

European College of Liberal Arts
Winter 2012
BA4/PY Core Seminar

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BILDUNG

In the twentieth century, the long tradition of German philosophical thought and literary experiment regarding the question of *Bildung* (education, or more broadly, formation) underwent surprising new and even disturbing developments. In addition to emerging concerns about *Halbbildung*, or incomplete and superficial cultivation, we find a deepening of investigation into the paradoxes of the concept (its tension between external standard and internal journey) in response to the problems of modernity. Some contributions lament the disappearance of a heritage of cultural knowledge and identity-conferral through the destruction wrought by the First World War and urbanization, while others propose a disciplinary process that will inure and conform the individual to these phenomena. Following the Second World War, reflections on *Bildung* diversify into considerations of how bureaucratic mechanisms can erase the individual's capacity for moral judgment, and into a more intense focus on the decisive importance, for political and social life, of the earliest phase of formation, the child's adaptation to its environment. We end with recent accounts of the function of *Bildung* in society, including the claim that belief in its character-building power has disappeared.

Week One

Monday January 9

Introduction

Wednesday January 11

Martin Heidegger, "Plato's Teaching on Truth"

Week Two

Monday January 16

Thomas Mann, "Felix Krull" (1911)

Wednesday January 18

Thomas Mann, "Felix Krull"

Week Three

Monday January 23

Walter Benjamin, "On the Image of Proust" (1929)

Wednesday January 25

Walter Benjamin, "On the Image of Proust"

Week Four

Monday January 30

Ernst Juenger, *On Pain* (1934)

Wednesday February 1

Ernst Juenger, *On Pain*

Week Five, February 6-10: State of the World Week

Week Six

Monday February 13

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (1958)

Wednesday February 15

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*

Week Seven

Monday February 20

Carl Schmitt, *Hamlet or Hecuba: The Intrusion of Time into the Play* (1956)

Wednesday February 22

Carl Schmitt, *Hamlet or Hecuba*

Week Eight

Monday February 27

Erich Fromm, "The Varieties of Aggression and Destructiveness and Their Conditions" (1973)

Wednesday February 29

Erich Fromm, "The Varieties of Aggression"

Week Nine

Monday March 5

Niklas Luhmann, "Self-Reference and Rationality" (1984)

Wednesday March 7

Niklas Luhmann, "Self-Reference and Rationality"

Week Ten

Monday March 12

Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason* (1987) (selections)

Wednesday March 14

Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason* (selections)

Grade Distribution:

Seminar Preparation and Participation: 40%

Paper One: 25%

Paper Two: 35%