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OTTO BAUER: A LIFE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND POLICY

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If we call a scholar who influences policy but always stays a scholar a »public intellectual« how do we call a person who is both: a (1) scholar and a (2) politician? The proposed presentation deals with this question on the basis of an example: Otto Bauer and his influence on the Austrian society in the first forty years of the last century.

(1) Studying at the University of Vienna he was a member of the seminar of economics of Eugen Boehm-Bawerk who was one of the famous Austrian Economists of the marginal utility school. Soon he became a well known economist and the liberal Ludwig von Mises referred to him as one of the most brilliant theorists of Marxism in Central Europe.

(2) In the twenties of the last century he was the most important politician of the Social Democrat party and also a central figure of the whole political life. He was minister for a short time and became an important member of parliament later. But Bauer always tried to keep contact with the scientific community. A good example for this is that he initiated the famous study of Marienthal by talking about this issue with Paul Lazarsfeld.

In this presentation I show that Otto Bauer influenced science, policy and the whole social democratic movement in Austria. Maybe he wasn't a public intellectual as we know them today. But he was a »translator« between different parts of society for sure. The Marienthal example shows that he had the ability to transform questions from the field of policy into the field of science and then use the scientific knowledge for his policy.

There are some questions left: what are the limitations for a life in the fields of science and policy? Can one be both – a scientist and a politician – or must one decide himself for one part? If it is not possible to be both: how important are »translators« to establish a link between the two fields?

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