

Chapter 25 : A royal upbringing

The royal upbringing of the Enlightenment had its own special features. Since the aim was to form an enlightened monarch and autocrat, not a subject, freethinker or citizen, one could not copy the pedagogical literature straight off but it became a compromise. The old pedagogy aimed to preserve a state society that was given by God. The new 18th-century pedagogics would "liberate" man from old historical rubble - the child was born in a natural state, without innate qualities, like a "tabula rasa" (an empty painting), and could be brought up to (almost) anything.¹ This sounds good but the scheme was often the old-time sausage stuffing & that the children would in different ways be hardened against the adversities of adult life. The royal children were to be isolated from the rest of society so that they did not get wrong ideas about their role. In addition, they would be protected.

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Gustaf III and his son Gustaf IV received an isolated special upbringing as above. In the case of King Gustaf III, it has been mentioned most for his extensive knowledge, grandiose self-image & that he was so incredibly awkward in his dealings with women. His son Gustav IV received a similar education with similar consequences.²

The Bernadotte's upbringing was not so extreme. Charles John himself had a rudimentary schooling & was largely self taught. His son Oscar I had before his arrival in Sweden a governess, a tutor & 1.5 years in a French state school. This would change completely upon his arrival in Sweden, where his father tried to emulate his predecessors. He published a manifesto³: The son would receive a comprehensive education, become Swedish, develop male virtues & like other citizens improve themselves in a profession. In the spirit of the philosophers, one could not simply be a crowned regent. You had also to earn the title.

It is doubtful whether Oscar I ever grew into his role as ruler. His tutor Lemoine seems to have protected him from the worst excesses. Oscar's royal education also started well late in life to be really effective. Even the later Bernadotte has not received a royal education in the classical sense, new ideas interfered. I describe a number of experiences.

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Charles XV and his brothers were educated at home by experienced teachers. This started from the age of seven, so they avoided their royal predecessors' experiences of learning Latin as a second language at the age of three and such. They did not have any classmates because Charles John feared a future rule of favourites. The group consisted of teachers, siblings, servants & court officials. They would not be indulged why the teachers were actually allowed to punish them. However, that soon ceased. All the brothers were addressed as Prince + name to inculcate their position. The teachers Aubert & Carlsson wrote a diary:

Inga-Lisa Petersson summarizes Carlson's diaries say that the royal part of the teaching was a character education based on bible, catechism, patriotism and historical and literary role models. Add knowledge of the country's laws, religion &

¹ Locke 1689 & 1693; Rousseau 1762.

² Anna Larsdotter. En aktör på världens teater. Populär historia, 1992:1; Astrid Ohlsén. Kronprins Gustav Adolfs hårda fostran. Populär historia, 2007:5.

³ Karl XIV Johan. Instruktion. Post- och Inrikes Tidningar, nr 134, 1812-11-12.

history. Carlson's ideal prince is similar to Marcus Aurelius and his princely ideology similar to Aurelius' 2,000-year-old stoicism: "One is born into one's lot. Play the game, because nothing else exists." In 1838, Charles (speaking of the corresponding thoughts in the catechism) wondered. "If you are born into a high position, is it permissible, to desire a lower?" No, it wasn't.⁴

Marcus Aurelius was part of the education of the royal children throughout the 19th century as part of their character education. He was also the role model and ideal prince of Frederick II of Prussia and Queen Victoria. Stoicism as philosophy of life is multifaceted, but the directions have in common that nature is inexorable but the will is free. The following quote gives an idea of what it meant:

"Life becomes, as the Stoics more than once tell us, like a play which is acted or a game played with counters. Viewed from outside, the counters are valueless; but to those engaged in the game their importance is paramount. What really and ultimately matters is that the game shall be played as it should be played. God, the eternal dramatist, has cast you for some part in His drama, and hands you the role. It may turn out that you are cast for a triumphant king; it may be for a slave who dies in torture. What does that matter to the good actor? He can play either part; his only business is to accept the role given him, and to perform it well. Similarly, life is a game of counters. Your business is to play it in the right way. He who set the board may have given you many counters; He may have given you few. He may have arranged that, at a particular point in the game, most of your men shall be swept accidentally off the board. You will lose the game; but why should you mind that? It is your play that matters, not the score that you happen to make. He is not a fool to judge you by your mere success or failure. Success or failure is a thing He can determine without stirring a hand. It hardly interests Him. What interests Him is the one thing which he cannot determine – the action of your free and conscious will."⁵

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When Charles had learned enough French, he was allowed to eat with his grandfather and account for his progress. During the meal, Charles John used to interrogate him which Charles anticipated with trepidation.⁶ Perhaps grandfather also received reports from the teachers. In Carlson's diary & reports Charles was until the confirmation in 1841 described as close to unmanageable - lazy, unruly & unconcentrated - and then experiences a total reversal (den Lidnerska knäppen). When a teacher in this way commits character assassination on his pupil, one should probably take a break and sort out what is behind it. As far as I have been able to determine, there were six separate conflicts:

1. As regent-designate, Charles believed that he could demand a respect from the teachers that he did not receive.
2. As regent-designate, Charles was assumed by the teachers to show unrealistic personal maturity.
3. His father and grandfather jointly attempted to force him into a royal role corresponding to their own - a calculating power player - which did not suit his

⁴ Petersson 1990.

⁵ Murray 1964.

⁶ Eriksson 1954: s. 22.

temperament, his teacher's views on kingship or the constitution: For Carlson, the monarch was the humble servant of the people. For Boström he symbolized the nation. For Aubert he was a power player.

4. Nor was Charles a particularly intelligent or diligent pupil, but a mediocre who was pushed beyond his abilities, which was always pointed out to him.
5. His own life and the siblings' was like living in a tin can, which led to endless conflicts between them, varying between squabbles and fights.
6. Because he was an educational project, his progress was closely monitored. Every attempt to evade the surveillance by staying away in the servants' regions, refusing to state "his true feelings" and/or not providing "correct" answers in the progress reports that Carlson forced him to write, led to further conflicts of obstinacy, disloyalty & lies.⁷

The isolation left its mark. All the brothers' social training was severely neglected. None of them behaved naturally in company. King Oscar II later placed his children in a public school so that they would avoid his experiences.

A comment: It seems incredible that even in high school, the brothers could have studied 43 hours à week. There are reports that Boström & Aubert grew tired and devoted themselves to playing chess instead of teaching. Boström was so disgruntled with their confined existence that he quit. There was no time put aside for homework, possibly it took place in the afternoons and/or weekends. The schedule seems wishful thinking, and must have been ignored or revised.

As an adult, Charles was felt to be unbearably self-absorbed. It seems to have been related to the fact that the environment did not know how to deal with him, and Charles through his incessant talking "filled the void". In his university diary he discusses his life situation. Most of it is about a cult of friendship - a simple & natural interaction beyond social positions & class boundaries. He wanted to avoid public life with its demands for a performance. What he disliked the most was never being able to trust people. That they sought him out to gain benefits, or out of sheer curiosity, not because they appreciated his person.⁸

The Uppsala period, Charles made contact with an odd mentor - professor of theoretical & practical medicine Israel Hwasser (1790-1860). Hwasser represented the Romantic natural philosophy in medicine and derived most of it from imbalances between the spirit and the body. Charles & Gustaf spent hours with Hwasser extemporizing on everything possible. Charles later claimed that Hwasser was he "who made him human, who taught him to value the purely human part of himself."⁹

Oscar II also acquired a "soul doctor", art curator Johan Böttiger, who helped him in his search for the meaning of life.

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Gustav V's upbringing was based on the fact that he must learn unconditional obedience before three years of age. Gustaf was perceived as slow and uninterested - probably some kind of protest - but did what he was told. The pedagogy was that if he did not finish eating

⁷ Eriksson 1954: ss. 58-78.

⁸ Hallendorff 1924: ss. 17-18.

⁹ Bååth-Holmberg 1891: s. 17.

in the allotted time, the food was taken away from him. If he cried, he was soft. If he failed, he was shamed. This was interspersed with games and pranks. Starting at the age of four, he received individual instruction in reading & writing. Then he, the brothers and some boys from the parents' circle of acquaintance started in "castle school". This was formally a preparatory elementary school and followed that study plan.

Gustaf's moral education was through Christian charity: "New Year's Eve [1865], the Duke and Duchess of Östergötland brought twelve poor children into their palace at Gustaf Adolfs torg, who, after being washed etc., received new cloths, and were dressed up. The children then had to sit down at the table and eat their fish and porridge, etc. After the meal, the princely children distributed their Christmas gifts from last year to these poor and when parting they received both money and a splendid Christmas bun."¹⁰

Gustaf's upbringing was in all essentials identical to the upbringing of the English heir to the throne, Edward VII (1841-1910). Edward's parents reportedly followed the advice of the German physician Baron Christian Fredrik Stockmar (1787-1863). He wrote a number of memos that were later published: The most important advice was that in the early years the child's natural [selfish] instincts were to be suppressed in favour of obedience, purity of the soul and sense of duty - "honest, truthful and high minded". The school education had be designed in such a way that the monarchy as a form of government appeared to be the only reasonable option. In addition to this, a comprehensive training was necessary because nobody knew what the future was like. "The proper duty of the Sovereign of England, was not to take the lead in change, but to act as a balance-wheel on the movement of the social body."¹¹ To do so, the monarch must know his kingdom in detail.

The demands, the special treatment, the surveillance & the constant adult companions made Gustaf so passive but at the same time "precocious" that his parents began to worry about his character development and finally put him in a private school, to give him a change of environment. His classmates came along. Gustaf also spent several long periods with relatives in Germany. Afterwards he attended high school at the "castle school".

Gustaf's school days can be summed up as never being left alone and everyone wring reports about him. During his time abroad Gustaf also wrote letters home and diaries. In spite of this, Gustaf's inner life is hard to discern. He appears to have been equal to the Stasi-atmosphere and lived in inner exile. There is no record of him ever entrusting himself to anyone - neither parents, teachers, brothers or peers - and that can be seen in the sources.

According to the reports, Gustaf was mediocre: Ambitious but slow. Promising but inhibited. Receptive but unimaginative. He did what he was told but took no initiative of his own. Intelligent but not intellectual. Intellectual but not a reader. Competent but difficult to express himself. Etc. There was also much self-praise from Lundberg about how he had won Gustaf's trust and adapted the pedagogy to the student's needs & limitations. However, you can trace a certain aggression against Lundberg's ungrateful royal student.

¹⁰ Post- och Inrikes Tidningar, 1865. I: Wennerholm 1982: s. 15.

¹¹ The Press, 1910-05-09, s. 11.

With this upbringing one might think that Gustaf had never met a woman before his marriage, but he actually spent a lot of time during the German stays with his female cousins.

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Development was not linear. Gustaf VI and his brother Wilhelm grew up in the style of the Prussian royal house. This had to do with their mother Victoria, who had herself been raised according to John Locke's recommendations from 1693 and similar authorities. What has been most talked about is her broad education & that she would be hardened by sleeping under a thin blanket so that she froze. She also learned that her own wishes were unimportant. What was important was the demands made of her as a princess. Anders Jarlert refers in his biography to a contemporary German handbook in pedagogy¹² that describes the difference between a bourgeois upbringing and a "princely upbringing". A citizen is brought up for his own good. A prince is raised for the common good. The citizen's education is aimed at developing his or her abilities. The Prince's upbringing aims to impress upon him what his or her social status requires. The manual calls it a "princely consciousness": Being princely meant power, responsibility, privileges, duties, restraints & expectations. The prince was more accountable than other people, but only in a theoretical sense. Other people could be disciplined by their peers. The prince had only self-discipline.

This was a recipe for shaping autocrats & weirdos and a poor fit to the Swedish spirit of the time. In order not to be infected by the surrounding area, the children had no classmates & the intercourse was screened. The first information about Gustaf VI's upbringing is from retired horse guard Carl Fredrik Malm. He remembered him from the courtyard as a three-year-old toddler, "but no one dared speak to the boy..."¹³ Prince Wilhelm has since presented it as he and Gusti living in total isolation from their peers, but that was clearly not the case. However, their lives were tightly structured:

They were never left to their own devices but their time was always occupied by various program items. At this and that time do this, then switch to something else and so it went. One day I [Carl Svedelius] took it upon me to lecture the Crown Prince Couple about my views on education. Even princes need to be left alone and are not well served by constantly being rushed from one thing to another. My royal audience listened with great interest and in particular the Crown Princess thanked me warmly for the sensible points I made.¹⁴

Gustav V is usually acquitted of responsibility for this & the like, everything is blamed on the wife, but they seem to have shared an exaggerated view of the special position of the Swedish royal house. All later royalty have at least periodically attended public school. They have certainly been given special treatment there too, but not to such an extent. For example, for Crown Princess Victoria in primary school: The teachers would name her Princess, but the children would choose her own address. Afterwards, CG invited the editors-in-chief to the castle and asked them to leave Victoria and her classmates alone in the school yard - preferably not write anything at all. Nearly all information about Victoria's education is therefore from much later. However, she was not an ordinary student:

¹² Meyer 1898: s. 499.

¹³ Tigram. [Margit Siwertz.] Femtio år i kungens tjänst. Vecko Journalen 1939:5, ss. 24-25.

¹⁴ Fjellman 1952: s. 21.

My little brother Johan was a classmate of Victoria and has told a lot of “stories” about how impressed the guys were by the bodyguards - wow, REAL special police guys outside the classroom! And a big, cool black car waiting to take her home. To the castle! All the classmates of Victoria thought it was supercool, but not herself. She just wanted to be like everyone else. An ordinary girl with normal parents. I also remember when we were at end terms and some (horrible I think) parents promptly tried to get their children to stand near the princess so that they got a picture of their kids with the Queen and Victoria. Know that Mom sighed and said how sorry she felt - that Victoria could not be treated like everyone else.¹⁵

Victoria withdrew into her shell and even spent some time in America (anonymously) to gain some perspective on life. The compromise seems to have worked. Victoria is royal, but no more than her position requires.

¹⁵ Mia Roswall. Klasskamrat med Victoria! SvenskDam.se, 2009-11-25.

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