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Education and vulnerability. On the historiographical analysis of the German educational discourse on punishment in the "short" 19th century

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Věnování

Dedication

Toto číslo je s úctou věnováno PhDr. Markétě Pánkové, zástupkyni šéfredaktora časopisu *Historia scholastica* a bývalé ředitelce Národního pedagogického muzea a knihovny J. A. Komenského, k jejímu životnímu jubileu.

Redakce časopisu Historia scholastica

This issue is respectfully dedicated to PhDr. Markéta Pánková, Deputy editor of *Historia scholastica* Journal and former director of the National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius, on the occasion of her jubilee.

The editors of Historia scholastica

Education and Vulnerability. On the Historiographical Analysis of the German Educational Discourse on Punishment in the “Short” 19th Century¹

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Abstract Although the contemporary educational discourses in the 19th century considered educational punishment one of the most effective means of education, and although it was frequently used in the educational practice, its history in the German-speaking countries has been only rudimentarily researched. This is even more astonishing as the history of educational punishment must be understood as a history of violent educational practices. In this article, the question shall be pursued of how a historiography

of educational punishment in the 19th century could be theoretically and methodologically based. The research is guided by the thesis that educational punishment must be understood in the sense of exploiting the child's vulnerability.

Keywords vulnerability, punishment, violence, history of education, childhood

1 Introduction

Although the contemporary educational discourses in the 19th century considered educational punishment one of the most effective

¹ This contribution was worked out in the context of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)-funded project “Erziehung und Verletzlichkeit. Strafe im Erziehungsdispositiv des 19. Jahrhunderts (Education and Vulnerability. Punishment in the Education Dispositive of the 19th Century)” (Project-No. 536068261). Dr. Mirko Wittwar translated the text, including the quotations in German, into the English language.

means of education, and although it was frequently used in the educational practice, its history in the German-speaking countries has been only rudimentarily researched (see Schäfer & Thompson, 2018, p. 29; Grüner & Raasch, 2019a). This is even more astonishing as the history of educational punishment must be understood as a history of violent educational practices. Although the reason given for educational punishment was again and again the correction of the child which was subject to education, the various punishment practices were meant to break the child's will and to bring its behaviour into subjection of the valid social norms (see Heinze & Straube-Heinze, 2019, pp. 10f.; Straube-Heinze, 2016; the same 2018; Gestrich, Krause & Mitterauer, 2003, p. 585; see also Schlumbohm, 1983; Ungermann, 1997, pp. 203–209). After all, educational punishment is based on the possibility to, by violent means, exploit the child's vulnerability to achieve the intended modification of its behaviour, in the context of which the pedagogical and education-scientific discourse used to aestheticise and discursively conceal the interdependence with violence far into the 20th century (see Heinze, 2016, p. 178; Hoff, 2023). This seems also to be the reason why hitherto the vulnerability of children as an analytical dimension has hardly been playing any role for the historiographic research of educational punishment (see Heinze, 2023).

In the following, the question shall be pursued of how a historiography of educational punishment in the 19th century could be theoretically-methodically based. For this purpose, at first the state of research is assessed, which is characterised on the one hand by historical-systematic interpretations of the “classical works” of the punishment discourse and, on the other hand, by pointed interpretations of the historical development in the area of tension of ‘black pedagogy’ and the ‘humanisation’ of educational punishments (2). Starting out from the finding that power relations have only insufficiently been considered by the research of educational punishment, then the child's vulnerability is worked out as an analysis-guiding category for a historiography of educational punishment (3). Research-guiding in this context is the thesis that educational punishment must be understood in the sense of exploiting the child's vulnerability. Then the question

is pursued in how far the punishment discourse can be reconstructed by way of a discourse-analytical approach which adapts methods of grounded theory (4). The presentation is concluded by hypotheses on educational punishment as a violent means of education (5).

2 The History(s) of Educational Punishment between “Black Pedagogy” and a “Humanisation” of Educational Behaviour

The analysis of educational punishment, which was intensified in the 1960s and 1970s, basically rested on the assumption that its history had to be interpreted as a process of progress, in the sense of the punishment practice becoming increasingly more humanised (see Reble, 1965; Scheibe, 1967; Netzer, 1959/1983; Hagemeister, 1968).² From a historical-systematic perspective, the focus was often on the relevance of the “classical works” of the respectively current educational theory and practice, which had to be perfected or improved (see Scheibe, 1967, pp. 289–356; Reble, 1961, pp. 55f.; Hagemeister, 1968, pp. 205–228). Doing so, the question about the violent consequences of those educational punishments which were considered legitimate was hardly considered. Studies which, beyond biographical histories, focused on the significance of scientific communications networks while also taking contextual influential factors into consideration are found rather seldom (see e.g. Biermann, 1970).

In 1977 Katharina Rutschky confronted the “illusion of progress”, which dominated the history of education, with her “attempt” to call the “consequences and concomitant phenomena of the attention [...] young people [were] subject to since the 18th century” “black pedagogy” (Rutschky, 1977/2001, pp. XXV, XV). By connecting to Norbert Elias’s civilisation-theoretical studies, by referring to a psychoanalytically inspired selection of sources from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th century, and while giving up on reconstructing the theoretical argumentation context, education is characterised

2 Even the scientific dealing with the perfection of corporal punishment follows this pattern of explanation (see e.g. Scheibe, 1967, p. 53; Netzer, 1959/1983, p. 13).

as a “totalitarian” (ibid., p. 148) “submission” motivated by “fear of the child” (ibid., p. 3, 24) and punishment as a “rationalisation of sadism” (ibid., p. 376). However, according to Rutschky’s reading, education becomes a sheer tool of repression, whereas the complexity of the discourse is ignored. Although “black pedagogy” attracted much attention by educational science and the term was used in the education-scientific discourse to name violent educational actions to achieve repressive submission, a broad topical debate on Rutschky’s interpretation offer has not happened, except for individual references (see, among others, Gstettner, 1981; Miller, 1983; Bernhard, 2009).

Meanwhile, given the lack of more recent research results, one refers to Rutschky, to be able to point out to the “black side” of education throughout its history (see Schäfer & Thompson, 2018, pp. 29f.; Seichter, 2020; Heuer, 2021, p. 87). Here we must furthermore point out to the results produced by Lloyd deMause’s team which, from a psycho-historical, presentist perspective, were adapted in this context and interpreted as a constant improvement of the child’s vulnerable position in the generational relations (on this see Baader, 2015, pp. 90f.; Bühler-Niederberger, 2022, pp. 477f.). Also Philippe Ariès (1960/1978) made such a problematic attempt to construe the history of childhood as a contrast to a “diagnosis of the present” (see Bühler-Niederberger, 2022, pp. 469–473) and, unlike deMause, interpreted the process of the institutionalisation of educational processes as a loss of freedom for the children (see Heywood, 2010). Neither deMause’s nor Ariès’s interpretation offers did become relevant for the historiographic research of violent educational punishment practices, except for the almost obligatory reference in the course of assessing the state of research.

A fundamental critical discussion of the historically-systematically grounded assumption that since Enlightenment the theory and practice of educational behaviour increasingly oriented at the welfare of those to be educated started in the course of the at first reluctant but then ever broader reception of Michel Foucault’s positions (see Balzer, 2020, p. 466) and resulted in a reassessment of the historical punishment discourse. In doing so, the analyses focussed first of all on transferring Foucault’s positions concerning “disciplinary power” to education

(see Foucault, 1975/1979; Caruso, 2003, p. 26f.). Accordingly, e.g. by connecting to Elias and Foucault, the pedagogy of Enlightenment is deconstructed as a purposively rational practice of exploiting the child by way of the “inextricable combination of affection and infantilising” (Glantschnig, 1987, p. 12), or the genesis of school is worked out as the “crucial dispositive of the disciplining power” from the Middle Ages to National Socialism (Pongratz, 1989, p. 215).

However, by reducing Foucault’s understanding of power to its repressive nature (on this see Balzer, 2004, p. 20 as well as Caruso, 2003, p. 49) and the sole focus on drilling the children by way of the “disciplining power” the question got out of sight how, in everyday educational situations and as a result of productive effects of power, they are constituted as subjects while at the same time learning how to actively create themselves as subjects (see Foucault, 1969/1972, p. 52, 54f., 122, 182; the same 1975/1979, p. 207; Butler, 1997, p. 15f.; Ricken, 2013). Starting out from a critique of the reduction of the reception of Foucault when it comes to the analytical figure of “disciplines”, there were research attempts at the beginning of the 21st century which, apart from the effects of the “disciplining power”, also made the entanglements of education with the interdependencies of “bio-power” a focus of attention (see Caruso, 2003, p. 48; Grabau, 2013, p. 10). In the context of the analysis of governmental techniques, these studies particularly pursue the question of how educational behaviour is strategically used for regulating the development of the population (see Grabau, 2013, p. 123; Caruso, 2003). In this context, there result new perspectives from considering the mutual influence of the techniques of “bio-power” and of “disciplining”.

Furthermore, by way of educational-historical, discourse-analytical studies on the history of educational punishment in the 18th and 19th centuries it could be shown that any reconstruction of the punishment discourse requires its location into overarching knowledge formations and, apart from the epistemological and education-theoretical contextual references, to also view at the educational-anthropological models of subject formation, the corresponding practices of subjectivization, as well as the institutional and social framings (see Heinze &

Straube-Heinze, 2019; Heinze & Heinze, 2013; Straube-Heinze, 2016; the same 2018; Heinze, 2008). Educational punishment is furthermore considered in the context of the historical research, from a historical science perspective, of “violence aiming at children” (Grüner & Raasch, 2019b, p. 8), in the context of which on the one hand the extension of the source basis results in new insights (see Grüner, 2019; Grüner & Raasch, 2019b; Hoff, 2023) while on the other hand, however, the education-theoretical justification discourses are left out of consideration (see Hoff, 2023). In sum, it may be stated that as yet we know relatively little about the justification of educational punishments and their practical implementation in the 19th century, except for the reproduction of the discourse of the “classical” educational works.

3 The Child’s Vulnerability as an Analytical Category for a Historiography of Educational Punishment³

The analysis of the discourse on educational punishment in the 19th century is meant as a contribution to a kind of educational historiography which asks about the historical conditions for the constitution of violent educational behaviour while critically reflecting on it. Such a study connects to historiographic approaches assuming that the “child’s vulnerability must be part of a history of childhood” and that in this context the focus must be on power relations and relationships of violence which have as yet only insufficiently been taken into consideration (Baader, 2015, p. 81; see Andresen, 2018a). To be able to meet this requirement, by referring to works by Michel Foucault and Judith Butler there happens an orientation at theories of subjectivization which direct the research interest towards an “empirical analysis of historical-cultural ways of subjectivization” (Reckwitz, 2021, p. 33) while including the constitutive function of power for the process of subject formation (see Foucault, 1975/1979; Foucault, 1982/2002; Butler, 1997; Ricken, 2006). At the same time, the thus

3 On this see the preliminary considerations on the development of vulnerability as the analytical dimension of a historiography of education in Heinze, 2023.

resulting vulnerability-theoretical connections are used to be able to historiographically grasp the significance of vulnerability in the context of the generational relation (see Butler, 2004/2020; the same, 2014; Burghardt et al., 2017; Liebsch, 2022; the same, 2014).

Starting out from the anthropological reflection, according to which vulnerability gives expression to the irresolvably relational constitution of human existence, the educational relationship must after all be understood as a relationship of vulnerability in the context of which the involved subjects depend on each other and are, moreover, exposed to each other (see Butler 2004/2020, pp. 23–28; the same, 1997, p. 6f.; the same, 2014, p. 102f., 114; Bünger, 2022). It is characterised by a configuration of dependencies on which at the same time a powerful subjectivization constellation of the involved individuals is based, as the practices of caring are oriented at those social norms as regulating the recognition of each respective vulnerability while also, as demonstrated by Butler, changing them (see Butler 2004/2020, p. 43). Accordingly, the analysis of educational punishment theories and practices rests on the awareness that the inter-generationally constituted recognition and vulnerability relations are a precondition for the subjectivization of the child (see Ricken, 2009, p. 122f.; Butler, 1997, p. 6f., 21), in the context of which the recognition of the subject and thus also the question of guilt and becoming guilty are considered powerful conditions of individual existence, the safeguarding of which is connected to the requirement of submitting to certain norms (see Butler, 1997, p. 13f., 83f.; Foucault, 1982/2002, p. 331; Heinze, 2017, p. 49f.).

Thus, although those educating are able to question the normative patterns of recognition, they run the danger of putting their own existence at risk (see Butler, 2005, p. 23). With rejecting the normative conditions for recognition, at the same time the confirmation of one's own self becomes precarious. The ambivalence of recognition, between confirming and compromising the process of identity formation, results in an inevitable vulnerability, which is particularly effective for children as a result of their social dependence in the context of the educational relationship of care. When it comes to a historical analysis of punishment, the interest is thus in shaping and legitimising

those ways of subjectivization as conditioned by shaping the educational vulnerability relations.

In the context of the educational relationship, vulnerability works as a criterion for defining the “moral status” of those educating (see Giesinger, 2007). To this their corresponds a positioning of the younger generation within age concepts, in the context of which the older generation mostly makes use of the criterion of the capability of autonomy or of reasonability to give reason to paternalistic interventions. By attributing to children a lack of capability of acting in their own interest, their dependence on care may at the same time be considered a justification of punishing, violent corrections of their behaviour (see Heinze, 2016, pp. 172–176). Vice versa, attributing competent creative power to the child may result in losing sight of the mutual relation of vulnerability and capability to act, as hazards resulting from the respective vulnerability relations are concealed by the alleged capability to act (see Heinze, 2017, p. 57f.). Of historical interest in this context are the modes of a pedagogisation of the child’s vulnerability, which is partly operationalised by way of corresponding conceptualisations such as, among others, ‘innocence’, the child’s ‘welfare’, ‘reasonability’, ‘care’, or ‘sensitivity’. This raises the question which consequences are drawn from the relationality of vulnerability as an irresolvable condition for social and political life when it comes to reflecting, in terms of education theory and practice, on educational punishment.

Essential for this process are educational moratoria established in society, to be able to structurally work what society demands from young people (see, inter alia, Zinnecker, 2000; Andresen, 2018b, pp. 370–374; Heinze, 2017, pp. 53–55). By temporarily exonerating the younger generation from tasks of social reproduction and by preparing them for contributing to society in the future, at the same time consequences for those are anticipated who are not in line with the normative guidelines (see Bühler-Niederberger, 2024, pp. 105–110). Accordingly, e.g. for the discourse on educational punishment at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century a degree of Janus-facedness of moratoria concepts may be stated, insofar as given the belief in controllability of the educational process there

happened a connection of the educational idea of the ‘innocent’ child with the possibility of disciplining it, and thus a perfection of concepts of corporal punishment (see Heinze & Straube-Heinze, 2019, p. 1f.).

When it comes to legitimising educational punishment, injuries are systematically accepted because – as summed up by Sachse still in 1879 – punishment without injury is impossible and punishment can thus be implemented only in the form of injuries (see Sachse, 1879/1913, p. 71). In the context of a historiography of educational punishment, reflections on the relation of violence and education or education and vulnerability must be considered crucial elements of moratoria concepts, which must inevitably be included into the analysis. Doing so, the research interest is in the social constitution of the moratoria as educationally controllable social spaces of subjectivization where, in relation to the social demands on the younger generation, specific needs profiles are defined as the basis for establishing educational measures and where thus vulnerabilities of children are pedagogised.

The question of how vulnerability is distributed among society is at the same time an issue of justice (see ten Have, 2016, p. 176). From the individual consequences of vulnerability there results social inequality which requires to pursue the causes for increasing this vulnerability and particularly to protect vulnerable individuals against potential harm (see Goodin, 1985, p. 109). Thus, the social perception and recognition of vulnerability is ethically and politically relevant to such a degree that it is necessary to identify the respective conditions under which vulnerability is updated and its consequences are increased. A history of educational punishment can thus not be written without reconstructing the knowledge of the child’s vulnerability and its recognition by society.

Attention must also be paid to the ambivalent consequences coming along with the social recognition of vulnerability, as the constitution of particularly vulnerable individuals or groups of people within society may result in excluding or discriminating effects (see Bueno Gómez, 2022, pp. 116f.). For example, the discourse on the legitimacy of educational punishment at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century conceptualised the child’s vulnerability, connecting

to Rousseau, by way of attributing ‘innocence’ to the child. However, the thus derived goal of protecting the children did not result in abandoning corporal punishment. Quite on the contrary, punishment was pedagogised, giving the reason that the children had to be ‘protected’ against their own misbehaviour. This way, the suffering caused for children could be socially aestheticized and justified (see Straube-Heinze, 2018, p. 74; Heinze & Heinze, 2013, pp. 64–66; see Bueno Gómez, 2022, p. 109f.).

4 Discourse-analytical Knowledge-research and Grounded Theory – Methodical Approaches

For the analysis of the historical conditions for subjectivization in the context of the punishment discourse in the 19th century we reach back to Foucault’s concept of the *dispositif*, by way of which a strategically motivated constellation of discourses, institutions, objects, practices and power effects is described (see Foucault, 1978/1980; the same, 1975/1979, pp. 31–36; Heinze & Straube-Heinze, 2021, pp. 29–32; Bührmann & Schneider, 2008; Heinze, 2014; Rousmaniere, Dehli & de Coninck-Smith, 1997, pp. 7–10). By this strategic ‘network’, power unfolds its ‘productive’ effect on the constitution of the subjects, by way of which their discursive positioning of the possibilities to find a place within the ‘truth regime’ of the *dispositif* is determined (see Foucault, 1978/1980). Against this background, the “strategic function” (ibid., p. 194f.) of the punishment discourse shall be considered, and in particular its being networked with scientifying pedagogy, the professionalising educational practice (as far as to special punishment practices and tools), the ways of institutionalising education as well as the demands by society are reconstructed (see e.g. Schaub, 2008; Kesper-Biermann, 2009; Caruso, 2003).

For the methodical operationalisation of the question an approach is chosen which makes sure that the epistemological claims to validity of the discourse, including the self-referential certainties of re-writing it in the form of a reception history of the “history of pedagogy”, will not be historiographically continued by their “immediate forms of continuity” (Foucault, 1969/1972, p. 26). For this purpose, by connecting to

Foucault, we reach back to an analysis of statements which aims first questioning the passed on contexts of a history of educational punishment, to be able to view at “the totality of all effective statements [énoncés] [...] in their dispersion as events and in the occurrence that is proper to them” (ibid., p. 27). Foucault describes the statement as „a function of existence that properly belongs to signs and on the basis of which one may then decide, through analysis or intuition, whether or not they ‘make sense’, according to what rule they follow one another or are juxtaposed, of what they are the sign, and what sort of act is carried out by their formulation” (ibid., p. 86f.).

Discourse analysis observes the relations of a “series of signs” which, because of these relations, “become a statement” (ibid., p. 89) and in doing so aims at the possibility conditions of those “objects” as being put into play and their delimitation (see ibid., p. 91), at the positions a subject may occupy to be able to speak during the discourse (see ibid., pp. 94f.), at the amount of statements by way of which each respective statement figures (see ibid., pp. 99f.), as well as at the “field of use” which allows for its repetition (the “materiality” of the statement) (see ibid., p. 104f.). The reconstruction of the rules-based structure of the field of statements allows for viewing at the “positivity” of the discourse (ibid., p. 125) which shall then be located within the ‘strategic network’ of institutions, objects, practices and power effects.

To implement the discourse analysis, qualitative-interpretative methods of knowledge analysis are used which, concerning the above explained claim of questioning reproduced ‘certainties’, adapt the way of proceeding of grounded theory.⁴ However, given the different epistemology-theoretical preconditions of discourse analysis and grounded theory when it comes to a possible approach at ‘reality’, this means that the ways of proceeding of grounded theory only serve as a model, under the epistemology-theoretical auspices of discourse analysis (see Gasteiger & Schneider, 2014, p. 141). Here, most of all the differing

4 The depiction of discourse-analytical knowledge research by way of which methods of grounded theory are adapted is oriented at Heinze & Straube-Heinze, forthcoming.

perspective at the position of the subject within the process of reality constitution must be taken into consideration, in the context of which Foucault's decentering of the subject is opposed to the action-oriented, interactionist orientation of grounded theory (see *ibid.*, pp. 143–145; Clarke, 2005/2012, pp. 93, 95–97, 185). To this there adds, from a discourse-analytical point of view, the epistemic significance of productive power relations when it comes to the analysis of ways of subjectivization, whereas for grounded theory the question about the effects of power is no crucial analysis category, although more recent conceptualisations locate the grounding of power relations in interactional practices (see Clarke, 2005/2012, p. 97; Strübing, 2013, p. 198). This can be made fruitful most of all concerning the ways of proceeding of 'theoretical sampling', 'open coding' including contrasting comparison, as well as concerning the concepts of 'theoretical saturation' and 'theoretical sensitivity' (see Strübing, 2021; Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

The analysis of the field of statements is based on a method of discourse-analytical coding. In this context, the coding system to be worked out is not the purpose of the research process but must be understood as a tool by help of which the preconditions for the process of systematic comparison and contrasting are supposed to be created and the interpretation of the rules-based context of the knowledge order is supposed to become possible (see Glasze, Husseini de Araújo & Mose, 2021). Furthermore, the coding of the knowledge contents is indispensable for being able to methodically grasp the distribution of knowledge elements across the voluminous corpus. Thus, for coding a coding strategy is preferred which must be worked out in the course of the research process and will be open to adaptations and recursive modifications (see Gasteiger & Schneider, 2014, p. 145; Diaz-Bone, 2010, p. 198).

As digital support, the Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) ATLAS.ti will be used (see Friese, 2019, pp. 282–284). Every text included into the corpus will be digitalized and imported into the ATLAS.ti programme, where it can be administered as a 'document' and assessed by help of the analysis tools (see Friese, 2014). For this purpose, by a first step the appropriate knowledge

segments will be marked as ‘quotations’, and by a second step the appropriate ‘codes’ will be attributed. When it comes to interpreting at a later stage, the coding is the precondition for swiftly finding and compiling the appropriate ‘quotations’, so that it will be possible to compare each ‘quotation’ both to the other ones, however also to ‘documents’ and ‘document groups’. Furthermore, this software allows for accompanying the coding process by way of creating theory and code memos which may be reached back to in the course of the iterative-cyclic analysis process. Starting out from the qualitative-interpretative approach of the project, this way of proceeding may be attributed to ‘close reading’, in the context of which the Atlas.ti software will be used to be able to appropriately reconstruct discursive meaning contexts (see Zaagsma, 2013, pp. 23–25).

The formation of the corpus is based on Foucault’s statement that discourses must be understood as “practices” “that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1969/1972, p. 49). Against the background of already existing studies (see Heinze & Straube-Heinze, 2019) as well as contemporary systematisations (see Sachse, 1879/1913), the analysis corpus will be compiled according to the concept of ‘theoretical sampling’ and will be continuously extended in the course of the research process, by following purposeful references and purposeful research. Crucial in this context is that, apart from the ‘classical works’ of the punishment discourse, the participation in the discourse will be recorded at the medium level of the documentation. As a crucial problem of previous studies a corpus formation must be stated which is reduced in this respect, producing the result of, due to topical limitations as well as a superficial orientation at the ‘classical’ texts, a constricted perspective of the discourse (see above, Section 2). With the extension of the corpus beyond its “ridge”, by way of texts which, in contrast to a “limited view”, historiographically depict the “general operation” (Fulda, 2016, p. 20; see Reichardt, 1998, p. 23; Heinze, 2008, p. 52f., 57), new insights may be expected insofar as now sources are analysed which take into consideration “what was dominating the market” (Fulda, 2016, p. 20). At the same time, the question will have to be asked in how far there were

connection lines between the texts at the medium level of the documentation and the ‘classical works’.

The chronological and spatial delimitation of the project happens according to the idea of the “short 19th century” (Osterhammel, 2007; p. 118; see *ibid.*, p. 120), starting out from the end of the “Sattelzeit” (Reinhart Koselleck) in the German-speaking countries from the end of the 1820s to the beginning of the *fin de siècle* at the end of the 1880s (see Osterhammel, 2007, p. 115). In conceptual terms, the choice of this period is not meant to give a concrete time of beginning and end, but it is rather about revealing the “temporal structures” of the topic-related processes (Osterhammel, 2010, p. 86f.). Accordingly, the analysis starts with the decline of the debates on the education of the Enlightenment and ends before the condensing of the discourse on a ‘progressive education’ developing at the end of the 19th century.

5 Educational Punishment as a Violence-related Means of Education? Hypotheses on its Historiography

Why corporal punishment as a possible means of education and a customary violent intervention into child’s development could prevail and even be education-theoretically legitimated in Germany until far into the second half of the 20th century, despite many critical voices, is one of the crucial questions concerning a historiography of educational punishment (see Grüner, 2019). It must be assumed that in most cases efforts at ‘humanising’ the punishment practices were connected to strategies of perfecting disciplining stimulations (see Heinze & Straube-Heinze, 2019) whose strategic optimum seems to have been achieved by expecting those punished to themselves implement the punishment stimulation (see Pongratz, 2013; Heinze, 2016, p. 180f.). This development comes along with aestheticizing the violent effects and thus connected injuries, which can be illustrated e. g. by the suggestive promise of the ‘natural punishment’ of being able to dissolve the connection of punishment and its physical effects. That this is an illusion can be pursued even in Jean-Jacques Rousseau who, according to the logic of an analogical conclusion, suggests locking up the

child displaying behavioural problems which repeatedly smashes windows in a dark room without windows (see Rousseau, 1762/1998, p. 80).

A historiography of the educational punishment discourse must thus be conceptualised under the assumption that in principle education runs the danger of becoming violent (see Andresen, 2018a, p. 6f.). Educational behaviour must be considered a social reaction to the child's vulnerability which, by its unstable dynamic, on the one hand creates an awareness of empathy, solidarity and care, while on the other hand, it provides violence with a target that can be exploited. Vulnerability gives expression to the child running the danger of being attacked and affected in its physical and personal integrity. It is grounded in the fragility of the child's body as well as in the relational social constitution of its existence. Being a possibility of experiencing painful suffering, vulnerability results from being open to development as well as from susceptibility and sensitivity towards impressions from the outside (see Wieseemann, 2019, pp. 185f.). As the child is able to sensually perceive and experience the world only by way of its body, due to its development-based openness towards the world it runs the risk of being injured in the course of the process of appropriating the world. This is where concepts of educational punishment for the sake of exploiting the child's vulnerability connect to, by way of which sensitivity and openness to development are misused to be able, by way of inevitably painful experiences, to work towards the desired behaviour in the most effective ways (see e. g. Straube-Heinze, 2016).

Assumptions of progress by way of which the historical development is interpreted against the background of the contemporaries run the danger of dissolving the complexity of the historical process according to the interpretation patterns of humanising educational behaviour. Consequently, the historical development of educational punishment should not, in theory and practice, be prematurely made subject to constructing overarching contexts of meaning. For example, any periodisation of the punishment discourse into comparably long phases (see Richter, 2018; Hoff, 2023) runs the danger of dissolving the 'positivity' of the discourse into the coherence of some overarching meaning. But the discourse on educational punishment "has not only

a meaning or a truth” (Foucault, 1969/1972, p. 127). Rather, the reconstruction of the social negotiating of the moral status of the child’s vulnerability as well as the subsequent punitive practice of subject formation in the context of educational moratoria requires considering the statements within the context of the discourse on educational punishment in “their dispersion”, “in their simultaneity, which is not unifiable, and in their succession, which is not deductible” (ibid.). Furthermore, the research process must consider the ambivalence of educational behaviour, which finds expression by the strategy, practiced over the centuries, of harmonising the child’s welfare with disciplining those growing up.

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