

The Educational Influence of the Philosophy Department of the German Classical University

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Abstract: The educational influence of the German Classical University School of Philosophy is essentially a revolution in the institution of knowledge driven by both Enlightenment reason and the demands of the modern nation-state. In the 19th century, this educational model not only established the basic framework of modern higher education through systematic reconfiguration of disciplinary hierarchies, innovation of academic institutions and reshaping of teaching paradigms, but also triggered far-reaching institutional diffusion and cultural adaptation on a global scale. The Ximinar system and lecture system it created shaped the basic form of modern academic division of labor; The dialectics of the principle of academic freedom is reflected in the institutionalized balance between freedom of teaching and freedom of research.

Keywords: School of Philosophy; German university; The Humboldt Model

1. The Origin and Development of the School of Philosophy

German universities, like those in other European countries, are a product of the Middle Ages. The University of Prague, founded in 1348, was the first university in the German Empire at that time. The founding of the University of Berlin in 1810 opened a new chapter for German universities. The term “German Classical University” in academic history usually refers to the German university system from the late 18th century to the mid-19th century, particularly during the period of university reform marked by Humboldt’s educational philosophy. The universities of this period were not only the foundation of modern higher education in Germany, but also a crucial time for philosophy schools to transform from traditional liberal arts schools to modern comprehensive academic institutions.

1.1 The dual context of the origin of the institution

The institutional genes of the School of Philosophy can be traced back to the School of Arts in medieval universities, which at that time was an important component associated with higher colleges and was renamed from the original School of arts in the humanist movement. At first, the college of Arts served as a link between Latin schools and higher colleges in the university education system. At the Latin school, students mainly engage in language learning; At advanced colleges, students receive professional training in science. The special mission of the College of Arts is to make up for the lack of Latin school education by providing general education in science and philosophy. “The name of the School of Philosophy comes from the time when philosophy encompassed all sciences: cosmology and physics, logic and metaphysics, ethics and politics, etc. were all included in philosophy,” Paulsen pointed out.

1.2 Institutional breakthroughs in the transition of modernity

In the 19th century, the School of Philosophy had a large faculty and a large number of famous people, far exceeding the number of the other three schools. During this period, the rise of philosophy as the leading science was largely due to the contribution of Kant. Kant’s system of thought had taken over the dominance of universities before the end of the 18th century, replacing Wolfer’s philosophy. After Kant, speculative philosophy was under absolute control of the belief in reason, and the University of Jena became the first center of the new philosophy, where scholars such as Fichte taught and carried out important academic work. Subsequently, the newly established University of Berlin, with the influence of outstanding teachers such as Fichte and Hegel, replaced the University of Jena as the new center of philosophical research. In addition, Schlermacher had a significant influence through lectures on theology and

philosophy, while Herbart's positivist inclination gained high prestige among Austrian universities after the decline of the Hegelian school.

2. Characteristics of the educational paradigm of the School of Philosophy

2.1 Organizational form of the academic community

One is the lecture-based system, which forms a model of professor governance through the academic autonomy of full professors. The concentration of power is evident in the 23 philosophy seats established at the University of Berlin in 1820. This vertical governance structure guarantees academic freedom, but it also lays the hidden danger of disciplinary barriers. The second is the Schimmgner system. Take Schimmgner of Ranke History as an example. His three-stage cognitive training model, from mentor guidance to original document analysis to collective discussion, transformed history from a literary narrative to an empirical science. According to Bossen, Ranke required his students to spend twenty hours a week copying 15th-century Venetian diplomatic documents, and the final essay had to pass a public defense and be certified by the school. This knowledge-producing mechanism sent thirty-four professors of history to German-speaking universities in the middle of the 19th century and established the Prussian School with the doctrine of "telling history truthfully", whose influence has continued to shape the empirical tradition of modern historiography.

2.2 The rationalist philosophy of curriculum

Schlermacher advocated for the perfection of human nature through classical studies, making Greek and classical philosophy compulsory subjects, and his formal training theory emphasized thinking methods rather than practical skills, which echoed Humboldt's idea of the perfect person's education. According to the 1827 curriculum catalogue of the University of Berlin, philosophy courses accounted for 63 percent, with emerging disciplines such as experimental physics and comparative linguistics accounting for 28 percent. This hierarchical structure of basic and specialized disciplines laid the foundation for the modularization of modern curricula. Li pointed out that this educational model was essentially a wonderful blend of rationalism and romanticism, pursuing scientific rigor while emphasizing the full generation of individuality, and its internal tension became the driving force for academic innovation. This tension often leads to institutional contradictions at the practical level. For example, in the six-year training period of the Institute of Comparative Linguistics, there is a methodological conflict between the classical language training in the first two years and the field research in the last three years. This structural contradiction eventually gave rise to the division between the historical and structural schools within linguistics.

2.3 The practice of the concept of a perfect person education

The perfect education of the German Classical University School of Philosophy is the core spirit of its educational paradigm, embodying the deep integration of Enlightenment reason and new humanism. The concept of the perfect man is centered on Humboldt's full anthropogenesis of humanity, emphasizing the free development and spiritual perfection of the individual through philosophical and classical studies. This educational model is based on the new humanistic tradition, with courses in Greek, logic, and the history of philosophy as the foundation, aiming to develop critical thinking and rational reasoning through formal training rather than being confined to the imparting of vocational skills. As an important vehicle of methodological discipline, the Ziminner system requires students to master the rigor of empirical research in archival criticism and group discussions, thereby internalizing knowledge production as an academic way of life.

3. The Educational Influence of the School of Philosophy

3.1 Paradigm reconstruction of the concept of higher education

One is the institutionalized transformation of the academic Carisma. The School of Philosophy has built the foundation of modern academic legitimacy by shifting the academic Kalisma, as Weber described, from religious authority to rational authority. Humboldt's idea of pure science is essentially a secularized expression of Carisma: professors, as symbols of knowledge authority, transform academic charm into institutionalized processes of knowledge production through the system of Ximenaar. For example, Ranke asked apprentices to critically reconstruct historical narratives through the original archives, and this Carisma disenchantment process shifted academic innovation from individual talent to methodological discipline. The second is the cultural capital reproduction of the concept of the perfect person education. Chen Hongjie pointed out that the essence of perfect education is the process of cultural capital accumulation. The School of Philosophy shapes students' aristocratic thinking habits through classical courses such as Greek and philosophy, endowing them with the differentiating cultural capital as Bourdieu calls it. Sixty-three percent of the 1827 curriculum at the University of Berlin was philosophy, and its goal was not professional training but to cultivate critical thinking beyond pragmatism

through forms such as logic and rhetoric.

3.2 Disciplinary systems and the Reconfiguration of knowledge power

On the one hand, there is the lecture-based knowledge monopoly mechanism. The School of Philosophy has achieved vertical concentration of disciplinary power through the lecture system. Full professors not only control seat resources but also build closed academic communities through academic genealogies such as the Hegel-Feuerbach - Marx genealogy. Li pointed out that in 19th-century German universities, 80 percent of PHDS in philosophy were directly appointed as private lecturers by their mentors, creating intergenerational transmission of academic power. On the other hand is the paradox of the division of disciplines. Although Humboldt emphasized the integrity of knowledge, the establishment of research institutes within philosophy schools gave rise to modern disciplinary divisions. For example, the Institute of Comparative Linguistics at the University of Berlin, established in 1820, provided academic support for German nationalism through the study of the Indo-European language family, embodying Foucault's theory of the symbiotic relationship of knowledge/power.

3.3 The differentiated path of global influence

In the United States, Johns Hopkins University is most representative of the creative transformation of the Schiminer system. President Gilman introduced the German workshop model in its entirety, but reduced the theoretical proportion of the curriculum from 68% to 41% and added laboratory research to strengthen the application-oriented approach. The adjustment has brought the average annual output of papers to three times that of the University of Berlin, but at the cost of a shift in the academic focus towards pragmatism, Kong noted. This variation gave rise to the American model of research universities, which produced 23 local philosophy PHDS such as John Dewey in a decade, but it also led to the dilution of pure scientific ideas, creating an essential divide from the German prototype.

All in all, the influence of the German classical University School of Philosophy was essentially an unfinished modernity project that created a utopia for academic freedom as well as hidden dangers of instrumental rationality. In an era of artificial intelligence and interdisciplinary revolution, reexamining its legacy requires going beyond institutional imitation and returning to the ontological inquiry of "science as a way of life". As Kant emphasized in "The Academic Debate", the ideal that universities should become "the public domain of rational criticism" has increasingly shown its critical power beyond time and space against the backdrop of the homogenization of contemporary universities and the proliferation of instrumental rationality.

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