay between individual and contextual factors” (Thornberg, 2015: 187).

Two recent papers (Kofoed and Staksrud, 2019; Wagner, 2019) are both critical to the Olweus-paradigm and to underestimate the similarities between traditional bullying and cyberbullying. The connection to posthuman theory is visible when Wagner refers to Rhizome Theory (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) when describing the essence of the Internet like a «growing maze or “living monster” ... a great medium of power communication to improve self-esteem and social recognition, ... also a dark side that can subvert the original user of cyberspace with very specific aggravating factors» (Wagner, 2019: 305). Similar traces of posthumanism is present in other papers by Jette Kofoed (2009; 2012; 2017). I find this posthumanist approach interesting in an ethical

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<sup>3</sup> This paper in English is based on a previous Danish text (Søndergaard, 2009).

discussion since at least Karen Barad is clear on the ethical impact of her agential realism: “there is no getting away from ethics – mattering is an integral part of the ontology of the world in its dynamic presencing” (Barad, 2007: 396).

## The concept ‘digital *Bildung*’ and alike

To deal with the new digital computers which started to be accessible from early 1980-ies, and connected to the Internet in the 1990-ies, concepts like ‘media literacy’, ‘digital competence’, and ‘digital literacy’ emerged (Tyner, 1998; Buckingham, 2006). These concepts started as descriptions of technical skills in ICT but were gradually widened. In 2006 David Buckingham lists four broad conceptual aspects as essential components: representation, language, production and audience (Buckingham, 2006: 268-269). In his article, Buckingham connects ‘literacy’ to the German ‘Bildung’, as “a more rounded, humanistic conception” (2006: 265)

My own study of *digital Bildung* in the (mostly) Norwegian debate 2000-2013 (Sando, 2014: Ch. 2.4), showed a development of ‘digital *Bildung*’ from two different points of departure, one from digital competence (Baltzersen, 2009), the other from *Bildung* in general (Løvlie, 2003; Løvlie, 2005; Erstad, 2005: 145). From about 2005, onwards ethical aspects were often added to both paths. It was, however, a tendency that digital competence + ethics focused more on rules like netiquette (Univeristets- og høyskolerådet, 2011: 22), whereas the *Bildung*-path often became “digital *Bildung* reduced to using classical ideals for *Bildung* in new contexts” (Haugsbakk and Nordkvelle, 2011: 351, my translation).<sup>4</sup> Gran et al. (2019) seem to situate themselves in both paths by making a distinction between “Bildung as a general concept” and digital *Bildung* as “a more limited analytic concept ... refers to an overall intercultural competence addressing more than just, for instance, online etiquette, and aiming towards the development of independent, critical and reflected individuals in a digital context” (Gran et al., 2019: 24). Gran seems to include a broader ethical aspect by the phrase “more than ... online etiquette”. In an overview article, she concludes that there is «no precise understanding of the concept “digital Bildung”» (Gran, 2018: 221, my translation).<sup>5</sup> Krumsvik et al. define ‘digital Bildung’ to be the fifth of five categories in digital competence, which they outline this way: «ethical considerations with regard to digital Bildung (5). This means a techno-cultural Bildung (‘digital dannelse’) which is based on a more holistic understanding about how children and youth learn and how they grow and develop their identity in a digitised society (Løvlie, 2003)» (Krumsvik et al., 2016: 151). What they mean with “ethical considerations” in this paper, they do not clarify. In general, when ‘ethics’ appear as a concept in such papers, it is seldom qualified or outlined. In normative documents for education from the European Commission, references to ethics are very few and focus mainly on how to protect

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<sup>4</sup> Norwegian original text: «”digital dannelse” redusert til anvendelse av klassiske dannelses-idealer i nye kontekster».

<sup>5</sup> Original Norwegian text: «entydig forståelse av begrepet ‘digital dannelse’»

oneself from, e.g. bullying (Redecker, 2017: 84-85). The Norwegian follow-up is slightly more ethically proactive (Kelentric et al., 2017: 6). Since ethics can imply a variety of theories and uses, or none explicit, I argue for the concept ‘digital ethical *Bildung*’ in contexts where digital ethics are discussed (Sando, 2014). Concepts like ‘digital competence’, ‘digital literacy’ and even ‘digital *Bildung*’ is too wide to be sure that ethical aspects are included.

## Task and method

Harrison’s paper “Cultivating cyber-phronesis: a new educational approach to tackle cyberbullying” will function as one of the starting points for the following discussion. The other is ethics found in selected texts by Aristotle, K. E. Løgstrup and K. Barad. Both *Bildung* and virtue ethics deals with traits, which we have seen have a prominent place in the Olweus-type of psychological research and would thus function as an ethicist’s contribution to this discussion. The critics from broader oriented researchers do not deny that traits are essential, only that there is more to be said. Søndergaard, for instance, describes how a good character like empathy can be put at stake by social forces: “the situation may shift to a phase in which empathy, which can produce dignity, evaporates and contempt increases” (Søndergaard, 2012: 367). Løgstrup has broadened the scope beyond the human individual, and Barad takes it further.

The method is a systematic-theoretical study of the theorists as mentioned above, in order to delineate a connection between these three that might give new ways to foster and educate children and adolescents on their lives on screen, and especially to refrain from bullying. Moreover, Barad’s concept entanglement will enhance and empower both Aristotelian and Løgstrupian thoughts to deal with those obvious and important non-human aspects with cyberspace – the technology itself in all its various aspects.

I will, however, start with the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's (1925-2017) thoughts of two main classes of ethics, which situates Løgstrup’s ethics in opposition to most other ethical theories.

## Two kinds of ethics

Different ethics have been around for centuries. Zygmunt Bauman (1998; 1996) claims that ethics can be divided into two different classes, both connected to two well-known Old Testament myths or stories. The majority of ethics has as its prototype the principles and the rules Moses got on the Mount Sinai, the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20). Bauman calls this the Sinai-story, a type of ethics that is pedagogical because it is clear when moral obligations are fulfilled or not. If you follow the rules or principle, you act ethically. The other class has the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3) as the prototype story. By eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge about good and evil, humans become ethically responsible for their acts, whether guided by a set of rules or not. Bauman writes that Emmanuel Lévinas and Knud Ejler Løgstrup are the two main ethicists connected to this Eden-story. Bauman advocates this kind of

ethics. It is interesting to notice that one of the most used ethical text of Christian ethics, Jesus' constructed case about the Good Samaritan (Luke 10.25-37), belongs to the Eden-story in Bauman's categorization (Sando, 2006). Løgstrup names his ethics *ontological* because he thinks the ethical demands you naturally experience in close meetings with others precedes any rules or principles you may derive from it (Løgstrup, 1971/1996: 20). Løgstrup is not against ethical rules or principles but thinks they are secondary to what he calls "silent demands" given by encountering others (1956/1991: 31-32). For Lévinas, the face of The Other plays a similar role as Løgstrup's silent demands.

If Bauman is right about placing Lévinas and Løgstrup in a class of their own, Løgstrup differs fundamentally from Aristotle and virtue ethics. This may be a challenge for my proposed combination of the two, which I will discuss later.

## The three proposed ethics to be combined

### Virtue ethics

Virtue ethics is subject-oriented ethics primarily focusing qualities and characters worth striving at by the agent (Bexell and Grenholm, 1997: 125). Such characters are called *virtues*. The opposites of virtues are *vices*. It is common to take Aristotle (384-322 BC) as a starting point to describe virtue ethics, and preferably his book (*The Nicomachean Ethics*, hereafter abbreviated *NE*).<sup>6</sup> The virtue *phrónēsis*,<sup>7</sup> often translated "practical wisdom", is often understood as a superior virtue or reason for the other virtues: "Aristotelian practical wisdom is the knowledge of why right acts are right" (Curzer, 2012: 293).

At least two aspects in *NE* seem interesting for application in the context of this article. The first is the virtue triad *epistēmē*, *téchnē* and *phrónēsis*. The second aspect is the balance between virtues and their counterparts, the vices.

### *Aristotle on episteme, téchnē and phrónēsis*

There are two reasons why this Aristotelian triad is relevant, considering values and education. First, Aristotle's ethics is *teleological*, i.e. ends and values are basic (Beauchamp, 1991: 215). Second, the *European Qualification Framework for lifelong learning* seems to be, as I will argue below, an implementation of the triad *epistēmē*, *téchnē* and *phrónēsis*. Consequently, it links directly to education.

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<sup>6</sup> I normally refer to Rackham's Greek – English interlinear edition, revised 1934, and Bekker's standard way of referring to Aristotle's complete works; for *NE* starting at page 1094a and ending at 1181b. For longer quotations in English, I use Terrence Irwin's translation from 1985.

<sup>7</sup> There translation of *phrónēsis* is difficult because of its many aspects, why it is common by many scholars to use the Greek word as it is.

The European Qualification Framework (EQF) structures the learning outcomes for lifelong learning in three main aspects: 1) Knowledge, 2) Skills and 3) Autonomy and Responsibility (Council of the European Union, 2017: 16). In making curricula, educational institutions have to specify the learning outcomes for these three aspects.

Aristotle's three forms of knowledge *epistēmē*, *téchnē* and *phrónēsis*, are also called Aristotle's intellectual virtues (Aristotle and Rackham, 1934: 331, Book VI.2, 1139b12). The similarities between EQF's Knowledge and Skills, and Aristotle's *epistēmē* and *téchnē* seem evident. *Epistēmē* is commonly translated as "scientific knowledge" (Aristotle and Rackham, 1934: 333; Aristotle and Ross, 1980: 140), and Aristotle calls it demonstrable knowledge, facts: "the quality whereby we demonstrate" (Aristotle and Rackham, 1934: 333. 1139b32). *Téchnē* is to master skills. "Art" is often used as a translation of the Greek word *téchnē*. *Téchnē* is, of course, the background for the concepts technique and technology.

*Phrónēsis* is more challenging to explain. The word has no modern version like *epistēmē* and *téchnē*. Some translate it with prudence, practical wisdom, intelligence, even ethics, but many scholars prefer today to use the Greek word as it is: *phrónēsis*. In opposition to *téchnē* where the ends are instrumental, ends in *phrónēsis* have themselves as ends. Aristotle says that phronetic actions, which are always good in order to be considered phronetic, have themselves as ends, when verbatim saying, "[in] oneself the good practice is the end/goal (telos)" (NE 1140b7).

Phronetic actions are always contextual because they deal with things that can be deliberated, and the purpose is what is good: "... it [*phrónēsis*] is a truth-attaining rational quality, concerned with action in relation to things that are good and bad for human beings" (Aristotle and Rackham, 1934: 337, 1140b6-7). The situation determines in which way to use knowledge and skills. Thus, *phrónēsis* is based on experience using knowledge and skills. To know what to do is based on deliberation in new contexts, on intuition, and on tacit knowledge in familiar contexts. Context is essential in *téchnē* as well, but in a narrower sense, restricted to the actual skill.

*Phrónēsis* is thus often a kind of meta-knowledge; knowledge about how to use lower levels pieces of knowledge and skills or to take a meta-perspective. The philosopher Christopher Warne explains this superiority of *phrónēsis*: Aristotle's "primary interest lies in practical wisdom [*phrónēsis*]. Practical wisdom is the faculty of the human soul that determines the best action to perform in any particular situation" (Warne, 2006: 79). Thus, tacit knowledge, qualified guesses and intuition are parts of *phrónēsis*. Support for this view is Dreyfus & Dreyfus' "Skill Acquisition Theory" where the expert level is a description of the *phronimos* (see below), where the actions are contextual and intuitive (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1986: 50 e.g.).

When Aristotle shall explain *phrónēsis*, he starts by saying: "We may arrive at a definition of Prudence [*phrónēsis*] by considering who are the persons whom we call prudent (*phronimos*)" (Aristotle and Rackham, 1934: 337, 1140a24). It is a kind of personal attitude and character acquired by the experience of what works well and what does not. – The link to the EQF is quite evident when they use the words autonomy and responsibility. Aristotelian *phronimos* persons are responsible for their actions and are

thus capable of being autonomous. Responsibility is the "the ability of the learner to apply knowledge and skills autonomously and with responsibility" (Council of the European Union, 2017: 17), i.e. in a contextual way, just like *phrónēsis* is contextual.

### ***Aristotelian virtues in a balance between two vices***

*In everything continuous and divisible we can take more, less and equal, and each of them either in the object itself or relative to us; and the equal is something intermediate between excess and deficiency. By intermediate in the object, I mean what is equidistant from each extremity; this is one and the same for everyone. But relative to us the intermediate is what is neither superfluous nor deficient; this is not one and is not the same for everyone.* (Aristotle and Irwin, 1992: 255 NE II.6 1106a27-32)

This quotation from *NE* shows one of several passages where Aristotle describes what is later called "The Golden Mean" or "Doctrine of the Mean". The preferred *virtue* is located somewhere between too much or too little of the same phenomenon, called *vices*. Aristotle's prototype virtue is courage, its vices are "rashness and cowardice" writes Alasdair MacIntyre (1998: 8), one of the most influential philosophers to restore contemporary virtue ethics. The Golden Mean is by some modern philosophers regarded useless in our time, like Bernard Williams' evaluation of it as "a substantively depressing doctrine in favor of moderation. The doctrine of the Mean is better forgotten" (Williams, 1985: 36). Recent scholars like Curzer and Gottlieb oppose to this disparagement and offer a more flexible interpretation to avoid the "depressing moderation". Paula Gottlieb claims that the Greek word *mesōs* should not, in general, be translated as moderation, but denotes most places a balance between the vices (Gottlieb, 2009: 19-38).

The good and prosperous life for Aristotle is to act virtuously through *phrónēsis*, and thus being wise (*phronimos*). *Phrónēsis* is achieved by acting (*praxeis*) and experiencing. Thus, it is ultimately a project for life, or what Germans call *Bildung*, the Swedes *bildning*, the Danes and Norwegians *dannelse*. This German/Scandinavian concept seems to be as difficult to translate to English as *phrónēsis*, so I use the word *Bildung* for this process. I will now turn to Tom Harrison's "cyber-phrónēsis" – or digital *Bildung*, as I will call it.

### ***Application of virtue ethics to deal with cyberbullying***

Harrison argue that virtue ethics should at least be allowed to complement deontology and utilitarianism, as "rules are hard to establish and uphold online, and consequences are hard to predict" and thus "an approach to morality that is based on an individual's own character virtues is particularly appealing" (Harrison, 2016: 237). He refers to Annas (2011) to argue for developing *phrónēsis* in analogue to developing practical skills. He could have used Dreyfus & Dreyfus, as mentioned above. The aim is that children and young people, through hard work and over time, "can learn to 'self-police' their actions, through showing virtues, even when no one is watching" (Harrison, 2016: 237). The impression given by this way of putting it is that the

difference between virtue ethics and deontology/utilitarianism is "only" that rules and consequences are internalized in one's character as self-police. The weakness of using deontology or utilitarianism will persist. This interpretation seems correct in the following chapter in Harrison's article, where he refers to the so-called e-CE<sup>8</sup> curriculum coined by Chang and Chou in Taiwan (Chang and Chou, 2015), which Harrison also admits "combines elements of consequences, as well as character-based approaches" (Harrison, 2016: 238).

In the following paragraphs in his article, Harrison purifies the Aristotelian approach, starting by referring to *NE* when describing "phronesis as a state of grasping the truth, involving reason, concerned with action that are good or bad for a human being" (Harrison, 2016: 238). This sentence is, in fact, a nearly exact quotation from *NE* 1140b5-8 where Aristotle distinguishes *phrónēsis* from *epistēmē* and *téchnē* by claiming that *phrónēsis* "by doing well is in itself the end". By this, it is also clear that Aristotelian virtue ethics is *tele*-ology, the same as utilitarianism. The distinction between utilitarianism and virtue ethics is thus not that fundamental but differs by different ends. Utilitarianism has hedonism or the better good for most people as an end, whereas Aristotelian virtue ethics has *phrónēsis* and becoming *phronimos* itself as an end.

Harrison coins the term 'cyber-phronesis' "to describe the ability to do the right thing, at the right time, and in the right amount whilst online" (Harrison, 2016: 239). To achieve this, he advocates educational efforts "through moral imaginative mindsets", for instance, by encouraging children to imagine what "kind of online world they would like to inhabit". He will use this to "see effects of cyberbullying from outside, and it, in turn, could increase online empathy" (2016: 239). By stories and narratives, one can focus on "moral exemplars", and interactive cases where students take different roles is described by others, Harrison continues on page 239. Another way to help the students to reflect is to encourage the use of personal journals.

In sum, he advocates an education that in various ways practice ethical reflection, almost like a laboratory practice by stories and training in seeing things from other perspectives and reflecting in personal journals of own online experiences. Such activities will hopefully increase the students' practical wisdom, their cyber-phronesis. With this approach, however, it may take a long time to achieve results. One has to start early with this kind of education if it shall be of effect when cyberbullying becomes relevant - probably years before the child is ten years old. Let us see if another ethical theory has more to offer.

### **Løgstrup's ontological ethics**

In one way, Løgstrup's ethics differs fundamentally from virtue ethics, which claims that good actions do come from lifelong training, whereas Løgstrup claims they come from reality (*ontōs*) itself. That is why Løgstrup calls his ethical approach ontological:

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<sup>8</sup> e-CE is "character education that pertains to the unique characteristics of cyberspace" (Chang and Chou, 2015: 518).

*There exists a third fundamental principle (grundsyn), which could be called ontological. It comes from the primary condition, under which we live – and this we cannot change – namely that one person’s life is entangled (forviklet) with that of others’. From this comes the content of the ethical demand (fordring): caring for that of the other person’s life that this entanglement places on someone’s mercy. ... The ethical demand refracts like through different prisms by all different and unique relations we are engaged in, like spouses, parents and children, teachers and students, employers and employees, since these [relations] are all forms of the same basic condition, from which the ethical demand gets its content. (Løgstrup, 1971/1996: 20, my translation)<sup>9</sup>*

Løgstrup writes about the ethical demands in his book with the same title (*Den etiske fordring*) in 1956. In 1968, in the book *Opgør med Kierkegaard* (Confrontation with Kierkegaard), he adds another essential ethical concept which he calls the *sovereign expressions of life* (suveræne livsyttringer) (Andersen, 1995: 68), which he outlines further in the book *Norm og spontaneitet* (Norm and Spontaneity) four years later. His examples of sovereign expressions of life are trust, mercy, open speech, love, sincerity, faithfulness; later also compassion, empathy, hope and indignation (Andersen, 1995: 69).

In *Norm og spontaneitet* he describes the open speech like this: “the elemental and definitive peculiarity attaching to all speech qua spontaneous expression of life: its openness. To speak is to speak openly” (Løgstrup and Niekerk, 2008: 84; Løgstrup, 1972/1993: 17). It is easy to tell the truth. To lie, you have to calculate how to tell a lie that is not easily unmasked. As soon as you are caught in lying, you will quickly, in general, be considered untruthful. If you renounce on any of the Sovereign Expressions of Life, even a bit, it immediately turns into its opposite: “Moderation with one’s trust, open speech or mercy is impossible; in the same moment you are in distrust, in insincerity and mercilessness” (Løgstrup, 1971/1996: 25 my translation).<sup>10</sup> Mercy needs no argument. It rests in itself. Mercilessness, on the other hand, have to be argued for (Løgstrup, 1971/1996: 24). Løgstrup thus also calls the sovereign expressions of life as spontaneous. They are ready at hand.

In addition to Løgstrup’s silent demand and sovereign expressions of life, he has an interesting discussion in volume 3 of his metaphysics *Ophav og omgivelser* (Source and Surroundings)<sup>11</sup>, published posthumously in 1984, which is relevant for technology ethics, namely his model for history and culture:

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<sup>9</sup> Original Danish text: «Der findes også et tredje grundsyn, der kunne kalles ontologisk. Fra det grundvilkår, vi lever under, og som det ikke står til os at ændre, nemlig at den enes liv er forviklet med den andens, får den etiske fordring sit innhold, idet den går ud på at drage omsorg for det af den andens liv, som forviklingen prisgiver een .... Den etiske fordring brydes som gennem prismer av alle de forskellige og egenartede relationer, hvori vi står til hindanden, som ægtfæller, forældre og børn, lærere og elever, arbejdsgiver og arbejdere, eftersom de alle er former for det grundvilkår, hvoraf den etiske fordring får sit indhold.”

<sup>10</sup> Original Danish text: «Lade der være måde med ens tillid, oprigtighed eller barnhertighed er ugørligt, i samme nu er man i mistilliden, i uoprigtigheden og ubarmhertigheden”.

<sup>11</sup> Excerpts in English translation is in *Metaphysics Volume II*, part I.

*Thus we acquire culture and history from phenomena that are peculiar to us, restraint and understanding – and which correlate with needing and sensation, which we have in common with animals. Culture and history come into existence from the tension between conquest and restraint. And we acquire culture and history from the interplay between distanceless sensation (Løgstrup, 1995: 45) and powerful understanding because of the distance (Løgstrup, 1984/1995: 48, my translation).<sup>12</sup>*

Technology is a product of the interplay between understanding and need/conquest, whereas Løgstrup lifts up the restraint (tilbageholdenhed) as an ethical regulator that has a too-small influence today. Løgstrup used this model in his increasing interest in environmental issues in the 1970-ies (Løgstrup, 1994; Jensen, 1994: Ch. 13). He advocates an alliance between sensation and restraint, preferably through aesthetics:

*Intelligent administration of the demands coming from the needs is not enough to cope with the powers of the needs [i.e. the conquest]. Aesthetics must be added, an aesthetics that comes with the sensation, and which can only unfold itself in a restraint towards what is outside our realm of power. (Løgstrup, 1984/1995: 58-59, my translation).<sup>13</sup>*

The focus on aesthetics and sensation in a (techno)ethical setting is interesting. The already mentioned story of The Merciful Samaritan, which also Løgstrup refers to (Løgstrup, 1971/1996: 22), uses the Greek word *esplangnisthē* in Luke 10.33 which are often rendered "mercy" or "pity" in English translations. It is a form of the verb *splangnizomai* (σπλαγγίζομαι) which is derived from meaning internal organs, entrails (Köster, 1971). This meaning fits well with the feelings most have when seeing seriously wounded people, as well as animals; we often feel it literally in our stomach and may even vomit because of the sight. Empathy and strong ethical drives may well be triggered by our senses, our aesthetics (Sando, 2006).

### ***Can virtue ethics and Løgstrup be combined?***

Løgstrup's own answer to this question is both "yes" and "no": "Character traits and sovereign expressions of life can work in tandem, and they can collide" (Løgstrup and Niekerk, 2008: 89; Løgstrup, 1972/1993: 26). Løgstrup is sceptical if the reason for cultivating one's character is to be a cultivated person for its own sake but is in favour to cultivate one's character to fulfil a certain task (Løgstrup and Niekerk, 2008: 92;

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<sup>12</sup> This is a continuous quotation, but the two last words in Dee's translation in *Metaphysics Volume II* has, in my view, a grave error when he translates "afstandsmægtig" with "powerless". The meaning is the opposite. Verbatim translation of the composite word "afstandsmægtig" is "distance-powerful". The complete Danish text of this paragraph is as follows: Kultur og historie får vi altså af fænomener, der er særlige for os, tilbageholdenhed og forståelse – og som korrelerer med behov og sansning, som vi er fælles med dyrene om. Kultur og historie bliver til af spændingen mellem erobring og tilbageholdenhed. Og kultur og historie får vi af samspillet mellem den afstandsløse sansning og den afstandsmægtige forståelse.

<sup>13</sup> Original Danish text: «Alene med intelligent administration af behovenes magt kan vi ikke magte behovenes magt. Æstetik skal der til, den æstetik som sansningen rummer, og som kun kan komme til udfoldelse i en tilbageholdenhed overfor det, som vi ikke har i vor magt.»

Løgstrup, 1972/1993: 29). The virtue ethicist MacIntyre has, on the other hand, compared Løgstrup's ethics with virtue ethics, especially French Thomistic ethics from the same time as Løgstrup's. He finds several differences, but conclude with a "hope to show that it is philosophically and morally profitable to bring these two standpoints into belated conversation" (MacIntyre, 2017: 264). Patrick Stokes compares MacIntyre and Løgstrup, and see both differences and similarities, but points out that it may be a bit difficult to compare these two ethical systems, partly because the main concepts which one compare may not be too easily comparable; thus he concludes with a little warning: "we [virtue ethicists?] should nonetheless be wary of assimilating Løgstrup too readily into our existing projects and concerns. His views may yet prove more challenging, more distinctive, than we realize" (Stokes, 2017: 296).

Therefore, the use of both ethical systems in this article should be done with some caution. Since the task here is to use ethical theories as a basis for a concrete educational project, I call however upon Løgstrup himself as cited above: "Sovereign expressions of life and character traits may thus converge in the concrete case".

### ***What does Løgstrup corrects or adds to education in order to deal with cyberbullying?***

Løgstrup's ethical demand and sovereign expressions of life give us a faster way to act ethically towards others than what seems necessary in virtue ethics, where fostering a character and *Bildung* is a time-consuming project. Many important meetings between people need no rules, principles or character to tell us what is demanded of us. The situations themselves are filled with silent demands that induce us with a pre-ethical understanding of what to do. Compared to virtue ethics, ontological ethics gives a sort of short cut to act ethically in cases where entanglement occurs.

A problem with this ontological ethics when it comes to cyberbullying, is that the bully and the bullied do not meet face-to-face, which seems to be a prerequisite for the sovereign expressions of life to work. The entanglement seems to be, at best, reduced the way Løgstrup describes it. Can it be otherwise? Are there other ways to be entangled than in the ordinary face-to-face way? Posthumanism seems to offer such a way, and especially Karen Barad, who is the topic for the next chapter.

### ***Barad's ethics in Meeting the Universe Halfway***

Since posthumanism per definition includes non-human agents, like computers, it may seem like a good starting point for ethics for an increasing digitalized society. One increasingly popular philosopher, also by educational scholars, is the American Karen Barad (born 1956). Her ethics are also interesting in the discussion in this article, since the ethics, which I will elaborate later, is in my opinion of Bauman's Eden-type.

Barad has a PhD in particle physics but is today professor in feminist studies in Santa Cruz, California. Her theory *Agential Realism* in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007) (abbreviated *MUH*), finds arguments from discussions within quantum physics, especially methodological questions about scientific apparatuses posed by the Danish scientist Niels Bohr.

Barad takes implications of quantum physics further than Bohr did. She considers matters as the fundamental entity within the universe, and assumes that it has agentic status: “Matter is agentic, not a fixed essence or property of things” (*MUH*: 137). Using Bohr, she claims in *MUH* chapter 4 that the border between the observer, apparatus and object in experiments is not sharp. An apparatus must be configured to observe some specific phenomena, whereas others are *cut off*.

Barad’s project is enormous: “Agency needs to be rethought. Ethics needs to be rethought. Science needs to be rethought .... every aspect of how we understand the world, including ourselves, is changed [by her project]” (*MUH*: 23).

One of Barad’s main concepts is *entanglement*, used throughout *MUH*, but especially in chapter 7. Entanglements are important phenomena in quantum physics, but Barad rescales it to macro and mental levels as well, for which she is criticised (Hollin et al., 2017: 936). This critique seems relevant since Barad herself rejects both analogical methods and reductionism (sociology -> biology -> chemistry -> quantum physics) (*MUH*: 24). Entanglement is based on diffraction instead of reflection. The latter she criticizes to be an out-worn metaphor for thinking since a mirror just reflects the same things, whereas diffraction “attends patterns of difference” (*MUH*: 29) and is creative: “diffractions involves reading insights through one another in ways that help illuminate differences as they emerge: how different differences get made, what gets excluded, and how those exclusions matter” (*MUH*: 30).

Ethics is in Barad’s view entangled with both ontology and epistemology, which she claims otherwise are “separate fields of study” within the metaphor “reflexion” (*MUH*: 90). Instead, she makes the neologism “ethico-onto-epistem-ology” (*MUH*: 90) which should be the outcome of diffractive thinking because they are not separable. She makes many new concepts by putting together known concepts or splitting them through hyphens. ‘Interaction’ becomes ‘intra-action’ in order to emphasize the entanglement between those interacting.

In general, Barad seems to use the concept ‘ethics’ whenever something or someone intra-act due to their entanglement. This goes along with her stressing that agency is not about a commitment one has, but something that takes place in given situations: “Agency is “doing” or “being” in its intra-activity” (*MUH*: 178). Barad makes the concept “cut” to differentiate where intra-actions take place or not, to discern what matters or not:

*Cuts are agentially enacted not by wilful individuals but by the larger material arrangement of which “we” are a “part”. The cuts that we participate in enacting matter. Indeed, ethics cannot be about responding to the other as if the other is the radical outside to itself. Ethics is not a geometrical calculation; “others” are never very far from “us”; “they” and “we” are co-constituted and entangled through the very cuts “we” help to enact. Intra-actions cut “things” together and apart. Cuts are not enacted from the outside, nor are they ever enacted once and for all. (MUH: 178-179)*

At first glance, this ethics seems to be a kind of relational ethics emerging out of given situations. Moreover, Barad has an affirmative reference to Emmanuel Lévinas (*MUH*: 391-192) and Martin Buber: “All real living is meeting.<sup>1</sup> And each meeting

matters” (*MUH*: 353, see note 1, page 466). Another place, however, she widens the scope completely: "Ethicality is part of the fabric of the world; the call to respond and be responsible is part of what is. There is no spatial-temporal domain that is excluded from the ethicality of what matters" (*MUH*: 182), at least in principle. Which kind of entanglements an agent is a part of, will, I presume, be what matters in a specific situation or instance.

Barad's ethics is, in my view, a meta-ethic. She gives no rules or principles, hardly any ethical cases either. In the following quote, she seems to discard consequentialism: "ethics is not simply about the subsequent consequences of our ways of interacting with the world, as if effect followed cause in a linear chain of events" (*MUH* p. 384). In general, she has very few references to ethical scholars, Lévinas being an important exception. Her ethics seems to be crystallized around the two concepts *mattering* and *entanglement*. The last chapter in *MUH* has these two concepts in the title "Toward an ethics of mattering" (*MUH*: 391). She combines the concepts in this quote a few pages earlier: "Ethics is about mattering, about taking account of the entangled materializations of which we are apart, including new configurations, new subjectivities, new possibilities – even the smallest cuts matter" (*MUH*: 384). By this, she broadens the ethical scope to encompass everything. Man is no island. We have responsibilities to more than other human beings, to everyone and everything we might be entangled with, and not only those close to us in space and time. Even standard thoughts about history and causality are challenged by Barad (*MUH*: 393, Barad, 2010: 180-181). Entanglements do not only hold for space, but also for time. Past, present and future are embedded in each other.

In this view, not only technical devices like computers, keyboards, screens, network and so forth are part of this entanglement, but also the whole structure and those responsible for its design, maintenance and use. Physical and socially constructed items are ethical agents like human beings because they are part of this web of possibilities and restrictions in which we live our lives. They are part of this web of love and hatred, which is typical for most people living today.

### ***Barad's ethics compared with Løgstrup's ethics***

I have already mentioned that Barad refers to Lévinas, as one of the few ethical scholars. There are also some striking similarities between Barad and Løgstrup, which seems to be a good argument for putting Barad in Bauman's category of the Eden-story. Such connection will do the combination of Barad with Løgstrup an easier task than Løgstrup with virtue ethics.

Løgstrup calls his ethics 'ontological' because of the unchangeable fact that "one person's life is entangled with other" (Løgstrup, 1971/1996: 20, see translation earlier in this article). Barad uses "ethico-onto-epistem-ology", with hyphens in order that these aspects should not be separable (*MUH* p. 90), or as she outlines it:

*... ethico-onto-epistemological questions have to do with responsibility and accountability for the entanglements "we" help enact and what kinds of*

*commitments “we” are willing to take on, including commitments to “our-selves” and who “we” may become. (MUH: 382)*

There is a difference compared to Løgstrup as far as the ethical demands due to entanglements are undisputable, whereas Barad seems by the phrase “willing to take on“, to let the agent have a certain degree of choice of how to act. On the other hand, Barad's agents may be understood more flexible than Løgstrup, by putting "we" and "our-selves" in citation marks. Her ethics are thus post-human, which involves more than humans as agents. However, so do Løgstrup to some extent in his own fashion in his later years. To put it short, his somewhat tricky to grasp the philosophy of sensation makes the universe, in how it comes to us by sensing, as a very potent agent:

*In sensation, the universe recedes before the sensed, totally. So engulfed are we by the universe in the sensation that there is nothing left in us that is not the universe. Sensing, we exist in the almost complete loss of independence before the universe. (Løgstrup, 1995: 6; Løgstrup, 1984/1995: 15)*

Or, to speak in Barad's language, we are so deeply entangled with our surroundings that they act upon us constantly.<sup>14</sup> Turned around, Løgstrup makes us responsible for how humans act upon both our natural and artificial surroundings, for instance, "landscape and city environment, flora and fauna" (Løgstrup, 1994: 243). Barad is, however, clearer on this point to include other agents than humans, because she grounds her position in the matter, and ask what kind of matter matters in entanglements? Humans are matter as well as animals, landscapes – and computers. The agentive roles of computers, and how these are entangled with other humans in digital social media for instance, are important to understand and include in our thinking and actions in order to act morally in our use of computers to whatever it might be used to – the temptation to bully for instance.

To sum up, the difference or addition to Barad's ethics compared to Løgstrup's ethics is first the way they argue for the responsibilities agents have because of their entanglements. Løgstrup argues philosophical based on phenomenology, basically as he was inspired by Hans Lipps (Fink and Stern, 2017: 1), whereas Barad argues from quantum physics. These different starting points strengthen the position of ontological ethics or ethics of Bauman's Eden-type. Secondly, Barad is clearer than Løgstrup in including artefacts as relevant agents in entanglements.

### ***What does Barad add to education in order to deal with cyberbullying?***

The last point mentioned above is essential to make Løgstrup's ethics more relevant to ethics in a digital era. The weakness of Løgstrup's sovereign expressions of life and ethical demands is that they seem to presuppose a direct sensuous connection between

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<sup>14</sup> In this article, Løgstrup's philosophy of sensation can only be mentioned and briefly touched. Løgstrup writes about sensation in the first chapter in his *Metaphysics III (Ophav og omgivelse)*, page 1-74 in Dees' translation *Metaphysics Volume II*. A helpful outline in Norwegian is prof. Svein Aage Christoffersen's article "Sanseløs og klaustrofobisk, noen sentrale perspektiver i K. E. Løgstrups sansefilosofi".

humans, which digital communication distorts. Buller and bullied are separated in space, at least, through the technology. Barad's ethics helps to overcome this gap by calling the technology as agents as well of the involved humans. Artefacts and technology are not ethically neutral. They enact. They matter.

The already mentioned Anne Wagner is concerned with the structural sides of the Internet because of its rhizomatic pattern where everything is entangled, using Barad's terminology. Wagner claims this has potentially enormous adverse effects on the participators, especially when being anonymously online, which enables bullying to a broader extent than offline: "removes physical congregation and/or social, moral and/or ethical barriers, and creates a close e-proximity between different actors without revealing any identities" (Wagner, 2019: 304). Using the Unesco Report "School Violence and Bullying" (Unesco, 2017: 15-20) she states that "E-users are less sensitive and show less empathy in their interaction online" (Wagner, 2019: 307). Thus, the concept of entanglement will explain how traditional virtue ethical prominent traits like empathy are under pressure and should be regarded as vulnerable when being online.

## Educational implications

Harrison's proposal for an education to deal with cyberbullying is to build in persons what he calls *cyber-phronesis* so that children and young people "can learn to 'self-police' their actions, through showing virtues, even when no one is watching" (Harrison, 2016: 237). This could be achieved, he thinks, through imaginative mindsets, narratives (moral exemplars) to "increase online empathy" (Harrison, 2016: 239). Education should be a kind of of laboratory where one could practice ethics in online situations and thus increase one's digital *Bildung*.

Harrison's project has evidently the task to achieve self-control of one's own actions, in order to reduce bullying. Empathy is part of being *phronimos*, in order to be able to imagine the effects of my actions upon others. Natalio Extremera et al. have, however, showed in a recent research article that empathy could also "protect against the negative symptoms associated with cyberbullying victimization" (Extremera et al., 2018: 1). If this is the case, this strengthens the purpose of *Bildung*.

Quantitative research by Thornberg and Jungert (2017) shows that harm-effect moral reasoning is negatively associated (-.42) with bullying, whereas callousness and uncaring is positively (.15 and .22) correlated. Harm-effect moral reasoning is achieved as "developed in the long-term memory through repeated experiences of social interaction" (p. 3), or a virtue ethical character achieved through *Bildung*, an ethical vocabulary.

Moreover, the works by Dorte Marie Søndergaard show that bullying is not necessary reasoned in a wish to be wicked, revenge or somewhat dichotomous thinking that distinguishes clearly between a bully and bullied. Instead, she points at the fear of social exclusion driven by the necessity of belonging as a cause for bullying (Søndergaard, 2012). This is yet another argument for the importance to foster empathy among children in Kindergarten and schools. Empathy is activated when people meet,

if Løgstrup is right about the ethical demands, the sovereign expressions of life, by the case of The Good Samaritan and that entanglements matter. Søndergaard also refers to Barad's "intra-acting enacting forces" (2012: 356) in her article.

Since it is better to deal with the causes than effects, Søndergaard's research indicates that the educators should first ensure belonging in a way that deals with the fear of social exclusion, cooperation rather than competition. Self-esteem should be grounded on qualities in oneself, rather than in comparison with others.

However, education in ethics should also be about the various forces in a human mind and cyberspace than counteract empathy. Løgstrup's model of history and culture could be helpful in this respect. Basic needs are at one time necessary to fulfil, but at the same time, this conquest to meet needs should be balanced by what he calls constraint, which has its ally in the senses and empathy. Input from senses are more abundant and more relevant in face-to-face meetings than online, so *Bildung* should primarily be built offline than online. Education in cyber-phronesis should, therefore, primarily be based on offline education where one's senses are fully available, and one's empathy and feelings could be tested and challenged by present persons. If offline empathy is not present in a sufficient amount, it hardly will ever be online.

Barad's focus of non-human agents is a valuable insight to think realistically about the role of the technological devices that furnish our daily life. A computer, mobile phone or laptop is an agent that gives us conditions in reaching out that was entirely out of reach just 25 years ago. Using a digital device can be immensely powerful, implying a responsibility when using a computer to both understand its effects and thus use it carefully, with *constraint* as Løgstrup would say it. As a receiver of messages on screen one could, to some degree, empower oneself with the thought that all those texting harmful messages may not know what they are doing and excuse them – to some extent. Getting too many harmful messages could also be met by closing the application or whole computer down, and thus stopping the messages to reach oneself. Discussing such possibilities to handle the technology could in itself be part of an educating towards cyber-phronesis, or what I prefer to call Digital Ethical *Bildung*.

## Conclusion

Tom Harrison's virtue ethical proposal for education in ethics to deal with cyberbullying, in order to achieve what he calls cyber-phronesis seems to be a good starting point and as a base for such undertakings. It should, however, be supplied with ordinary offline education towards children's and student's general *phronēsis* and *Bildung*. Since bullying, in addition to other things, could be a result of social anxiety general education in order to underpin the children's and student's self-esteem should not be neglected. Løgstrup and Barad's concept entanglement is essential to be aware of both to understand how we can affect others and be affected ourselves. Entanglement does not restrict itself to a face-to-face meeting, but use and management of cyberspace and communication devices should be considered as influential agents as well as people.

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