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History 133C

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*Bildungskatastrophe*

Georg Picht, “Tradition und Zukunft der Universität" ["Tradition and Future of the University"] (1963); in Irmgard Wilharm, ed., *Deutsche Geschichte 1962-1983. Dokumente in zwei Bänden* [*German History 1962-1983. Documents in Two Volumes*], vol. 1, Frankfurt am Main, 1989, pp. 231-33.

 A German philosopher, theologian, and educator, Georg Picht (1913-1982) was born in Strasbourg on the eve of the First World War.[[1]](#footnote-1) Following in the footsteps of his father (a scholar and intellectual himself), Picht studied both classical philology and philosophy in Freiburg, Kiel, and Berlin, alongside other notable German intellectuals such as: Wilhelm Szilasi, Wolfgang Schadewaldt, Eduard Fraenkel, and Johannes Stroux.[[2]](#footnote-2) Following his own educational studies, Picht briefly worked at the Berlin Academy of Sciences (1938-1939) where he would work closely with the texts of Ambrose and other classical philosophers, later moving on to a career of teaching at *Birklehof*, a prestigious German boarding school in Hinterzarten, Südschwarzwald.[[3]](#footnote-3) However, his employment there would soon come to an end in 1942, as his more progressive thoughts and publications would put him at odds with the National Socialists who had gained control of the boarding school and its administration.[[4]](#footnote-4) In 1946 (two years after the closing of *Birklehof)*, Picht established his own boarding school at the location of the original *Birklehof,* where he served as headmaster for the next decade.[[5]](#footnote-5) For the rest of his life, Picht turned his attention to his own writings and publications on ideas of philosophy and theology, working with many post-war German educational and intellectual institutions to further his own ideas and research.[[6]](#footnote-6) By the time of his death in 1982, Picht had left behind a legacy spanning dozens of widely read and influential publications with numerous translations and citations by scholars throughout the late twentieth century to the modern day.[[7]](#footnote-7)

 While many scholars and historians may conclude that Picht’s most influential and widely referenced work is his 1964 book titled *Die deutsche Bildungskatastrophe* (T*he German Educational Catastrophe*), it would actually be his 1963 article, “Tradition und Zukunft der Universität” ("Tradition and Future of the University"), in which he would first voice his concerns with the German post-war higher education system. In this book, Picht discusses the steps that would need to be taken in order for Germany to reform its universities. This book was a primary influence on the larger German education reform that occurred throughout the 1960s.[[8]](#footnote-8) In the beginning of this document, Picht frames his arguments by examining the context in which he is writing, referencing the state of the German higher education system following the mass deaths of German intellectuals in both World War I and II as well as the lack of financial support for educators and scholars during the economic depression of the Weimar era. From this, Picht concludes that the older generation of German intellectuals had experienced too much loss and suffering through the last five decades and thus “[could not] be expected to rebuild the German higher education system,” claiming that the German youth would instead need to be the ones to implement a progressive reformation of German universities.[[9]](#footnote-9) Throughout the rest of the text, Picht outlines four major challenges that the German youth would face when attempting their reforms, namely: the balance between quality of education and quantity of scholars, the antiquated and specialized nature of German scholarship, the influence of politicians, scholars, and practical applications within the scientific community, and the increasing importance of scientists to understand the political context in which they work. Picht concludes his statements by reaffirming the idea that the youth are the only one capable of reforming the German education system and without acknowledging the challenges they face, they will be doomed to fail.

Annotated Bibliography in Chronological Order

Gadamer, H.-G. *Philosophische Rundschau* 6, no. 1/2 (1958): 150-52. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42582784.

This review of Picht’s philosophical book titled *Die Erfahrung der Geschichte (The Experience of History)* (1958) praises Picht’s references to great Greek classical philosophers and further gives the reviewer’s philosophical views in comparison to Picht’s writings. Written in German in 1958 (the same year as Picht’s book’s publication), Gadamer was a major German philosopher, known best for his work *Wahrheit und Methode (1960)*, and thus speaks on Picht’s work as both an intellectual peer as well as in the position of being a more experienced philosopher, as he was thirteen years older than Picht and focused his career solely on his philosophical work. Through Gadamer’s praise, it can be seen that Picht was a philosopher in his own right in addition to his other academic endeavors.

Adorno, Theodor W. *4 Daten. Standorte, Konsequenzen*. Vol. 51. Hamburg: Internationaler Studentenarbeitskreis, 1963.

The location of the *original* publication of “Tradition und Zukunft der Universität,” being a magazine publication that would publish articles dealing with German social issues, with Picht’s article about social reform first being published within this issue. Though unable to locate a physical copy of this source, it can apparently be found in libraries and archives in Germany.

GHDI. "The German Education Crisis (1963)" Http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org.

The main version of Picht’s writing used for this assignment. Translated by Allison Brow, the header to this work also provides a very brief introduction to the text, stating “Picht criticizes the narrow-mindedness of the traditional German academic community and argues for a reform of the university system, which, as he writes, would have to include both an overhaul of the curricula and better planning for the future.”

Baumgarten, Eduard. ​Die Verantwortung des heutigen Studenten für Tradition und Zukunft der Universität: die Rede wurde vor der Kösener Arbeitstagung im Frühjahr 1961 in Würzburg gehalten. VAC-Dr.-Schr.-Zentrale, 1966.

This 1961 speech shares an almost identical title as Picht’s work, though it was written almost two years before Picht wrote his. Almost twenty years his elder, Baumgarten was also a notable philosopher and educator, producing many notable works throughout his career. Operating within the same German philosophical and educational community, one could infer that Picht drew some inspiration for his own work from Baumgarten’s speech (possibly even being in attendance), though there is no substantial evidence that proves this theory besides the similarity of their titles and subject matter.

*Deutsche Geschichte 1962-1983*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1985.

 The location of the republished “Tradition und Zukunft der Universität,” the book itself contains a wide variety of German primary sources from the years 1962-1983 in their original German form. This book was useful in locating the original source document (see *4 Daten. Standorte, Konsequenzen)*.

Löwe, Teresa. *Georg Picht Und Die Schule Birklehofin Der Nachkriegszeit (1946–1955)*. Berlin: Oldenburger Straße, 2004.

This fifty-page German thesis discusses the history of Birklehof, from its re-establishment under Picht in 1946 to the year 1955, while also referencing its history from 1932-1945 as well as including some more modern historical information in the 1990s. This source does include some unique information about Picht (such as detailing some of his administrative decisions), though it does not include any information about his actions in philosophy or educational reform directly.

GHDI. "Documents - Education Reform." Http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org.

An overview of the German Education Reforms of the mid-twentieth century provided by GHDI. While the document does not directly reference Picht, it does cite his documents throughout the text, providing context for the reforms.

Herchenröther, Hildegard. "Meine Geschichte der Schule Birklehof." Birklehof.de. June 2018.

While the original article can no longer be found on the Birklehof website, this article is among one of the most referenced on the Wikipedia pages for both Georg Picht and Birklehof itself. Through looking at the information provided with these citations, one can assume that this article provided historical records of Birklehof as an educational institution and thus information on Picht during his time as an educator at Birklehof.

"Georg Picht." Wikipedia. January 19, 2019. Accessed May 17, 2019. https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georg\_Picht.

The German Wikipedia article for Georg Picht contains much of the basic information about his life, education, and career that is referenced in the header of this assignment. While much of the writing pertaining to his later works and adulthood are backed through citation to other biographical works, all of his childhood and education information are without any type of citation, thus leading to a lack of credibility and room for speculation on whether the information presented is completely accurate. However, all of the information listed on this page falls in line with other sources that detail specific moments in Picht’s life, thus leading to some amount of legitimacy in the page contents through corroboration. While not the most expansive Wikipedia page, it does serve as the only consolidated biographical writing on the life and works of Georg Picht.

1. "Georg Picht." Wikipedia. 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Löwe, Teresa. *Georg Picht Und Die Schule Birklehofin Der Nachkriegszeit (1946–1955)*. Berlin: Oldenburger Straße, 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Herchenröther, Hildegard. "Meine Geschichte Der Schule Birklehof." Birklehof.de. June 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. "Georg Picht." Wikipedia. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Melvyl/Worldcat. "Picht, Georg." Worldcat.org. https://www.worldcat.org/wcidentities/lccn-n80159183. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. GHDI. "Documents - Education Reform." Http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. GHDI. "The German Education Crisis (1963)" Http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)