

COMMENTS

by

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on

Klaus Schleicher's

MODERNIZATION AND EDUCATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE 14/15 - 18/24

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The first impression is fascinating:

It is remarkable how elegantly and masterly the speaker succeeded in shifting through the overflow of information, data and statistics regarding today's youth education and arranging it in the framework of an overall view. Upon initial consideration this concept, which claims to present the labyrinthine-chaotic situation of the present, seems to be convincing and surprisingly logical: But only initially.

The second impression is irritating:

Upon closer and more critical consideration an uneasy feeling arises, which indicates there are various mistakes. Furthermore, the whole tastes penetratingly stale and flat. No doubt the speaker, who argues eagerly, takes his undertaking seriously. However, he obviously does not recognize that he is hopelessly maneuvering himself into a dilemma. The suspicion that the speaker is running blindly down a dead end (is on the wrong track or "Holzweg" a la Heidegger) cannot be denied. It is a pity for the busily invested effort because now the mistakes must be rectified.

The third step: is to object to the deception of the obtrusive and categorical use of the construction of the keyword of the thesis "modernization". What is to be understood by the term "modernization"? It is nowhere defined precisely. "Modernization" is much more presumed to be the obvious and binding goal of the education of today's youth. Therein, the concept of modernization shows itself to be not only weak, inexact and, of itself, contradictory, but above all absolutely antiquated and, therefore by principle inapplicable.

That we are in a time of radical change is uncontested:

We also have to recognize the abysmal embarrassment which prevents characterization of

the threshold of the new era as positive. Up to now not only the exotic paradoxical label "post-modern" has lent itself to this purpose. It is joined by attributes such as "post-history" and a complex of "post-material" needs, interpretations and values. Further "post"-compositions (as a sign of the destruction of modernity) are for instance the "post-industrial" society and "post-structuralism". These terms are often used positively in the discussions about "post-modernism". Nonetheless, Mr. Schleicher subtly claims that they are a corrective for a dangerously ill "modernity".

The fourth step: an alternative is urgently needed. Even though a supplementary paper is only required to criticize and indicate weak points, the writer is free to and in certain cases also improves the paper if he hints at a prospective alternative with (at least) a heuristic intention. In offering an alternative, however, it is not enough to just allude to the intense controversy over "post-modernity", "post-history" and "post-material values". Therefore, the writer, transcending the perspective of the time, takes a decisive position by demanding a (if you wish) professing statement-in-advance about supra-individually, supra-culturally and existentially based purpose and values; this not in spite of but exactly because it is a risk. Since it is not possible to do this extensively in this presentation, let us leave it at a recollection of the historical model of John Amos Comenius. Wherein an attitude is pointed out which incessantly draws one's attention to the "unum necessarium", i.e.: that which is absolutely necessary to carry out. In his era, which could be considered as labyrinthine as the present one, Comenius set an historical example by not trying to adapt silently to the turmoil of his time, but rather continuously trying to effect a return to the "foundation of creation", open "new paths of world reform" and through "calls of alarm" throw "light into history".

In comparison with such a standard Mr. Schleicher's presented diagnosis is:

1. In its analytical disposition not "radical" (i.e. thorough) enough.
2. In its conclusions too conformistic: it is missing the imperative and appellative impulse of the "sapere audere" (i.e. daring venture) of which we, who take up the educational query in response to the need of the times, should not be ashamed.