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### Boundaries and Possibilities of Humanistic Higher Education in the Late Holy Roman Empire

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## GRENZEN UND MÖGLICHKEITEN 'ARTISTISCHER' HOCHSCHULERZIEHUNG IM SPÄTEN REICH

[English original of a German lecture later published in Reiner Schwinges (ed.), *Artisten und Philosophen. Wissenschafts- und Wirkungsgeschichte einer Fakultät vom 13. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert* (Basel: Schwabe, 1999), 233-46.]

1. High risk of error in projecting backward to 16-18 C questions useful for 19th but really invented by 20th. E.g. functionalism of much 20th C social science causes us to look for comparable functions in the remote past.

2. High risk of committing the Semantic Fallacy by assuming Artisten then were like Philosophen at a later time, operating in comparable frameworks of personal and community motive, expectation, and potential.

3. Finally, very high risk, given flexible structures of early-modern education, in focusing exclusively on "universities" or parts of them called "faculties" while overlooking other trends outside them.

4. My purpose is not to say much significantly new about "graduates of artistic faculties" 16-18 C., but to make a few points about the boundaries of the search for meaning about what scholars do discover. Perhaps by deconstructing and analyzing such heuristic categories of "professional studies", "units of socialization" and the "certification of knowledge" we can gain a few new insights into the great transformation that universities were beginning to undergo already in the Holy Roman Empire.

One chronic problem of educational and especially university history is its institutional base and bias. Every institution is unique -- there is no disputing that -- and the romantic overemphasis of uniqueness is one of the heritages of Rankean historiography that I do not advocate reviving. Thus recent literature on European universities that consciously stress comparative approaches<sup>1</sup> can only deal in relative "models" and ideal types to which very few real institutions completely corresponded. But if we must be careful about "reifying" the "type" called "university", especially in the pre-modern period, should we not also be careful to question some ancillary mental baggage we may carry to our task -- namely an assumption of a hierarchically primary role for universities in "education"? Even if we restrict ourselves to "graduates," whose pursuit of a degree might lead us to suppose a more "serious" professional reason for immatriculation than most "students", we may want to

consider in what way a degree in the faculty of arts could be compared to one in the traditional "higher" faculties as a sign of "professional" career intent. Can one speak of an emerging "profession" or professions based on that faculty?

One important corollary to these questions is: were there significant developments in "higher" education outside the world of universities, and what can they tell us? One immediately obvious answer lies in the creation of institutions of a new type during the 16th through 18th centuries -- academies of art, of science, and for the nobility. To the best of my knowledge, little attention has been paid to any conceivable linkage between universities and academies in these centuries, reflecting perhaps the mutual suspicion, contempt or ignorance of one type of educational institution for the other.

It cannot my task today to trace the development of the various kinds of academies or their relationship to universities. Nor can I dwell on the fortunes and significance of other kinds of new educational departure, such as the nobles' academies of the Baroque age, except to point out that the impetus behind founding these largely unsuccessful institutions in the Empire perhaps signified more for university education than merely their obvious link to such new foundations as Halle and Erlangen.<sup>ii</sup> What we might want to consider today is the degree to which these all these changes may have signaled the emergence of a new definition of a social role, what I might jokingly term the "professio artis."

It is a commonplace in older German-language literature on professions to emphasize the ethical weight placed on Beruf -- as well as paving the way to it with improved education -- by Luther and other Protestant reformers. Even in its secularized form, in the guise of "altruism", professional activity was until fairly recently assumed to have a high ethical value in English-language literature. One of the points historians like myself, dealing with the particular birth of late-modern professional structures and identity, must deal with is the pre-existence of a sense of professional consciousness that in some ways developed long before the emergence of the particular expertise and Wissenschaft invoked to justify the privileging of "professional" men. The clearest example of this can be found in medicine, a well-established profession centuries before doctors learned to diagnose and even cure with the aid of medical research in the nineteenth century. Indeed, the gradual disappearance of the craft-trained barber-surgeon (Wundarzt) by the middle of the nineteenth century indicated that university-

trained physicians were for the first time actually able to do something with the expertise imparted by science, and medicine became more than a form of mostly helpless learnedness in the face of grave illness.

What we can legitimately look for in the early modern period is the appearance of a beginning connection between the older idea of *Beruf* and a new idea of specialized learning other than that reserved for state and church functionaries and located in the law and theology faculties. If one searches for signs of this new connection only in the faculties of philosophy or arts, one may miss much important evidence, at least before the second half of the eighteenth century.

It is notable that German universities (like most elsewhere in Europe) resisted the expansion of the curriculum to encompass new educational and professional needs. Although the arts faculties had nominally included music and in some places architecture, these functions appear to have atrophied by the 18th century. Instead, such arts as painting and sculpture, which university masters had not been alone in regarding as mere crafts as late as the 17th century, since training for them lacked a high level of theoretical content, were elevated to higher status by the institution of royal academies. The main justification for arts academies was that, since the Renaissance, art had become a noble and theoretically-based profession, at least as carried out at royal and aristocratic courts. Unlike guild-trained painters and sculptors, the academicians were expected to know their classics and to be able to interact and converse with the court as "gentlemen." Polishing and finishing was also the aim of the other main kind of "academy" gaining popularity in Baroque-era central Europe, the Ritterakademie. This institution based its allure in part on the ability to impart secular and (to many scholars) frivolous instruction in the courtly "arts" of riding, fencing, dancing, and drawing, but also in practical knowledge of mathematics, physics, and modern languages.

It cannot be clear to what extent art or nobles' academies really attracted students away from universities, and particularly from their arts faculties. (Indeed, the same can be said of competition from the thickening network of Gymnasium-like schools. Cf. Eulenburg, *Frequenz* ??) But university reformers were keenly conscious of the need to incorporate changes that would make their institutions more attractive to the noble and wealthy classes in particular.<sup>iii</sup> The new University of Halle, established in 1694, was indeed grafted onto a

Ritterakademie, but its initial success in attracting scions of the nobility appears to have suffered from the temporary triumph of orthodox Pietist theologians over the immensely popular Enlightenment philosophy professor Christian Wolff in 1723. To be sure, the planners of the most self-consciously "reformed" university of the early eighteenth century, Göttingen, were hoping to attract "Vornehme und Ausländer" more by the quality of the law faculty than that of the Artisten. But the latter faculty was also consciously upgraded and modernized in curriculum, and it gradually established the new university's lasting fame, with an openness to new methods of approach to old subject matter that eventually produced new scholarly disciplines such as philology and history. Practical disciplines for administration, finance, and agriculture were introduced under the rubric of Kameralistik within the Artistenfakultäten.

As I have argued elsewhere, a self-conscious attempt to woo Vornehme from both the Empire and abroad from the late seventeenth century onward depended on diminishing the authority of traditional theological faculties in favor of instruction of a type more congenial to the social classes least likely to be attracted to the study of theology. This was in an era when the fortunes of Artistenfakultäten were at a low ebb, (Get stats on this ??). At the larger and more fashionable universities, law was one of the faculties to benefit from secularizing trends. (Medicine appears to have been held in relatively low esteem and attracted very few students.) But the law faculties were not the exclusive choice of the gentlemanly class: for those not contemplating a career in the civil service or administration, the philosophical faculty became a respectable home, evidently above and beyond its traditional "propaedeutic" function. (??) At the same time, pursuit of degrees in the Artistenfakultäten does not appear to have been characteristic of the class of gentleman-scholars. For one reason, a doctoral degree was more than a merely academic signifier -- it conferred on its holder an elevated social cachet somewhat analogous to a rank in the lower nobility, and this extra distinction was logically superfluous for many Vornehme.

The relativization of meaning of "faculty" boundaries may be illustrated by the case of Halle. Its fame and success was established in large measure by the presence of Wolff in the "philosophical faculty," although evidently very few of his auditors took degrees in that faculty. "Philosophy" was coming to have the non-academic and distinctly anti-scholastic meaning of Weltweisheit by the end of the seventeenth century. Thus students might be attracted to the fame (particularly achieved

by literary productivity) of a professor in the philosophical faculty, but they would likely still take their degrees in law, theology or -- in tiny numbers -- medicine. Even Wolff's large audiences appear to have come from students in the law faculty. As one of his colleagues in the philosophical faculty, the philologist Christoph Cellarius complained about the complexion of studies at the new university, ius, ius et nihil plus.<sup>iv</sup> Perhaps because opportunities to offer private courses were more abundant in the "higher" faculties, it was not uncommon still through much of the eighteenth century, even at the reformed universities, for members of the philosophical faculty to obtain the right to offer lectures in other ones at the same time. Of the philosophical professors at Halle, A. H. Francke actually lectured a great deal on theology; J. F. Buddeus held an aoP in theology; J. P. Ludewig switched into the law faculty; C. B. Michaelis, into theology; N. H. Gundling, into law; S. J. Baumgarten, into theology; and it was common for members of the law and medical faculties to offer lectures in the philosophical faculty as well.<sup>v</sup> Although the range of courses thought to belong properly to the philosophical faculty was emerging -- classical philology, history, mathematics, physics, modern languages, and some practical subjects -- a firm identity as either a "philosophical" career professor or student was still not cast.

Furthermore, the professionalizing role of philosophical or artist faculties in the early eighteenth century is made even more difficult to assess because of the particularism and local circumstances. Not only did some older, unreformed universities continue to have large artists' faculties; in some one cannot properly speak of a "faculty" in the 19th century sense, because students were immatriculated in a wide variety of categories, making it difficult to say what, if anything, these ascriptions meant. Bamberg University, for example, inscribed its students not only in theology and artes, but also in physics, metaphysics and logic during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>vi</sup> The fact that theologians made up four percent or less of the of all students and "arts" or "philosophical" students all the rest raises more questions about the "university" label for Bamberg than it answers. Several other universities also showed a preponderance of Arts/Philosophy inscribers (e.g. Freiburg, Heidelberg) or at least a sizable minority (Strassburg). But enrollments in the philosophical faculties of the newest (Kiel, Halle, Göttingen, Erlangen) and otherwise largest (Leipzig, Jena) universities of the eighteenth century were very low, not infrequently well under ten percent, and even lower than medical inscriptions.<sup>vii</sup>

There is considerable evidence to suggest that the decline in enrollments in the philosophical faculties at the newer universities was intended. The neglect of public lectures and the rise of the private lecture pioneered by the new universities (e.g. Halle and Göttingen) was but one sign of a shifting of financing away from the state and onto the private resources of the students, who had to pay fees to their professors for each private course. This shift must have had a chilling effect on the type of student both unprepared to enter the "higher" faculties and unable to afford extra preparation for them in the propaedeuticum of the Artistenfakultät. Even at the end of the eighteenth century, when Prussia introduced the Abitur, the motive was not to prevent Unreife from attending university, but only to prevent them from receiving financial aid to do so.<sup>viii</sup>

Yet it does not follow that policies intended to make the philosophical faculty marginal to the university and build up the legal faculties were necessarily an indication that the professio artis was a chimera. What may have been happening instead is that the center for socialization toward future professional activity remained in the traditional older faculties, but with the significant change that the content of that socialization was altering in the direction of modernity. Paradoxically, I would like to suggest, the declining significance of many traditional courses in the philosophical faculties of the more successful eighteenth-century universities -- rhetoric, grammar, logic, and metaphysics -- as well as the decline of Latinity and the associated old-humanistic disciplines -- accompanied the successful invasion of the traditional "higher" faculties by "philosophy" in the new sense of the word, based on "nature" and derived by "reason." Thus if we expect to find evidence of a trend toward professionalization among students of "arts and sciences," we may have to look -- in the 18th century -- at the faculties other than arts and sciences to find it!

It is also noteworthy, in this context, that the beginnings of neohumanistic university-level education for higher schoolteachers, such as found in the philological seminars of Halle and later Göttingen (under Gesner and Heyne), and which would become in the nineteenth century one of the foundations of the transformed philosophical faculties, consisted entirely of theology-faculty students to begin with. Significantly, the candidates admitted to the seminar had explicitly to finish a stated course in the philosophical faculty, a requirement

pointing to the assumption that even students bound for higher schoolteaching no longer were expected to obtain lower degrees from or even exposure to that faculty.<sup>ix</sup> At the same time, the tendency for eighteenth-century Göttingen students to seek "encyclopedic" knowledge drew many from the higher faculties to Heyne's lectures, which covered a wide range of humaniora.<sup>x</sup>

Teaching had of course for centuries been the career most obviously open to students of philosophical faculties. But as a profession it was, if one was lucky, only a temporary one. One the most characteristic differences between modern professions as they emerged in the nineteenth century were their permanent, lifelong character. Schoolteaching in the seventeenth and eighteenth century was many things, but it was not yet a desirable lifelong profession. The medieval tradition of magistri teaching the candidate baccalauri in the Artistenfakultät while attempting to qualify for a doctorate in one of the higher faculties still has faint echoes in the practice late-20th-century American universities, with the major exception that the magistri are seeking higher degrees in the Arts and Sciences faculties. The meaning of baccalaureate and master degrees appears to have been in decline in the baroque age, judging by the sparse statistics available.<sup>xi</sup> Schoolteaching often remained a very poorly paid way-station to a higher calling, such as a church office or pastorate, or a dead-end marking practitioners as "distinctly second-class citizens of the clerical estate."<sup>xii</sup> It is arguable that the lower university degrees lost value as professional credentials, and there is little evidence that employers of educated men required them, although they may have done no harm. From early on the Prussian state guaranteed "besondere Beförderung im Staatsdienst für diejenigen, welche mindestens zwei Jahre in Halle fleißig studiert und sich eine gute Humanitätsbildung angeeignet haben,"<sup>xiii</sup> but the time spent, not a formal degree or certificate of knowledge was the key. In Great Britain, indeed, the master's degree had sunk, after the Restoration Period, into a purchasable commodity and thus indicated more the wealth and social status of its holders than any shred of additional learning.<sup>xiv</sup>

A further barrier to "professional career ladders" for graduates of the philosophical faculties, particularly in German Catholic states, consisted of the grip of the Society of Jesus on both higher schooling and instruction in those faculties. The relatively high number of Artisten at some Jesuit-dominated universities in the eighteenth century appears to reflect the blurred distinction between pupils in the higher levels of urban



schools and students at the university. The same blurring is evident with their clerical schoolteachers, who frequently doubled as professors at the local philosophical faculty. The rotational procedures of the Jesuit Order undermined chances that professors in the philosophical faculties would be able to develop a life-long commitment to a professorial career at one institution.<sup>xv</sup>

Just as higher schoolteaching has often been described as a way-station to more permanent and better-remunerated "real" careers, teaching in the philosophical faculty does not seem to have been a desirable or permanent goal for university graduates, and not even a thinkable one for members of the Jesuit Order. Even in a relatively well-endowed Gymnasium such as that of the Graues Kloster in Berlin or the Latin School of Flensburg, the turnover among rectors was astonishingly high in the seventeenth century (less than five years), and only the eighteenth century witnessed a trend toward rectorates of prestigious schools becoming a life-long career.<sup>xvi</sup>

Yet there is ample evidence that reformers in Germany's Catholic states were eager to emulate the success of Halle and Göttingen even before the suppression of the Jesuit Order in 1773. The formula of suppressing theological quarrels, tolerating other denominational viewpoints, emphasizing practical and worldly knowledge in an "enlightened" fashion was attempted with varying degrees of success in such settings as Cologne, Bonn, Trier, Mainz, Erfurt, Würzburg and Münster, among others.<sup>xvii</sup>

Let me now move one from these somewhat detailed examples of the Problematik of Artistenerziehung to some generalizations about it. First, we can perhaps agree with traditional interpretations describing universities in general and philosophical faculties in particular as being "in crisis" by the eighteenth century. The traditional functions of the latter were increasingly questioned. The new Protestant universities de-emphasized their importance, and the unreformed universities, especially in Catholic lands, encountered increasing dissatisfaction with the largely outworn scholastic curriculum. Although historical scholarship will probably never have adequate statistics, we can probably also confidently agree that this crisis was reflected in both absolute and relative declines in both the number of students inscribed in and the number of students taking degrees from philosophical faculties.

Still, a crisis is often an opportunity (the Chinese

characters is the same for both meanings). The statistical and verbal testimony against the continued relevance of the faculties also speaks for the appeal of new or recast kinds of institutions, all of which were ready to abandon or modify the scholastic and Latin curriculum of the traditional Artistenfakultät. The Ritterakademie, although not a long-term success, demonstrated the "market need" for a worldly, courtly, modern and practical education for the upper social strata, few of whom would proceed to a higher degree in any field but law, and few enough of them to that. In many cases, the Ritterakademie made a transformation into the preparatory level for the higher faculties, as at Halle, Göttingen and Erlangen. One would also like to know more about the transformation of urban Latin schools into forerunners of Gymnasien, for much evidence points to an increase in the quantity and quality of such schools over the eighteenth century, as well as the modernization of their curriculum, the professionalization of their principal directors, and their taking up much of the propaedeutic burden formerly carried by the Artistenfakultäten. Although the student numbers at academies of art were relatively small, the perceived need to create a kind of higher education for painters, sculptors, and architects that was both gentlemanly and theoretical, i.e. beyond artisanal apprenticeship, shows another way in which specialized "learnedness" was coming to be linked to several Berufe. The establishment of other special academies for mining, engineering, building, medicine, agriculture and military science should also be looked at afresh in conjunction with the mounting demand for higher education that was both practical in application and "philosophical" in the rationalist sense. Although three percent of the relevant age cohort attending all types of höhere Schulen by the end of the eighteenth century does not strike us today as high, it represented a considerable increase over previous centuries, and contrasted with the falling enrollments in universities.<sup>xviii</sup> Die "Künste und Wissenschaften" -- so kann man von diesen Zahlen wohl schließen -- waren schon im Begriff, professionalisiert zu werden, nur fand dieser Prozeß vor und außer den philosophischen Fakultäten zuerst mal statt. Das (vorübergehende) Sinken der akademischen Grade an sozialem Wert widerspiegelt sich auch vermutlich in der Gepflogenheit dieser "neuen" Anstalten, keine Grade zu erteilen. Das fachliche Können war eher zu bescheinigen, nicht die Fähigkeit, auf lateinisch zu disputieren. The process of building "career ladders" starting with the certification of knowledge imparted by higher education was only beginning by the late eighteenth century.

As traditional Latin schools moved toward becoming

Gymnasien, the dual role of philosophical faculties in many locales as both highest classes of secondary school and Propädeutikum for berufsausbildende "höhere" Fakultäten began to dissolve, although never completely. Searching for new roles, professors began to teach non-traditional "practical" subjects, to some degree competing with new specialized higher education institutions, but also to reshape traditional curriculum to produce gelehrte Philologen rather than merely useful pedagogues. As Friedrich August Wolf mentored his Halle students,

he also prepared and encouraged them to establish themselves by pursuing a 'cold-blooded' publication strategy. What was needed was the kind of substantive scholarly contribution that was manageable for beginners but, unlike contributions to pedagogy, could be judged by criteria on which a community of scholars agreed.<sup>xix</sup>

As in the case of art academies, the professional raison d'etre of the self-transforming philosophical faculties, what raised them above the level of mere training through apprenticeship, was the claim to involve a high level of theoretical learning. The validation of such learning by extensive publication was a development in the course of the eighteenth century, although more because the resultant "fame" led to a larger student following (as well as income from publishing) rather than an ethic of Wissenschaft, which would only be firmly established in the early nineteenth century.

Finally, the curricular changes coming about in the eighteenth-century philosophical faculties coupled with the ultimate dying-off of Ritterakademien suggest that the faculties were in the end able to attract a clientèle for such emerging or transformed disciplines as history, philology, idealist philosophy, applied mathematics and Cameralia, giving them more a professionalizing than a school-like character. It would also be interesting to know exactly how these developments correlate with trends we can suspect but not prove very exactly, namely the secular increase in the average age of students.

These observations raise more questions than they answer, and hopefully indicate some of the perils of projecting backward notions of professionalization that work better in the past century and a half. Indeed we should be on our guard about university history as a genre, since so many histories have been written by graduates and professors of philosophical faculties,

with the likelihood that the activities of their own and well-known "family" might receive disproportionate emphasis and weight. Nevertheless, future research might be more fruitful if we think of the story not in terms of "the fall of the Artistenfakultäten" or "the rise of a few new zukunftsweisende Universitäten", but rather as one of sehr unterschiedlich transformation from the decline of propaedeutic and the rise of professionalizing functions for the "junior" faculty of universities.

#### NOTES

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Such as Hilde de Ridder-Symoens (ed.), The History of the University in Europe, vol. I, Universities in the Middle Ages (Cambridge, 1992).

ii See Charles E. McClelland, State, Society and University in Germany, 1700-1914 (Cambridge, 1980), especially chapters 2-3.

iii Götz von Selle, Die Georg-August-Universität zu Göttingen, 1737-1937 (Göttingen, 1937), S. 27

iv Wilhelm Schrader, Geschichte der Friedrichs-Universität zu Halle, 2 vols. (Berlin: Dümmler, 1894), I, 17.

v Schrader, Halle, I, 59-61, 139-41, 284.

vi Franz Eulenburg, Die Frequenz der deutschen Universitäten von ihrer Gründung bis zur Gegenwart, Photomech. Nachdruck der Ausgabe von 1904 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1994), S. 308.

vii Ibid., S. 313. Halle did not even bother to maintain an inscription list for the philosophical faculty until long after its founding. Schrader, Halle, I, 114.

viii Friedrich Paulsen, Geschichte des gelehrten Unterrichts, II, 95.

ix Paulsen, Geschichte, II, 25.

x Johann Stephan Pütter, Versuch einer akademischen Gelehrten-geschichte von der Georg-Augustus-Universität zu Göttingen, 2 Bde. (Göttingen, 1765-88), II, 347.

xi Eulenburg, Frequenz, Tabelle IV, "Zahl der Promotionen," 314-17.

xii Anthony J. LaVopa, Grace, Talent and Merit. Poor Students, Clerical Careers, and Professional Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Germany (Ca,bridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), S. 292.

xiii Schrader, I, 85.

xiv

Lawrence Stone, "The Size and Composition of the Oxford Student Body 1580-1909," in Stone (ed.), The University and Society, 2 Bde. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), I, 39. Sons of the well-born also increasingly used preferment and connections to obtain for themselves scholarships previously intended to support pauperes.

xv Robert Haaß, Die geistige Haltung der katholischen Universitäten Deutschlands im 18. Jahrhundert (Freiburg: Herder-Verlag, 1952), S. 19.

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- xvi Paulsen, Geschichte, I, 335-6.  
xvii Haaß, S. 31-76 et passim.  
xviii Heinz-Elmar Tenorth, Geschichte der Erziehung (Weinheim: Juventa, 1988), S. 85.  
xix La Vopa, Grace, Talent and Merit, S. 324.