

Die Forderung, daß Auschwitz nicht noch einmal sei, ist die aller-
erste an Erziehung. Sie geht so sehr jeglicher anderen voran, daß

Appell Unterzeichnen

Plea

to the conference of secretaries of culture and education, the county ministries of science, the federal ministry of science, as well as to all Universities and Colleges in Germany

Why the examination/ analysis of the NS-era – the NS-atrocities, the NS-ideology and the NS-pedagogy – should be firmly established in the study of pedagogy

1.
Moral principles and a democratic orientation are essential to the study of pedagogy. Whether teachers or social workers – whoever studies pedagogy and expects to be active in this field, will be dealing with people from largely differing backgrounds and circumstances. Specific professional expertise is not the only basic requirement for a pedagogic occupation, but in the study of pedagogy it is especially crucial to examine fundamental questions and problems of the occupation itself, to question and discuss these issues critically. The problems and limits of this occupation became nowhere as apparent as in the theory and practice of NS-pedagogy, which played an essential role in the dissemination of NS-ideology and in the preparation of the murderous NS-atrocities/ NS-crimes. The use of pedagogical techniques with the goal of ideological indoctrination and a radical dehumanization of marginalized and to-be-marginalized groups of people are important, extremely negative examples, that can clarify very precisely why a humanist and democratic pedagogy is necessary and where/that manipulation and indoctrination (can) also begin with the application of modern techniques and scientific research. Therefore, “Education after Auschwitz” is a versatile task: The ability to say no, to not go along with everything, but also just the knowledge of the Death Camps, the KZs, the NS-Murder-program and the murderous NS-ideology are

– to briefly name only two aspects –
indispensable foundations.

2.
Today's reality in Germany has a history. A historical consciousness of the NS-crimes/atrocities and their dimensions is also necessary to understand their connections to the present. The knowledge of the globally singular, state-organized and on the technically highest advanced level executed murder of Europe's Jewish population and of the Sinti and Roma – whether infants, children, grown-ups or elderly, of everyone the NS-murderers could get their hands on – or the knowledge of the murders of tenths of thousands of people categorized as “worthless life”, who were reported by educators, teachers and doctors. The question about the influence of NS-ideology and NS-terror on the majority of the population, as well as the one about the resistance against the NS-regime and the suppression of the worker's movements organizations are also a part of this and structurally crucial/ crucial in structure. The fundamentals of all these areas can and should be treated as part of the preparations for the teaching vocation and other pedagogic occupations and should be thoroughly thought through.

3.
German society as a whole and especially its schools, are constantly subjected to the challenge to react adequately to the latest anti-

democratic and inhumane actions. This does not just mean the NS-oriented scene of organized Neo-Nazis or the partially homicidal cases of arson in refugee housings. Core-elements of an ideology of marginalization which borrows from NS-ideology already have a much broader base in society, so that scientific studies dealing with right-wing extremism rightfully refer to the “middle of society”.

To accept this challenge is also the task of all pedagogic occupations:

The understanding of the social and historical context are important not only for addressing content-related questions, but also concerns the accommodation of underage refugees in pedagogic institutions, which is of special import at the moment. But if nothing else, the point, in general, is to prevent marginalization and discrimination in pedagogical everyday-life. These often find expression in curses and insults that are directed at those groups that were targeted by the NS-Murder-program.

Where words like “Jew, Gypsy, Cripple” are used as insults for real (and everyone working in pedagogic practice knows that there are not occasional instances in any case), pedagogy is without a doubt also challenged concerning the NS-era. But not only there: Everywhere where mechanisms of discrimination, marginalization and insults bear fruits, for example also on the basis of religious belief, the well-educated educational worker has to react adequately. This means first and foremost siding with the discriminated, but also to aptly analyze the situation as a whole, to evaluate and react appropriately and at the same time to reflect one’s own role.

4. It becomes apparent in practice, that the students of educational sciences have very great interest in dealing with these questions as part of their education for their difficult occupations. Comprehensive studies that have taken place in Frankfurt since 2009 have proven that the often cited statement “We are sick of hearing it” is not true for the current generation of students of educational sciences. It could be shown in lectures and seminars dealing with NS-pedagogy in reference to NS-ideology and NS-crimes that were regularly evaluated between 2009 and

2015, how big interest in these topics is but also which gaps in knowledge exist. Critique was formulated, not regarding a too full-scale analysis, but on the contrary mostly regarding a too superfluous examination, especially if there were redundancies. Precisely the effects and mechanisms of NS-ideology evoke great interest. Therefore, the students should learn more precise details about the history of NS-ideology and its effects on today. They should discuss these topics as well as the issue of practical pedagogic of actions against discrimination and marginalization. Not least due to the students’ feedback, a concept was drafted as a pilot-project by the “Forschungsstelle NS-Pädagogik” that spans the whole pedagogic area with lectures and seminars. It also includes a collection of three minute impulse-videos on individual topics and original documents of NS-pedagogy and NS-indoctrination for analysis and discussion. It can serve as an inspiration for all pedagogic faculties of German universities and colleges.

„The prime demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not occur again. This priority before any other requirement is such that I believe I neither need nor should explain why. I cannot understand why this has been given so little concern until now. To justify this demand is monstrous in the face of the monstrosity that transpired“.

Theodor W. Adorno

(English translation by Rabbi Andrew Steiman)

The suggestion or rather the demand addressed to everyone responsible for the education of teachers and of students in other pedagogical occupations is to treat Adorno’s dictum not as an ornament, but as guidance for acting in the present. “Education after Auschwitz” is not a specialty topic. This means that from our point of view, that the examination and analysis of the NS-crime, the NS-ideology and the NS-pedagogy has to become firmly established in all pedagogic faculties across Germany. The already existing approaches have to be developed and should under no circumstances be cut out or made impossible while involving an ominous orientation towards practice.