

ARTICLE

The Authoritarian Institution

Else Frenkel and the University of Vienna

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Abstract

Else Frenkel was associated with the University of Vienna for more than five years in total. She studied at Austria's largest university for eight semesters from 1926 to 1930, attained the position of a research assistant in the academic year 1931/32, and worked there a second time as a temporary employee in 1936. The political climate in these years was characterized by racist antisemitism and attacks against parliamentary democracy, by violence against "Jewish" and left-wing students, and by discrimination against scholars who did not fit into the racist and ethno-national template. Fascism and National Socialism enjoyed huge support, especially among the student body, many years before Austria became a part of Nazi Germany. The aim of this article is to draw an evocative picture of the University of Vienna during these years, especially 1926 to 1932, when Frenkel was almost continuously connected with the institution. It seeks to demonstrate the significant impact of antisemitism and gender on the academic life and work of Else Frenkel, and consists of two parts: her study years, and her subsequent career as an academic at the Psychological Institute. The focus is not on the content of the courses she attended or her academic work in the 1930s but rather on the political circumstances and context of her university career, seeking to answer the question: What did it mean to be a Jewish woman from Galicia at the University of Vienna during these years? In addressing this question, the article explores the forms of antisemitism she was confronted with, the student union (Deutsche Studentenschaft), professorial networks, and her chances of gaining the habilitation, the highest university qualification and the precondition to becoming a full professor.

Keywords

Anti-Semitism, Antifeminism, History of Universities, History of Science, Racism, Discrimination, University of Vienna

ELSE FRENKEL AND THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA I: A STUDENT LIFE IN THE FACE OF EXCLUSION AND VIOLENCE, 1926–1930

When Else Frenkel began her studies at the University of Vienna, one of her first tasks was to fill out an enrolment certificate known as the *Nationale* (see *Figure 1*, Seidl 2004: 291–294). These documents provide sociodemographic data, such as birthplace, age, religious confession, place of residence and social origin (the father's profession). Some of these variables played a decisive role in

determining a student's position and opportunities within the student body: the level of course fees to be paid, whether a person was allowed to enter the student canteen, and whether he or she could apply for fellowships. Furthermore, the *Nationale* also listed courses and lectures including the name of the university teachers, and the number of semester hours—essential information when searching for traces.

Else Frenkel and her Nationale in context

Else Frenkel's birthplace was given as "Lemberg (Poland)" (today Lviv in Ukraine), which at the time of her birth in 1908 was located in the Habsburg Empire, almost 600 kilometers east of Vienna. Her father Abraham was a Jewish bank employee and had a great interest in "German culture" when the family was still living in Galicia, and had probably been keen to move to Vienna for a long time. Economic crises and violent riots against the Jewish population of Galicia were most likely the crucial factor in finally taking this step (Paier 1996: 8–9). Else Frenkel and her family were, in a sense, typical of the Jewish population in Vienna but rather untypical of Jewish immigrants from Galicia; in these years, Eastern European Jewry was still characterized by traditional structures and a dominant orthodox Judaism (Raggam-Blesch 2008: 98, Freidenreich 2002: 7). Nonetheless, the Jewish enlightenment movement *Haskalah*, which strived for emancipation and combined enthusiasm for German culture with religious principles, succeeded in sections of the Eastern European Jewish middle-class and to some extent also in the orthodox milieu (Raggam-Blesch 2008: 86–90). Women especially became supporters of this movement because they were widely excluded from the religiously dominated world (Raggam-Blesch 2008: 92). "Ironically, the gendered nature of traditional Jewish education enabled some women to have access to modern ideas earlier than many men within their communities," the historian Paula Hyman concludes (Hyman 1998: 283). When Else Frenkel and her family moved to Vienna, the circumstances were quite different from those in Galicia. Liberal Judaism had become the dominant mode of religious affiliation and practice in Central Europe (Freidenreich 2002: 2). A good secular education for sons as well as for daughters was considered important in acculturated Jewish middle-class families (Freidenreich 2002: 5). Thus to some extent, Frenkel's pursuit of further education in Vienna was predefined and as characteristic as the career of her father: Abraham Frenkel became the owner of a private bank, which made him a prime example of the social mobility of the Jewish population in Vienna and of the leading role played by Jews in the banking sector. The end of the Jewish emancipation process can be dated to 1867 when both chambers of the Imperial Council passed the Basic Law on the General Rights of Citizens (*Staatsgrundgesetz*), which guaranteed equality and free choice of occupation. During the same period, the proportion Jews in Vienna's population increased from 2.2 percent in 1857 to 10.1 percent in 1880, but dropped to 8.6 percent in 1910 due to the incorporation of the suburbs (Pauley 1993: 55). By the first decade of the twentieth century, Vienna had become a city of more than two million inhabitants, having grown from only 400,000 in 1857. And Jews played a crucial role for the city's identity and development: 71 percent of all financiers, 63 percent of industrialists, and more than half of the journalists in Vienna were Jewish in the years 1900 to 1910, a period in which an antisemitic mayor (Karl Lueger) governed the city (Pauley 1993: 80). But the Jewish emancipation, as well as the industrial revolution, gave rise to a countermovement and a new phenomenon: racist anti-semitism.

Wird um deutlich lesbare Schrift ersucht.
Organe der akademischen Behörden
ermächtigt, Nationale mit schlecht
baren Eintragungen zurückzuweisen.

Gegenwärtig im I. Semester.

Nationale

für ordentliche Hörer der philosophischen Fakultät.

Nachname und Vorname des Studierenden:	Else Frenkel
Nationalität:	Österreich
Wohnort (Ort und Land):	Wien
Geburtsort und Land:	Lemberg (Polen)
Mutter- und Vatersprache, Alter, Volkszugehörigkeit:	Grünfeld, 18 Jahre, Grünfeld
Religion, welchen Ritus oder Konfession:	ist.
Postanschrift des Studierenden:	VI. Stumpersg. 39
Nachname, Stand und Wohnort seines Vaters:	Abraham, Bankier, Stumpersg. 39
Nachname, Stand und Wohnort seines Vorgesetzten:	
Bezeichnung der Lehranstalt, an welcher der Studierende das letzte Semester zugebracht:	in der Schulerwald'schen Sch.- Anstalt (Realschule) in Lemberg
Erhält ein Stipendium (Stiftung) im Betrage von	S 8
erhalten von	unter dem 192, 3
Bezeichnung der Grundlage, auf welcher der Studierende die Immatrikulation oder Zulassung anspricht:	
Lebenslange Unterschrift:	Else Frenkel

Figure 1: Nationale of Else Frenkel, winter semester 1926

Antisemitism had always been present in the Austrian half of the Habsburg Empire, but it was economic crises in particular, and the subsequent search for a scapegoat, that resulted in significant increases in antisemitic agitation and violence, for example after the stock market crash of 1873. Increasingly, hatred toward Jews focused on those who were apparent as “others”: Jews from Eastern Europe—so-called *Ostjuden*. Until 1867 most Jewish immigrants had come from Hungary, Bohemia and Moravia but over the following years, the majority arrived from Galicia. Many of these immigrants did not speak German and were orthodox. As a consequence, the percentage of Viennese Jews who had come from Polish and Ukrainian regions increased from 18 percent (1880) to 23 percent (1910) (Pauley 1993: 56). The hatred towards *Ostjuden* reached its peak in World War I, when up to 125,000 Jewish refugees settled temporarily in Vienna after the Russian army had conquered Galicia and the Bukovina (Pauley 1993: 106). These negative sentiments not only affected orthodox Jews but also people who had been members of the East European Jewish bourgeoisie (Raggam-Blesch 2008: 104). Else Frenkel and her family had settled in Austria shortly before the outbreak of the war. This is a small but very important detail, especially as the Austrian government introduced several measures to prevent *Ostjuden* from obtaining Austrian citizenship. The Frenkels had come soon enough not to be confronted with this discrimination and Else became an Austrian national.

According to the Citizenship Act (*Staatsbürgerschaftsgesetz*) of 1918,¹ people who were able to “claim right of residence in a municipality of the German-Austrian Republic” became German-Austrian citizens automatically, as well as people who moved to German-Austria. But there was an exception for people coming from Dalmatia, Istria and Galicia. The intention was that the numerous war refugees from Galicia should not become citizens automatically. This discrimination did not end with the Treaty of Saint-Germain, even though the treaty allowed people to opt for citizenship of another successor state if their “race and language” differed from the majority population of the successor state they were in. Yet Austria’s Interior Ministry refused to grant this option for *Ostjuden*, following the view that Jews were “racially different from the majority of the population.” This exclusion from Austrian citizenship was officially confirmed by the Supreme Administrative Court of the Republic of Austria in 1921 (Burger 2013: 132–139).

As mentioned above, Else Frenkel was not a “typical” Jew from Eastern Europe. Her family, who lived at Stumpergasse 39 in Vienna’s sixth district, was more typical of the Jewish bourgeoisie, which can almost be equated with the *liberal* bourgeoisie in the former capital of the Habsburg Empire (Beller 1993: 43–49). Within this milieu women were expected to complete secondary school—and to continue their education at a university. “Emancipation, the liberation of groups or individuals from civil or legal restraints, is a central theme in modern Jewish history,” states Harriet Pass Freidenreich (Freidenreich 2002: 2). Education played an important role for women in particular and helped them to emancipate from conventional roles. Intellectual creativity, personal self-fulfillment and new careers could be achieved through university studies (Freidenreich 2002: 1–2). Besides the high value placed on education and study in Judaism for its own sake, for Jewish families who represented a secular Jewish culture, education was an effective means to accelerate integration into the *Bildungsbürgertum*, the educated middle classes (Freidenreich 2002: 17). As a consequence, modernization resulted in a crisis of Jewish identity for men and women, and not only in Vienna. A Jewish female intelligentsia who incorporated more and more aspects of the external culture visibly moved away from Judaism (Rose: 86). Furthermore, most Jewish university women were distanced from Jewish religion and traditions, with only a few involved in synagogues or Jewish activities organized by the community (Freidenreich 2002: 37).

In the winter semester 1926/27, Else Frenkel was one of 9,907 students, of whom 19 percent were female. These 1,865 women were unequally distributed across the faculties: at the Philosophical Faculty 31 percent of the students were women, followed by Medicine (15 percent), Law (6 percent) and Protestant Theology (3 percent) (Statistisches Handbuch 1928: 169). These percentages also reflected the dates when women were admitted to the different faculties. Alongside Prussia, Austria was the last European country to enable women to enroll at universities. While the University of Zurich affiliated women (albeit at first only from foreign countries) in 1863, followed by French, Swedish, English and other European universities in the years 1870 to 1894, Austria’s potential female students had to wait until the winter semester of 1897, when the Ministry for Education permitted women to study at the Philosophical Faculties. This was followed by Medicine (1900), Law (1919) and Protestant Theology (1923) (Heindl 1990: 17–18).² The admittance of women to study was preceded by long-running discussions. In the 1870s, the Academic Senate at the University of Vienna had argued that women should fulfill their nature-given role as wife and mother, and should

¹ Staatsgesetzblatt für den Staat Deutschösterreich, 20. Stück, 91. Gesetz vom 5. Dezember 118 über das deutschösterreichische Staatsbürgerrecht, § 2.

² The Catholic Theological Faculty was still closed to women when Frenkel entered the university—and remained so for a further two decades.

thus be kept away from higher education. But there was also another argument repeated among these opponents of women's higher education: that women were not intelligent enough to study at a university. The German psychiatrist Paul Möbius played an influential role in this debate. He declared women to be more irritable, more easily scared and more cowardly. Only male women, i.e. "not real" women would reach for education and a profession. Viennese doctors claimed that a woman undertaking intellectual activities could not be a "woman" or a "mother" (Heindl 2015: 529–531). Antifeminism and misogyny went hand in hand with antisemitism. The German-national politician Georg von Schönerer, one of the most influential antisemites in Central Europe and a role model for Adolf Hitler, once stated that female suffrage, for Schönerer an "idiocy," would only be demanded by women who had failed in their calling as women—and by "Jewesses" (Rose: 100). Antisemites' frequent portrayal of the male Jewish body as feminine underlines the connection between these two phenomena. They became a cultural code to demonstrate membership of a particular sociopolitical camp, and the similarities between antisemitism and antifeminism were not only programmatic and structural but also present in terms of personnel and organization (Raggam-Blesch 2008: 55, 64). Antifeminist stereotypes did not disappear after World War I but to a large extent they were overlaid—by antisemitism.

The practice of racist antisemitism at the University of Vienna can be observed in the fifth line of Else Frenkel's *Nationale*. Only two years previously a new category had been introduced by the Academic Senate: *Volkszugehörigkeit* (ethnicity). For Else Frenkel there was probably no doubt that her *Volkszugehörigkeit* was "deutsch" (German), especially as German was her native language and she had Austrian citizenship. But her answer of "deutsch" has been crossed out by somebody. Frenkel had stated "isr[aelitisch]" (Israelite) as her religion but according to the ideology of the leading university institutions—the academic authorities and the student union—Jews could not be Germans. This also meant that they could not be members of the student union (and were therefore excluded from social benefits and elections), and this six years after the Federal Constitutional Law had been decreed in Austria. The body responsible for this exclusion was the Deutsche Studentenschaft (DSt).

Student Fraternities and the Deutsche Studentenschaft

The Deutsche Studentenschaft was the self-proclaimed "German Aryan" student union in the First Austrian Republic. It had been established after World War I by German-national and Catholic student fraternities, a coalition that would have been unthinkable in the Habsburg Monarchy. Catholic student fraternities (whose history started in 1864 with the foundation of Austria Innsbruck) had faced hostility from members of German-national student fraternities from the very beginning. Bones of contention prompting these often violent attacks were the appearance of Catholic students in traditional student uniforms including fencing weapons (although Catholic students rejected the *Mensur*, the traditional fencing bout between members of different fraternities), and ideological differences, especially the anti-Catholic agenda of the *Burschenschaften* and other German-national student fraternities. Georg von Schönerer, who had a great impact on these organizations, had propagated "Los von Rom" ("Away from Rome") in 1897. As the number of Catholic fraternities grew rapidly in the first decade of the twentieth century, these conflicts increased in intensity. Karl Lueger, then mayor of the city of Vienna, demanded a "conquest of the university" at the Catholic Day in Vienna in 1907, at which he also complained about the influence of Jews.³ One year later, the conflict

³ Ein Stich in's Wespennest oder Der 6. allgemeine österreichische Katholikentag (1907) und die katholische Universitätsfrage, 3. The article is published in Rathkolb 2014: 259–276.

between German-nationals and Catholics reached its peak with the “Wahrmund affair.” Ludwig Wahrmund, a German-national law professor at the University of Innsbruck, opposed the influence of Catholicism at Austrian universities, whereupon the Ministry for Education transferred him to Prague. This was followed by violent confrontations between the two camps (Hartmann 2001: 45–51).

In the wake of the outbreak of World War I a thaw began, culminating in a meeting between the leading figures of the German-national student fraternities in February 1918. The representative senior members of the *Burschenschaften*, *wehrhafte Vereine*, *Sängerschaften*, *Corps* and other organizations reached a momentous decision: to settle their differences (which had often been considerable in the Monarchy), to join forces against “Judaism,” and to put an end to the fight against the Catholic student body (Knoll 1923: 763). One consequence of this was the establishment of a common student union a short time later. Meanwhile, in Germany general student committees were founded at the beginning of 1919 with compulsory membership, obligatory fees, and a general, direct right to vote. A student parliament in Würzburg was intended to represent all students of German descent and native language, including student representations from the German-speaking areas of the former Habsburg Empire: Austria as *Kreis 8* and the Sudetenland as *Kreis 9* (of ten *Kreise* in total) (Jaraus 1984: 120). But the student unions of Austria and the Sudetenland did not agree with the rules and regulations made by the German ones. At the University of Vienna, a “German-Aryan list” was constituted and a vote was called in October 1919. For the next 14 years, until the breakdown of the DSt in 1933, its first election program would dominate student politics, namely: the fight against Judaism and the implementation of a *numerus clausus* (admission restriction) for Jewish students (Lichtenberger-Fenz 1990: 13–23).

For German-national student fraternities, especially the *Burschenschaften* and *wehrhafte Vereine* (the latter were organized in the *Kyffhäuser-Verband*), the exclusion of Jews and the implementation of an “Aryan paragraph” did not constitute a break since these had already been part of their statutes by the end of the nineteenth century (Stimmer 1997: 121–136). But for the Catholic student fraternities it did mark a change in direction. Although the attempt by Engelbert Dollfuss and the theology professor Nivard Schlögl to establish an “Aryan paragraph” for the *Cartellverband* (an umbrella organization of Catholic fraternities) was rejected in 1920 (Hartmann 2006: 493), and although *racist antisemitism* never became a generally accepted phenomenon in the Christian Social Party, *racist antisemitism* did take root in some parts of the Christian Social milieu, especially among the Catholic representatives of the *Deutsche Studentenschaft*.

This ongoing process of radicalization reached a first peak in 1922 following the election of the Jewish historian Samuel Steinherz as rector of the German University in Prague. Yet not only in Prague did antisemitic students protest against his election and initiate riots in the university building, the protests also spread to Vienna, Graz and Innsbruck shortly thereafter. In an official statement, the DSt demanded a *numerus clausus* of ten percent not only for Jewish students but also for Jewish university teachers. With regard to academic authorities, especially rectors and deans, their demands went even further: only professors of German descent and mother tongue should be allowed to adopt such a position. As mentioned above, “German descent” could not be acquired or chosen, according to Austria’s high courts.⁴ In the Rectorate of the university, this proclamation by the DSt was not shelved but taken very seriously. The rector Karl Diener, a geographer and geologist,

⁴ Wienbibliothek, Tagblatt-Archiv, *Mappe Hochschulen* (1922), *Deutsche Studentenschaft der Universität Wien an den hohen Akademischen Senat der Universität Wien*, 27 November 1922.

even publicly sympathized with these demands. His reaction was published in several newspapers and cited hundreds of times over the following years. Not only did he exhibit sympathy with the quota demands but he became abusive against *Ostjuden*, whom he compared with a canker, stating that the first task of every rector at a German university would be to remove *Ostjuden*.⁵ The following year, the academic authorities of the University of Vienna recognized the DSt as the official representative body of “German” students, thus formalizing existing unofficial practice.

The *Staatsgrundgesetz* of 1867 and the democratic constitution set limits on the racist agenda of the Rectorate and the Deutsche Studentenschaft. But these limits did not apply to foreign Jewish students, who were numerous due to the restrictive Austrian citizenship policy. Shortly after the proclamation of the Republic of German-Austria in 1918, the Academic Senate drastically increased enrolment fees for foreigners and made access to places in institutes and laboratories more difficult. In addition, foreigners (students from Germany were not classified as such) were excluded from fellowship programs (Goldhammer 1927: 39). In 1923, the Academic Senate went one step further: prospective students from Eastern Europe were no longer to be accepted as extraordinary students, and the already high barriers to ordinary students were raised once more. Enrolment was now only possible under certain circumstances and, in particular, school reports were checked even more closely than before (Lichtenberger-Fenz 1990: 51–52). As a result, the proportion of Jewish students in the interwar period fell continuously. Yet this decrease—from 42 percent in 1920/21 to 25 percent five years later—did not meet the expectations of the Deutsche Studentenschaft. Therefore the student union found other ways to decrease the percentage of Jewish students: constant hostility, further discrimination and violence.

Antisemitic Agitation and Violence

In autumn 1926 Else Frenkel started her first lectures at the university and attended courses held by the psychologist Karl Bühler, the mathematician Josef Lense and the physicist Egon Schweidler.⁶ The year 1926 fell in a period of relative economic stabilization and there was a general decrease in antisemitism in Austria (Hänisch 1998: 32, Pauley 1993: 145–146). However, the University of Vienna, as well as other universities and colleges in Austria, was an exception. Frenkel’s first semester was marked by protests against Josef Hupka. Hupka was Ordinary Professor of Commercial and Exchange Law and had been elected dean of the Law Faculty. Although Hupka had left the Jewish faith almost 30 years ago, the Deutsche Studentenschaft staged a protest rally in front of the university building. The students passed a resolution in which they objected to the election and demanded, once more, a numerus clausus.⁷

Hupka’s election was also harshly criticized on some notice boards in the main building, most of which were placed at the disposal of the DSt and other right-wing organizations, such as the Alldeutscher Verband (Pan-German League), the Akademische Vereinigung für Rassenpflege (Academic Association for Racial Cultivation) and the Völkische Arbeitsgemeinschaft (*Völkisch* Study Group) (Zoitl 1992: 338). Since most of Frenkel’s courses took place in the main building on the Ringstrasse, she had to pass these notice boards at least three days per week. They were covered with antisemitic propaganda, insults, and threats against the “Jewish race.” A flyer produced by the

⁵ Neues Wiener Tagblatt (daily edition), 11.12.1922, 1–2.

⁶ Vienna University Archive (VUA), *Nationale* of the Philosophical Faculty, winter semester 1926/27.

⁷ Kundgebung deutschnationaler Studenten gegen den Dekan der juristischen Fakultät, Neue Freie Presse, 6.11.1926, 27.

DSt dated October 1926 accused Jews of economic enslavement and being responsible for “the plight of German academic youth,” and cited Richard Wagner: “The Jew is the plastic demon of the decline of mankind.” Furthermore, the flyer of the official student union called for “the elimination of Jewish exploiters, fomenters and destroyers of the German *Volk*.”⁸ Flyers of other organizations went even further, insulting Jews as a “hideous bastard race,” as reported in the *Neue Freie Presse* in December 1926.⁹ Although the Academic Senate implemented new rules during this academic year—flyers now had to be approved by the Rectorate—essentially the situation did not change.

This brutalized language did not fail in its intended effect. Violence became an almost everyday phenomenon in these years. And university autonomy was abused insofar as the police were not allowed to enter the university buildings. Policemen waited outside to collect what were often severely injured students and hand them over to an emergency ambulance. The institute most severely affected at the University of Vienna was the First Anatomical Institute run by Julius Tandler, who was a boogymen for antisemitic students for two reasons: not only was he a Jewish professor, but he was also a city councillor in the left-wing municipal government of “Red Vienna.” Students repeatedly disrupted his courses, entered the lecture hall, screamed “Juden hinaus” (“Jews out”), and attacked Tandler’s students (Taschwer and Nemeč 2014). As a consequence of these student riots, the Rectorate found itself repeatedly forced to close university buildings. Frenkel and thousands of other students who did not sympathize with the perpetrators were not able to attend courses, for example in June 1927, when the rector Hans Molisch ordered the closing of the main building as well as the Anatomical and the Physiological Institutes. More and more often, German-national and National Socialist students (the border between them was fluid) prevented Jewish and Socialist students from attending their courses and lectures, also by violent means.¹⁰ Posters reading “Juden hinaus” (“Jews out”) became a commonplace sight next to the doors of Austria’s university buildings.

Another common occurrence were calls to boycott (supposedly) Jewish university teachers. This was at a time when course fees accounted for a considerable part of teachers’ income, especially of *Privatdozenten* (unsalaried instructors, the male form *Privatdozent* also applied to the few habilitated women). As early as 1924, the cultural office (*Kulturamt*) of the Deutsche Studentenschaft had published a list of Jewish professors and *Privatdozenten* at the University of Vienna.¹¹ Five years later the Völkische Arbeitsgemeinschaft, an organization with close ties to the DSt, created an updated list which was distributed in front of the main building.¹² Else Frenkel, who had to enter the building via the Ringstrasse every day during this winter semester of 1929 for courses given by the philosophers Robert Reininger and Rudolf Carnap and by the ethnologist Wilhelm Koppers,¹³ might well have been handed such a list. It urged students not to attend the courses of the listed teachers and the approximately 200 names included Frenkel’s teachers “Bühler” and “Schlick” (although Schlick and *Karl Bühler* were not of Jewish descent). The message of the Deutsche Studentenschaft was clear: these teachers—but also students who attended their lectures—were not welcome. It is

⁸ VUA, Senat, GZ 156, Flyer with the heading “Die Deutschenhetze der sozialistischen Studenten geht schon wieder los”. Original quote: “Wahre sozialistische Gesinnung verlangt Beseitigung der jüdischen Volksausbeuter, Volksverhetzer und Volkszerstörer [...]”.

⁹ Eine Kulturschande an der Universität. Die antisemitischen Anschlagtafeln in der Aula, *Neue Freie Presse*, 20.12.1926, 6.

¹⁰ Die Universität gesperrt, *Der Abend*, 14.6.1927; An der Universität wird weiter geprügelt, *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 6.11.1928; Die Zusammenstöße auf der Universitätsrampe, *Neue Freie Presse*, 9.4.1929.

¹¹ Rasse und Wissenschaft, *Deutschösterreichische Tages-Zeitung*, 23.4.1924 (TBA).

¹² UAV, Senat, GZ 152 ex 1929/30, Rector Wenzel Gleispach to the Völkische Arbeitsgemeinschaft, 14.10.1929.

¹³ VUA, Philosophical Faculty, *Nationale* WS 1929/30; VAU, Vorlesungsverzeichnis der Universität Wien 1929/30, 42-43, 52.

quite conceivable that “Frenkel” was also mentioned on this kind of list when she began to teach in the academic year 1931/32.

ELSE FRENKEL AND THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA II: PROFESSORIAL NETWORKS AND THE NON-EXISTENT CHANCES FOR AN ACADEMIC CAREER, 1930–1938

The Psychological Institute, where Else Frenkel began to work as an assistant in the Department for Biographical Studies shortly after her graduation, was a huge research institute in these years. Financed by the City of Vienna and the Rockefeller Foundation, by the end of the 1920s it had become an internationally renowned institute. No fewer than 34 psychologists from the United States studied and worked there in the years 1929 to 1935 (Paier 1996: 10). Yet this fact remained invisible in the staff index of the University of Vienna: for the years 1926 to 1938, when Frenkel was studying and working at the institute, the staff index normally listed only two scientific employees: Karl Bühler, ordinary professor, and his research assistant and later assistant Egon Brunswik. The only exception was the 1931/32 academic year, when the directory published in autumn 1931 listed a third person: Else Frenkel.¹⁴ During this period Brunswik was living in Ankara, where he was involved in setting up a Psychological Department based on the model of the Viennese Institute—an idea brought to Karl Bühler by the Turkish Ministry for Education.¹⁵ Frenkel returned a second time as Egon Brunswik’s substitute in 1936 when he was visiting the University of California in Berkeley, where he ultimately remained (Paier 1996: 31).¹⁶ As a student Else Frenkel had, without any doubt, experienced excesses of racist antisemitism on multiple occasions. She was excluded from the student elections because of her confession, she undoubtedly noticed the brutal attacks against fellow students, and at the very least she was confronted with antisemitic flyers and slogans. But what were her chances for a university career? Was an assistant’s substitute the highest position a Jewish woman from Galicia could hope for in these years? The following sections illustrate the objective chances for promotion and the interaction of several non-academic criteria.

Non-academic Criteria and Academic Careers

The year 1848 marked the beginning of the modern university as we know it today. In the same year the academic criteria for habilitations and professorships were decreed by the Ministry for Education: the *Habilitationsverordnung* (Decree on Habilitations) and the *Lehrkanzelerlass* (Decree on Professorships). The academic criteria set down in these decrees remained relatively unchanged until the 1930s, when Else Frenkel started to work as an assistant. Applicants for the habilitation had to submit a major scientific work—their *Habilitationsschrift* (postdoctoral thesis)—on the topic they wanted to teach. If the thesis met the academic requirements, the Professorial Council would invite the applicant to what was known as a colloquium, a scientific discussion. The third step was a test

¹⁴ Die Akademischen Behörden, Professoren, Privatdozenten, Lehrer, Beamten usw. an der Universität zu Wien, I., Ring des 12. November Nr. 3, für das Studienjahr 1931/32, Wien 1931: Verlag von Adolf Holzhausens Nachf. Charlotte Bühler, who had been a *Privatdozent* at the University of Vienna since 1923, was not officially affiliated with the Institute, at least from the point of view of the university and the Ministry for Education. As a *Privatdozent* she was not a public employee and her income at the university was limited to the course fees paid by the students.

¹⁵ Egon Brunswik, Wiener psychologische Schule in der Türkei. Ein Institut nach Wiener Muster in Ankara, Neues Wiener Journal, 27.7.1932, 6–7.

¹⁶ This information is based on Paier’s article. Frenkel was not listed in the directory.

lecture. After this, the Professorial Council would decide whether the applicant was qualified for the position of *Privatdozent*. The Ministry for Education was required to confirm the Council's decision. In 1888 the Ministry introduced a new passus: from now on, the Professorial Council was allowed to refuse an applicant because of "another reason relating to the personality of the applicant."¹⁷ In 1920 the passage was slightly reformulated and expanded: the habilitation could be denied because of "a reason relating to the person of the applicant that queried their suitability for a university teaching post."¹⁸ This legislation gave the Professorial Councils plenty of scope for refusing a candidate. When a new *Habilitationsnorm* was decreed in May 1934, one year after the passage of an authoritarian constitution, candidates for the habilitation now had to be Austrian citizens, because the Ministry only wanted people from the same "cultural area." This can be seen as a further barrier to Jewish scholars who were born in Galicia or the Bukovina (Erker 2021: 126–127). Likewise, the rules on professorial appointments did not change greatly between 1848 and the 1930s. The professors and a few representatives of the *Privatdozenten* had to agree on a list of three candidates, which was sent to the Ministry. The candidates had to demonstrate academic quality (via publications) and the ability to teach. A habilitation was not an absolute precondition for an appointment as a university professor but in practice a non-habilitated scholar was almost never appointed. A doctorate was obligatory. The state authorities were not bound by the suggestions of the Professorial Councils. De facto the Ministry took the decision but the Emperor had to confirm it. In the First Republic the rules only changed insofar as the Federal President, as the new head of state, had the final say (Staudigl 2017: 138–145).

It is obvious that not only academic criteria were decisive in determining whether somebody gained the habilitation or a professorship, especially under the aforementioned circumstances and given the scope for action accorded the Professorial Councils. One of the first people to investigate the influence of these criteria was Josef Redlich, a law professor at the University of Vienna. His dossier was a direct response to a speech by Vienna's mayor Karl Lueger in 1907, in which he had spoken of "Jewish dominion" (*Judenherrschaft*) over the universities. Redlich found out that the proportion of Jews among the ordinary professors was, compared to the *Privatdozenten*, extremely low. And he pointed out that a large proportion of these "Jewish" scholars were not practicing Jews and had converted to Christianity.¹⁹ But these findings never came to light, Redlich never published the dossier. But religion, not to say "race," was not the only criteria that had an impact on an academic career. Gender, social origin, political views, country of origin and native language could be much more important than articles published in renowned scientific journals. Especially for women, it was extremely difficult to gain a foothold in academia. Before the Nazi Party came to power, only 84 women had been appointed to an academic post in Germany and Austria, and only four of these had reached the position of full professor. 32 of these women scholars were of Jewish descent but the majority were either baptized or without denomination. None of these 32 women became a full professor (Freidenreich 2002: 70). "You are a woman and a Jew and together that is too much." This was the sentence the physicist Marietta Blau was confronted with when she requested at least some form of

¹⁷ Reichsgesetzblatt, 19. Verordnung des Ministers für Cultus und Unterricht vom 11. Februar 1888, betreffend die Habilitation der Privatdocenten an Universitäten, § 6 ("... oder wenn aus einem anderen in der Persönlichkeit des Bewerbers gelegenen Grunde sich die Ertheilung der *venia docendi* als unzulässig darstellt, so ist das Habilitationsgesuch sofort abzuweisen.")

¹⁸ Staatsgesetzblatt 124. Stück, 415. Vollzugsanweisung des Staatsamtes für Inneres und Unterricht vom 2. September 1920, betreffend die Zulassung die Lehrtätigkeit der Privatdozenten an den Hochschulen (*Habilitationsnorm*), § 6 (1).

¹⁹ Josef Redlich, Über die Situation für jüdische Gelehrte an den österreichischen Universitäten. Published in Rathkolb 2014: 277–317.

paid employment, after she had succeeded in establishing herself in the scientific world, and it illustrates the interconnection between these forms of discrimination (Freidenreich 2002: 75). When Else Frenkel started to study at the University of Vienna in 1926, only 3.3 percent of the university teachers were women. In the 1931/32 academic year, when she was employed as a research assistant, this proportion had risen slightly, to 3.9 percent.²⁰ Eight of these 39 women (of 1,008 teachers in total) had reached the last stage before a professorship, the position of a *Privatdozent*, Charlotte Bühler among them. Else Frenkel's supervisor at the Psychological Institute had applied for the transfer of her *venia legendi* from the Dresden Technical College to the University of Vienna. But this endeavor had almost failed: only 25 of 46 members of the Professorial Council had approved Bühler's application, 15 had voted no and six had abstained from voting (Huber 2019a: 177). Charlotte Bühler was a Protestant but of Jewish origin, which may have explained these 15 votes against her attempt. But her husband was an ordinary professor at the same faculty, which gave her a definite backing. Only one Jewish woman attained the status of *Privatdozent* in the interwar period: Anna Spiegel-Adolf, who gained the habilitation in Applied Chemical Medicine in 1931. A first attempt had failed in 1926 (Huber 2019a: 172). In the 1931/32 academic year, approximately 20 percent of *Privatdozenten* and more than a quarter of the extraordinary professors at the Philosophical Faculty were of Jewish descent; but not even one in ten ordinary professors was Jewish. However, the proportion of Jewish university teachers fell continuously during in the interwar period. Fewer and fewer applied for the habilitation; the chances were increasingly hopeless.²¹ Frenkel herself was confronted with antisemitism shortly after the start of her university teaching career. An antisemitic student periodical complained that it would be a shame for "Aryan" psychology students to have to attend courses by "the Jew Else Frenkel" (Paier 1996: 32). To summarize, a few women and a few male Jewish scholars achieved the habilitation. But the interaction of female gender and Jewish religion proved an insurmountable obstacle. Scandalous rejections of this kind, for example that of zoologist Leonore Brecher in 1926, can also be attributed to the existence of antisemitic networks.

Professorial Networks

At least two networks of antisemitic university teachers were active at the University of Vienna in the interwar period: the *Fachgruppe Hochschulen* (Universities Professional Group) of the *Deutsche Gemeinschaft* (DG, German Community), and the *Bärenhöhle* (Bear's Lair), named after a paleontological seminar room at the Philosophical Faculty. The existence of *two* networks might be due to the fact that the paleontologist and evolutionary biologist Othenio Abel had been rejected by the DG.²² The *Bärenhöhle*, which he ran, consisted of 19 professors in total and was probably active in the years 1923 to 1934 (Taschwer 2015: 99–132, Taschwer 2022). Somewhat more information is available on the *Deutsche Gemeinschaft*. It can be seen as a parallel institution to the *Deutsche Studentenschaft* and as another consequence of the decisions made in 1918 between the leading figures of the German-national student fraternities: the common anti-Jewish approach and reconciliation with Catholic elites, who were mainly organized in the *Cartellverband* (see above). Like the *Deutsche Studentenschaft*, the DG was led by members of German-national and Catholic student fraternities but the secret society was not only limited to the universities. It was made up of approximately 20 groups of normally 20 to 30 brothers (the self-designation of its members, borrowing

²⁰ The numbers are preliminary results based on approximately 90 percent of the university teachers.

²¹ These numbers are based on approximately 90 percent of the university teachers at this faculty.

²² Archive of the *Österreichische Gesellschaft für Zeitgeschichte*, DO-1102, Jules Huf estate, Folder No 7.

from the freemasons, whom they actually fought against) who came together periodically. The club's seat was located in Vienna's first district, at Elisabethstrasse 9, only 200 meters away from Abraham Frenkel's banking business (*Bankkommissionsgeschäft*) at Elisabethstrasse 13.²³ In contrast to the Bärenhöhle, the DG was a registered organization whose official activities included organizing food banks for children suffering from lung diseases (Rosar 1971: 29–37). But the DG was only a cover organization for a secret society called Die Burg (The Castle) whose activities were a far cry from child welfare. The goal of the society was the patronage of its members and the exclusion of Jews—but also freemasons, socialists and liberals—from leadership positions. The members called themselves *Gerade* (the Evens), the persons they fought against *Ungerade* (the Unevens) (Huber, Erker and Taschwer 2020: 89–116). The clique blocked habilitations, influenced the appointment of professors by the Ministry for Education, and initiated disciplinary proceedings against “uneven” scholars. Another activity of the brothers in the Fachgruppe Hochschulen was to draw up lists of “uneven” university professors. It is remarkable that the secret society not only branded professors of the Jewish faith as “uneven” but also those who had converted to Christianity. Furthermore, the professors' wives were also subjected to judgement if somebody's career had to be hindered (Huber 2019b). Women were not mentioned in the protocols of this male-only society, and were obviously not seen as opponents. Although the DG disintegrated in 1930, it is likely that its activities continued. Looking at the careers of Else Frenkel's fellow colleagues, it is clear there were very limited opportunities for them within Austrian academia.

Frenkel's Scientific Environment and Allies at the University

Else Frenkel's scientific environment at the university was strongly influenced by Karl and Charlotte Bühler and the Psychological Institute. The Böhlers had a clear vision for the theoretical and methodological orientation of the institute. They differentiated their work from psychoanalysis and declared the psychoanalytical education of the institute's employees to be a private matter. This also kept Frenkel and her scientific work away from psychoanalysis, although she underwent two analyses before her emigration (Paier 1996: 30). The Böhlers maintained close contacts with logical empiricism and the Vienna Circle, an intellectual group led by philosophy professor Moritz Schlick. The philosophy of this group was oriented towards the natural sciences and the members decidedly rejected metaphysics and shared a declared belief in the Enlightenment (Stadler 1997). Frenkel had already been a member of discussion circles under Moritz Schlick during her university studies (Paier 1996: 31). Klaus Taschwer (2018) has interpreted the formation of this collective and the first get-togethers in autumn 1924 as a direct reaction to developments within the University of Vienna, namely the appointment of Robert Reininger (Professor of the History of Philosophy since 1922 and, furthermore, a member of the Bärenhöhle network) as the head of the Philosophical Society, in which role he biased the organization towards metaphysics, and the rejection of habilitation attempts by well-qualified academics such as physicist Karl Horovitz. Some members of the Vienna Circle can be seen as victims of antisemitic networks who were unable to get a foot in the door at the University of Vienna, for example Edgar Zilsel, a philosopher, historian and sociologist with whom Frenkel maintained contact, who saw no other option than to withdraw his habilitation attempt in November 1924, 15 months after he had sent his application to the faculty (Taschwer 2022). Schlick's only scholar who became a *Privatdozent* (in November 1925) was Rudolf Carnap, who was born in Ronsdorf,

²³ Adolph Lehmann's allgemeiner Wohnungs-Anzeiger, nebst Handels- u. Gewerbe-Adressbuch für d. k.k. Reichshaupt- u. Residenzstadt Wien u. Umgebung, 1921–22, 1923 and 1924.

Germany, and who was without confession.²⁴ Else Frenkel had attended three of his courses in the summer and winter semesters of 1929.²⁵ Frenkel's future husband, Egon Brunswik, was also closely linked to the Vienna Circle. But Brunswik's habilitation proceeded without any problems. The vote was almost unanimous: only one of the 46 members of the Professorial Council abstained from the vote but no one voted "no."²⁶ Brunswik, who was Roman Catholic²⁷ and who had obtained Austrian citizenship, became a *Privatdozent* on 21 February 1934.²⁸ Had he already been married to Else Frenkel (whose confession had been publicized in an antisemitic journal, as mentioned above), the habilitation procedure might have been more difficult. But Brunswik was probably aware of the fact that, as a scholar of Karl Bühler, any professorship was a long way away. The same applied to Charlotte Bühler. When a commission at the Philosophical Faculty debated the award of the *title* of extraordinary professor (not to be confused with a real professorship, which came with the status of a civil servant) in 1927, the philosopher Robert Reininger pointed out that there was "no favorable sentiment" in the faculty.²⁹ Two more years passed until Bühler was listed as *Privatdozentin* with the title of extraordinary professor in the staff directory. A sad climax—and a direct result of continuing attacks against political dissidents by German-national but also Catholic forces—was the murder of Moritz Schlick in the main building of the University of Vienna on 22 June 1936. Schlick was shot dead by a former student, Hans Nelböck, who had made death threats against Schlick on two previous occasions. The murder was largely exonerated in an article published in the journal *Sturm über Österreich* by Johann Sauter, a philosopher and student of Othmar Spann. Sauter differentiated between a Christian and a Jewish philosophy (Schlick was not of Jewish descent), and claimed that Schlick was not a Christian philosopher and should not have been teaching at the Philosophical Faculty (Erker 2021: 214–217).³⁰ A plaque now remembers the assassination at the location where Schlick was murdered. "An intellectual climate poisoned by racism and intolerance had contributed to the act," states the inscription. Else Frenkel definitely also experienced this poisoned intellectual climate.

CONCLUSION

The University of Vienna was an institution under the auspices of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education. As such the Basic Law on the General Rights of Citizens of 1867 and the Federal Constitutional Law of 1920 were legally binding. Nonetheless, Austrian universities became centres of antidemocratic tendencies in the interwar period. A large section of the student body, as well as of the university teaching staff, held liberal and democratic views. But these actors did not hold positions of power. Instead, through perfectly coordinated collaboration, their ideological opponents became rectors, deans and officials in the student union. It was they who determined the development of Austria's leading university and enforced the exclusion of several groups. By 1923, the academic

²⁴ Carnap was without religious confession in 1924, according to his registration form. WStLA, 2.5.1.4.K11, Carnap Rudolf, 18. 5. 1891.

²⁵ VUA, Philosophical Faculty, *Nationale*, summer semester 1929 and winter semester 1929.

²⁶ VUA, PH PA 249, fol. 29, Dean of the Philosophical Faculty to the Federal Ministry for Education, 19.12.1933.

²⁷ VUA, PH PA 249 fol. 17, Commission report on the habilitation attempt by Dr. Egon Brunswik (Psychology), 7.7.1933.

²⁸ VUA, PH PA 249, fol. 15, Dean of the Philosophical Faculty to Egon Brunswik, 21.2.1934.

²⁹ VUA, PH PA 249, fol. 21, Protocol, 19.3.1927.

³⁰ Ehs, Tamara, Johann(es) Sauter, *650 plus – Geschichte der Universität Wien*. Internet: https://gedenkbuch.univie.ac.at/index.php?person_single_id=33757 (accessed: 5.12.2021); Kniefacz, Katharina, Der Mord an Prof. Moritz Schlick, Memorial Book for the Victims of National Socialism at the University of Vienna in 1938. Internet: <https://geschichte.univie.ac.at/de/artikel/der-mord-prof-moritz-schlick> (accessed: 5.12.2021)

authorities of all Austrian universities and colleges (*Hochschulen*) had recognised the Deutsche Studentenschaft as the only representative body of “German”—in the sense of “Aryan”—students. Appointments of Jewish, liberal and left-wing scholars occurred more and more seldom. Antidemocratic and fascist attitudes were a common denominator within these driving forces. To put it in slightly exaggerated terms, the University of Vienna can thus be characterized as an *authoritarian institution*.

Gender discrimination was also widespread in this institution, as well as in Austria in general, where women’s representation in parliament remained under 6 percent until 1975 (Rose 2008: 97). In her study of more than 400 Jewish university women, Harriet Pass Freidenreich concludes that these women “had been even more likely to encounter obstacles and hostility due to their gender than because of their Jewish origin” (Freidenreich 2002: 165). However, it is questionable whether this finding also applies to the University of Vienna, where antisemitism had become the dominant theme in the 1920s (the exclusion of women from the DSt was obviously never a matter of discussion). Misogyny was still present but it remained an undercurrent and was much less visible. Without doubt, Frenkel was aware of the interrelationship between antisemitism and antifeminism, and that it was “too much” (Marietta Blau) to be able to forge a stable academic career. She was witness to antisemitic excesses and the discrimination against her teachers and academic colleagues: against Charlotte Bühler, whose efforts to transfer her habilitation to Vienna almost failed, and against Edgar Zilsel, whose habilitation attempt failed under scandalous circumstances, to give but two examples. These antisemitic and anti-liberal campaigns reached their tragic culmination in the murder of Moritz Schlick in 1936.

All these personal experiences very likely formed an important impulse for research on the personalities of the discriminators. (This applies not only to Frenkel-Brunswik but also to Marie Jahoda, who had a similar biographical background and contributed to another influential and famous book on antisemitism and racism: “Anti-Semitism and Emotional Disorder: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation”). Being born as a Jewish woman, the experience of gender discrimination and antisemitism at the University of Vienna definitely shaped the life and work of Else Frenkel.

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