

Wolfgang Brezinka. *Pädagogik in Österreich. Die Geschichte des Faches an den Universitäten vom 18. bis zum Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts. Band 1: Einleitung: Schulwesen, Universitäten und Pädagogik im Habsburger-Reich und in der Republik. Pädagogik an der Univer.* Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000. 1060 pp. EUR 123.00, gebunden, ISBN 978-3-7001-2908-0.



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A History of Pedagogy in Austria

Paedagogik in Oesterreich, vol.1. is a welcome attempt in the writing of an institutional history for a much neglected field of study. It is to be followed by another volume on Prague, Graz and Innsbruck, while the third volume will focus on the Universities of Cernowitz, Salzburg, Linz, the Economics University of Vienna and the University of Klagenfurt. The author is to be congratulated in undertaking to write the first volume, for several reasons. The research that went into this work is breathtaking -- spanning times and systems, ideas and two World Wars. Brezinka's work makes a serious contribution to the history of pedagogy in Europe as a whole. And yet *Paedagogik in Oesterreich* disappoints because of its lack of clarity and poor organization. It is far too long to be read by any but the most ardent followers of Habsburg history.

The book is largely based on documents found in Viennese archives and the Ministry of Education, a dozen or so German university archives, and letters and journals. It comprises the work of a lifetime. Curiously, though, the journal

History of Universities is absent among the sources. To his credit, the author uses some Polish and Slovenian reference works, but the overall lack of non-German sources is striking.

The book has four basic sections. The first covers the history of pedagogy in twelve chapters, from the period from Maria Theresa's reign to the establishment of the first chair of pedagogy in 1806-1810. Included is a welcome discussion of non-German universities such as the Universities of Pavia, Lemberg (Lviv), Krakau (Cracow), Olmuetz (Olomouc), Budapest, Agram (Zagreb) as well as Laibach (Ljubljana) and Klausenburg. This part is followed by twenty-five uneven chapters about the theological (both Roman Catholic and Protestant), medical, and sports faculties in Vienna (pp. 231-494). The third section covers the Nazi period and its effects on the various pedagogical faculties in Vienna from 1938-1945. The fourth focuses entirely on the post-war period, 1945-1999 (pp. 494-889). There is a useful appendix of nearly two hundred pages of letters, pictures, registers, memoranda and literature (pp. 890-1005) but the reader is left without a badly needed conclusion.

A decisive ending would have helped to restate a series of important details and added to the overall clarity of the book.

Until the Revolution of 1848, the Catholic Church held a near stranglehold on education, and thus on pedagogy in the Habsburg Monarchy. For instance, in 1770 nearly all *Gymnasien* were run and directed by the church. Out of a total of 79 schools, 37 were Jesuit run, 24 by Piarists, 6 by Benedictines, 11 by other orders and 1 by *Welt-priester* (p.13). The two reforms of importance in 1805 and 1824, during and after the devastating Napoleonic wars, gave some impetus to pedagogical studies but in effect proved far too weak to overcome the importance given to the study of religion. Already by 1774, pedagogy was made a *Pflichtfach*, an obligatory object of study for all students of theology and future teachers known as *Lehramtskandidaten*. Later, pedagogy took on some importance when all students were required to take a course for two hours a week as part of the *Philosophicum*, a two-year transitional period between the *Gymnasium* and the graduate studies at the university.

One outstanding reformer of pedagogy during the first half of the nineteenth century is Vinzenz Eduard Milde (1777-1853), bishop and later archbishop of Vienna. His textbook *Lehrbuch der allgemeinen Erziehungskunde zum allgemeinen Gebrauche der oeffentlichen Vorlesungen*, proved highly successful and was translated into half a dozen languages. Had the government followed his advice, the Habsburg educational system would have been far more responsive to the needs of its people prior to the revolution of 1848. Indeed, in the 1870's Friedrich Dittes, the director of Vienna's pedagogical institute, remarked: "Haette man im Geiste Mildes das oesterreichische Bildungswesen gestaltet, so wuerde man ein halbes Jahrhundert fuer den Fortschritt gewonnen haben" (p. 245).

There are, however, some fundamental weaknesses to be found in *Paedagogik in Oesterreich*

in relation to events caused by the 1848 Revolution. While it is true that Franz Exner, the philosopher on loan, so to speak, from Prague to the Ministry in Vienna was indeed the 'spirit of the educational reform', Brezinka fails to include the mathematician Hallaschka, who worked with Exner on the educational reforms. But, more important, the author does not assign any philosophical connections between Wilhelm von Humboldt's well-known educational reforms in Prussia (1809-1812) and the Habsburg reforms. This is a serious omission. Moreover, there is also little discussion of the all important *Lehr- und Lernfreiheit*, which radically transformed Habsburg universities from insignificant *Beamtenfabriken* into modern research-oriented institutions. Also, the section on Count Leo Thun-Hohenstein, the conservative reformer and Minister of Religion and Education (1849-1860) who believed himself to be "the cornerstone against the Revolution", is at best, incomplete. While it is general knowledge that Thun was to a large degree opposed by most cabinet ministers and, as a result, was very close to resigning, it was none other than Franz Joseph I who supported the embattled minister during the heady days of neoabsolutism (1851-1860). [1]

There is also little, if any, discussion of the effects of the 1855 *Konkordat*, and its ultimate termination in 1871, on pedagogy. A more thorough description of these events would help the reader to gain a better understanding of the various political complexities at work, which either furthered or hindered the development of pedagogical studies in Vienna. This brings us to the next political issue: the rise of nationalism as enemy of the Habsburg multinational state. Unfortunately, Brezinka does not explain the political ramifications of Franz Joseph's opposition to liberal ideology, his failed political alliance with Pius IX and the Vatican, and as such the conflict of nationalism at the university level.

In 1871, the University of Vienna finally re-established its chair of pedagogy. A few years later,

in 1877, the pedagogical seminar followed, a late comer if compared with other German universities that established their seminars a generation earlier. Moreover, pedagogical studies and the seminar were seen by many academics as a kind of fringe study and, as such, considered secondary. However, by the turn of the century the seminar had increased to about 150 students. From 1900 on, pedagogy gained steadily in prominence along with related studies such as psychology, social anthropology, or sociology. This development is particularly evident in the inter-war period as well as in the years since 1945.

While it is undeniable that the First and Second World Wars had an incalculable effect upon the University of Vienna, and thus on pedagogy, Brezinka achieves a high point when writing about the Nazi years. He details the effects of Nazi indoctrination on Viennese pedagogy, which lasted long after the Second World War had ended. One of the preeminent pedagogues during this period was Richard Meister (1881-1963), a classical philologist and President of the Austrian Academy of Sciences in the post-war years. Meister symbolizes to a large degree Austria's ambivalence over past events. A scholar and political conservative, Meister, while distrusted by the Nazis, did not, like others, directly oppose them. So he remained at the university but was forced to lecture on classical philology and leave pedagogy to more loyal academics.

Astonishingly, little if anything is written about Sigmund Freud's relevant connection with pedagogy, or more importantly even about Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and the rise of Gestalt psychology. This intellectual void is most unusual in such a work. A recent study on the University of Vienna concluded that 45% of all university staff were either dismissed or forced to flee because of Nazi purges. [2] For Brezinka and many others, Austria had inevitably plunged into a kind of static provincialism.

Slowly the study of pedagogy re-emerged at the University of Vienna without any ominous nationalist interpretations and interference. Democracy, though, brought other difficulties in its wake. Since the 1960s admissions rose dramatically at the university in general, and in particular in pedagogical studies. The apparent silver lining of university expansion included some debilitating features. While student numbers increased greatly, academic standards declined. There are several reasons for this. For one, many professors took on too many master's or doctoral students, with diverse interests and specializations. They could not possibly meet the academic demand. This inevitably led to a subsequent lack of professional supervision, political interference and student pressure. Brezinka does not mince words about this (pp. 522-537). Whatever the reasons for this intellectual malaise, it is evident that no outstanding pedagogue appeared on the scene in the last decades.

In conclusion, whereas Brezinka portrays the development of the University of Vienna's chairs of pedagogy in great detail and with care, it is nonetheless a work with serious shortcomings. Above all, as stated previously, it is far too long. While at times the book is quite fascinating, scholarly and most useful, at others, reading becomes tedious. A conclusion would have been most helpful at the end of nearly eight hundred pages of information. And yet, Brezinka's work is a worthwhile addition to the study of pedagogy at the University of Vienna since it offers much information about the history of the field at Vienna's faculties, and one awaits the arrival of a more compact volume on Prague, Graz, and Innsbruck with anticipation.

Notes:

[1]. On Thun, see Peter Wozniak, "Count Leo Thun: A Conservative Saviour of Educational Reform in the Decade of Neoabsolutism". *Austrian History Yearbook* 26 (1995), pp. 61-81, and Christian Thienen-Adlerflycht, *Graf Leo Thun im Vor-*

maerz: Grundlagen des boehmischen Konservatismus in Oesterreich (Veroeffentlichungen des oesterreichischen Ost-und Suedosteuropa-Instituts 6, Graz-Vienna-Cologne: Boehlau, 1967). See also *Die Protokolle des oesterreichischen Ministerrates (1848-1867). Abteilung III: Ministerium Buol-Schauenstein. 14. April 1852-13. Maerz 1853.* Bearb. von Waltraud Heindl. Vols. 1-3 (Vienna: Oesterreichischer Bundesverlag, 1975-1984), especially vol.1, pp. xix-xxii. Cf. with Waltraud Heindl, "Universtaetsreform - Gesellschaftsreform: Bemerkungen zum Plan eines Universitaetsorganisationsgesetzes in den Jahren 1854-55". *Mitteilungen des Oesterreichischen Staatsarchivs* 35 (1982), pp. 134-149, and Waltraud Heindl, *Gehorsame Rebellen: Buerokratie und Beamte in Oesterreich 1780 bis 1848.* (Vienna-Cologne-Graz: Boehlau, 1991).

[2]. Kurt Muehlberger and Thomas Maisel, *Rundgang durch die Geschichte der Universitaet Wien.* 2nd ed. (Vienna: Archiv der Universitaet Wien, 1999), p. 13. On Freud and related pedagogical issues, see Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York and London: Norton, 1988), pp. 597-651.

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