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『オイゲン・フォン・ベーム＝バヴェルク』

——理論と実践のオーストリア経済学者——

Shigeki Tomo, *Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk: Ein großer österreichischer Nationalökonom zwischen Theorie und Praxis*, Metropolis-Verlag: Marburg 1994, pp. 216.

Rarely has a dissertation convinced as much as this one<sup>1)</sup>. The slim book comes across as the studious compilation of somewhat marginal material. No original research design in sight the superficial reader might think and due to other demands on his time, put the little carefully produced red book aside. So almost did I, yet the editors of this journal urged me to carefully review the book by Shigeki Tomo. The second look, indeed, is worth every single researcher's hour of his time.

Was he named von Meyer, von Mueller, von Böhm or Schulze? The answer is, as we know, Eugen Ritter Böhm von Bawerk. Nobility was important at money stripped German-Austrian universities, since these schools could not compete with their salaries on the German language market.

It is important to learn, therefore, from the extremely discreet and tactful account provided by Dr. Tomo, that the family actively (and twice) sought the restoration of this rather low (knighthood of the order of Leopold) nobility, with success. It is interesting, certainly as you look at the score figures of these promising academic high school years, how early the Austro-Hungarian Empire was able to spot talents. This policy, which in its modern appearance has always been hailed as an achievement of state socialism in e.g. the GDR (unsere moderne Per-

sonalpolitik), under the monarchic Viennese administration resulted in creating an Austrian school of economists.

Having economics taught was increasingly seen as an important task, leaving it to the Business School was beyond the question, because the graduates of the Law School were the candidates for the entry civil service positions.

Trying to cover this gap of more than 150 years of neglect, the Vienna ministry imposed on the Law School a required field of political economy, to be taught separately as economic policy and public finance, and also instructed the Law School deans to appoint such professors.

Since no such topic had ever been taught at (German) Austrian universities, the dean's task was a difficult one. Early foreign professors could be engaged to solicitate, and those were so expensive! The scholar the faculty in Vienna wanted could not be financed—in addition, the ambassador of the Kingdom of Saxony had contestantly intervened and the second one in row received a salary well at the top of the sitting senior faculty.

The difficulties with filling this chair seem to have gotten on the nerves of the senior Viennese official in charge. In any event, the expenditure for political economy was on the minds of the bureaucrats in question. Even despite the shaky revenue situation we learn, Lorenz von Stein was appointed to the chair in political economy.

Since v. Stein had rejected Menger's request to be admitted to the faculty (on the basis of a second thesis called *Habilitations-schrift*), it was a good thing that he left Vienna in due course.

The ministry saw its chance to pursue a low cost approach by appointing Menger as one extra ordinary professor (mainly relying on the lecture fees) and conceiving a low cost approach to generating new scholars. The idea is simple and well familiar to European scholars today. Four scholars, Böhm and Wieser, Leigang and Proksch, were selected to study abroad (in Heidelberg e.g.) and reported regularly (about twice a year) on their efforts. Upon return, however, the successful

fellows were not nominated to newly created chairs, as the European Monnet program would suggest, but they were assigned to sensitive political legislative projects, in Böhm's case the legislation on various tax reforms.

Although Dr. Tomo is at pains to show that Böhm did indeed use concepts of economics in his work, he suggested to understand the concept of interest which he tried to reconcile with a Roman law informed general pre-understanding—the economic impact of Böhm's work on a really exiting tax practice in Austria must be seen as non existent, all the author's polite efforts notwithstanding.

Is there anything wrong with creating programs in order to bridge budgetting gaps in cash stripped public universities and create a school in economics? Yes, there is.

A school as such is a problematic phenomenon which often fosters excentric behaviour on the part of adults. The great (my judgement J.B.) Schumpeter did much in order to forestall a school in his name.

A ministry that is somehow convinced that certain knowledge needs to be taught is ill advised to select superb scholars in discipline A to become outstanding in (an unknown) discipline B; why ask lawyers to compete for fellowships in economics, and why not veteranarians? Law and economics are two largely incompatible disciplines, and the work of the Austrian School (Menger, Böhm, Mises) is marred by the confusion of economic and legal concepts.

As I pointed out above, Dr. Tomo is much more discreet, than I have chosen to be. His little red book is a wonderful stepping stone for a sound academic career.

#### Note

- 1) Shigeki Tomo, *Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk*. Marburg: Metropolis, 1994.

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