

**The Psychoanalytic Observation of Children**  
**Origins and Recent Developments -- Training and Research**  
**Its Significance for Psychotherapy and other Fields of Psychosocial Work**  
**An International Conference at the University of Vienna, April 19-21, 2024**

**Wilfried Datler (AUT)**

**From Esther Wander's observations with Charlotte Bühler in Vienna to  
Esther Bick's conception of Infant Observation at the Tavistock Clinic in London**

***Saturday, April 20, 9:15 a.m. / Kleiner Festsaal / Plenary session I***

**Abstract:**

Esther Wander came to Vienna from the Ukraine in 1930 to study psychology at the University of Vienna. Like many other female students, she took part in Charlotte Bühler's research and observed infants in a youth welfare institution. She wrote her dissertation about "Group formation in the second year of life" and finished her studies at the University of Vienna in 1935. After her marriage with the physician Philip Bick, she fled from National Socialism to England, where she became a psychoanalyst. When John Bowlby asked her to develop a training programme for child psychotherapists at the Tavistock Clinic in London, Esther Bick created as a core element of this training the concept of "Infant Observation", which from today's perspective can be seen as the starting point for the development of a broad spectrum of psychoanalytic observation methods. These methods can be summarised under the term "Tavistock Observation Methods (TOM)" and are used both in training and in research. The lecture will focus on Esther Bick's early years and outline some similarities and differences between the setting, method and approach of child observation conceptualised by Charlotte Bühler, Anna Freud and Esther Bick.

**Keywords:**

History of child observation, Infant Observation, Esther Bick, John Bowlby, Charlotte Bühler, Tavistock Clinic, Tavistock Observation Methods (TOM)

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