

## Will the Real Hans Asperger Please Stand Up? –Letters from the Round Table

Dean Falk, Florida State University  
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Hans Asperger, discoverer of the syndrome that bears his name, worked in, and eventually directed, the Therapeutic Pedagogy Unit (TPU) of the University Children's Hospital of Vienna during the 1930s and 1940s. In 2018, Asperger was publicly accused of having knowingly been complicit in the murders of children during the Nazi era in Austria. This talk discusses a collection of private letters written to Asperger between 1933 and 1949 by members of his inner circle at the TPU who referred to themselves as the Round Table (*Tafelrunde*): Valerie Bruck, Josef Feldner, Georg Frankl, Anni Weiss, and Viktorine Zak. The letters are from Asperger's estate and will be published in an edited volume that should be of interest to scholars of the history of medicine in Vienna and America in addition to historians and members of the public who want to understand how Asperger and his colleagues treated disabled children before and during the Nazi occupation of Vienna. The letters provide evidence that the sensational allegations about Asperger's conduct during the Nazi era are based on unsubstantiated and incorrect assertions.

\*Konrad Lorenz Institute for Evolution and Cognition Research

Martinstraße 12

3400 Klosterneuburg

Lecture Hall, ground floor

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**Dean Falk** is the Hale G. Smith Professor of Anthropology and a Distinguished Research Professor at Florida State University in Tallahassee, where she teaches and does research. Having trained as a biological anthropologist, Falk is interested in the evolution of the brain and the emergence of human cognitive abilities that led to language, music, analytical thinking, and warfare. She has directed collaborative research on the brains (or traces of them imprinted in fossilized skulls) of nonhuman primates, prehistoric human relatives, and recent humans including *Homo floresiensis* (aka “Hobbit”) and Albert Einstein. In addition to numerous scientific and popular articles, Falk has written books including *Braindance: Revised and Expanded Edition* (2004), *Finding Our Tongues: Mothers, Infants, and the Origins of Language* (2009), *The Fossil Chronicles: How Two Controversial Discoveries Changed Our View of Human Evolution* (2011), and *Geeks, Genes, and the Evolution of Asperger Syndrome* (2018), which is coauthored with her “Aspie” granddaughter, Eve Penelope Schofield. Falk is currently writing a book titled *The Botanic Age* (University of Toronto Press, forthcoming). More information can be found at: [www.deanfalk.com](http://www.deanfalk.com)