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AUGUST HERMANN NIEMEYER

(1754-1828)

*Gilbert de Landsheere*¹

Profile of a life

August Hermann Niemeyer was born on 1 September 1754. His father was deacon at the Marienkirche of Halle. His mother, A.S. Froylinghausen, was the daughter of the director of the town's orphanage and granddaughter of A.H. Francke, the most active representative of Pietist educational theory in Germany and founder of the famous Halle school institutions. Moved by the poverty of the people, Francke, a protégé of Spener's, began by founding a school for the poor and an orphanage. In order to be able to maintain them, he added fee-paying schools, followed by a dispensary and a printing works. On his death, the Halle schools made up a vast complex attended by some 3,000 pupils and employing over 200 teachers. The complex included the following establishments: a school for poor children, an orphanage, a primary school (*Bürgerschule*) for the children of artisans and the lower middle classes, a *Pädagogium* (a sort of academy reserved for the children of wealthy parents), a *Gymnasium* (secondary or grammar school) for children who were to go on to higher education, a teacher-training institution for primary-school teachers (*Seminarium praeceptorum*) and a higher teacher-training college (*Seminarium selectum praeceptorum*).

There were two features common to all of Francke's schools; while sharing the same genuine religious inspiration, they were diversified along social class lines, and each of them prepared pupils for a specific 'status'. Niemeyer would later restore the schools to the former glory they merited under Francke's direction.

Orphaned at the age of 13, Niemeyer was brought up by the counsellor Lysthenius von Wurmb, a lady of high aristocratic culture. He studied at the University of Halle and was taught by, among others, Nösselt, Griesbach and, particularly, Semler. In 1775 he published his *Charakteristik der Bibel* [Characteristics of the Bible], a work which earned him instant fame. He then struck up a personal acquaintance with Lessing, whom he met in Brunswick, and especially with Klopstock, with whom he stayed for several days in Hamburg in 1776. The following year, Niemeyer was appointed fellow in Greek and Latin literature at Halle. F.A. Wolf, the founder of modern archaeology, succeeded him to that chair.

Niemeyer the philologist and educational theorist—but also playwright, travel writer and oratorio composer—was the very embodiment of a Germany which filled the cultural void of the seventeenth century with works of genius accomplished in just a few decades.

There were some major landmarks in the life of the teacher from Halle. In 1778 he met Goethe, Herder and Wieland in Weimar. He did not get on at all well with the latter. We know little of his relations with Herder; but he did become Goethe's friend and remained so until Niemeyer's death.

In 1783, Duke Charles Eugene visited the Halle institutions and offered Niemeyer the post of professor at the Karlsschule. He declined the offer, but on that occasion became the correspondent and confidant of the Duke's favourite, Franziska von Hohenheim.

Protégé of the Kings of Prussia, Frederick William II and III, Niemeyer enjoyed a glittering career. He became prorector of the University of Hallein in 1793, director-general of

the Francke Foundations in 1799, senior councillor of the consistory and schools (*Oberkonsistorial- und Oberschulrat*) with a seat and voting rights at the Ministry of Religion and Instruction in Berlin and, one year later, chancellor and rector in perpetuity of the university.

In July 1802, Goethe visited the Halle *Pädagogium*. At the time, Niemeyer was translating Terence's *Andria* for him, under the title *Die Fremde aus Andros* [The stranger from Andros]. The play was staged the following year by the Weimar theatre.

Niemeyer met Schiller at Lauchstädt in 1806 and struck up a friendship with him as well. Thus it was that Niemeyer received the manuscripts of *Wallenstein* and *Maria Stuart* before their publication, with Schiller asking for his opinion and advice (see Menne, 1928, p. 48). The *Pädagogium* also received a visit from Schiller on 8 July 1803.

Then came the dark war years. On 17 October 1806, three days after the defeat at Jena and Auerstädt, Halle fell to the French. Napoleon immediately decreed the closure of the university, and Niemeyer was deported to Paris. Halle was incorporated into the kingdom of Westphalia.

In 1807 Niemeyer, back from exile, was invited by Nolte to take part in the founding of the University of Berlin, a veritable symbol of Prussian resistance which was arming itself morally and physically, and preparing for Napoleon's downfall. At practically the same time, the minister vom Stein offered him the post of State councillor. Niemeyer refused both posts, preferring to stand by his schools *in situ*.

On 1 January 1808, King Jérôme authorized the reopening of the University of Halle and appointed Niemeyer chancellor. When the King of Prussia called his people to arms in 1813, Napoleon closed the university again. It was to reopen its doors after the Prussian victory at Leipzig, and Niemeyer—who still enjoyed the support of King Frederick William III—was restored to his post as chancellor and rector, even though public opinion accused him of collaborating with the enemy.

After Napoleon's defeat, the aristocracy raised its head once more and the period of anti-liberal reaction personified by Metternich began. The promised constitutions were refused and Schleiermacher, Arndt, Jahn and other patriots were subjected to harassment. Alarmed by the French Revolution, Niemeyer came down firmly on the side of the conservatives, disapproving especially of the students' associations in general and the Wartburg events in particular. In 1816, the King appointed him *Beständiger Beauftragter des hohen Departments in Universitätsangelegenheiten*, that is to say permanent officer-in-charge of the Department of University Affairs.

Niemeyer was to live on for many years, covered in honours and held in high esteem, writing and above all continuing to watch over the expansion of Halle. When his academic jubilee was celebrated in 1827, he received gifts from Goethe and the King among many others, was made professor *honoris causa* of the University of Moscow, and received congratulations from a number of universities, including those of Breslau, Göttingen, Königsberg, Jena and Leipzig.

Development and mainstays of Niemeyer's educational thinking

During the first half of the nineteenth century, German education was very much dominated by Niemeyer's educational theory, whose influence was felt throughout Europe and beyond.

As we have seen, Goethe and Niemeyer had much in common. Apart from the fact that they lived near each other—a mere 100 or so kilometres separated Weimar from Halle—it was above all a friendly relationship spanning fifty years that brought the two men together, sharing as they did the same humanism, literary tastes and political opinions.²

Despite its paramount importance, Niemeyer's educational work is little known today. It is an extensive collection of some 110 books, manuals and brochures. The author's educational thinking is nevertheless summarized in his *Grundsätze der Erziehung und des*

Unterrichts [Principles of education and teaching]. Published in 1796 as an educational guide for parents and private tutors, this work gradually expanded into a sort of encyclopedia covering ‘the result of all that has been tried and tested in pedagogy and didactics’.³

And indeed, as German teachers were to say for almost a century, the three large volumes of the eighth edition (1825)—the last prepared by Niemeyer—contained everything:⁴ the philosophy of education, family education (including childhood nutrition), structure of the school system (which was to prevail in Western Europe for over a century), psychology, general methodology and special methodologies (which were to have a strong influence on Herbart), organization of teaching, and last, but not least, a history of education which is held by several specialists to be one of the first reliable essays on the subject.

With Prussia and the rest of Western Europe in the throes of a crisis of civilization at the end of the eighteenth century, as well as through much of the nineteenth, at a time when everything crystallized around the two revolutions that marked this period—the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution—and when ‘institutions, habits, symbols and beliefs were almost all affected by chronic instability, confusion, schism and uncertainty’,⁵ Niemeyer strove to establish education and teaching on firm ground once more.

Social order and progressive thought: a moderate approach

His aim was twofold: he wanted happiness for the child and he aspired to social peace. True to Enlightenment ideals, he believed that both of them could be realized through education.

Niemeyer reacted to the upheavals of his time from an upper middle-class standpoint, and his eclecticism was akin to that of Goethe. Both men, who have been accused by some of conservatism, seem to have been somewhat alarmed by revolutionary violence, which was incompatible with their ideals. They did not reject political, social or scientific progress, but wanted it to be the outcome of peaceful change. H. Uyttersprot clearly illustrates Goethe’s attitude in this respect:

We can safely say without risk of error that in politics Goethe was a conservative. But his conservatism was not narrow and blinkered like that of Metternich or Gentz. Here too he distrusted inflammatory slogans and expected good to come from the kind of change that does not destroy, poses no risk, and does not involve rash experiments. Here too he advocated the idea of gradual change, of slow and unforced maturing.⁶

Niemeyer wrote: ‘Any ill-considered love of innovation leads to the worst evils a people can suffer, revolution and anarchy.’⁷ The whole cultural outlook of the educationist from Halle is to be understood from this perspective.

For instance, regarding religion and ethics, Niemeyer subscribed in principle to the modern rationalist trend, looking to Semler for theology and Kant for philosophy. However, aware of the inability of the morally and intellectually uncultivated classes of society to accede rapidly enough to a religion or moral code increasingly stripped of its emotional content, Niemeyer adopted a moderate position. In religion, he left the door open to Pietism and maintained that pure reason and revelation, as well as practical reason, could legitimately lead to faith. He also compromised when it came to moral philosophy and, as well as the complete gratuitousness of moral behaviour held by the idealists to be the supreme criterion, accepted increasingly opportunistic motivations and did not even reject the simulacrum of morality dictated by sordid self-interest, in the hope that positive conditioning would assert itself as a result.

In fact, thanks to his profound experience of people, Niemeyer had already become aware of the phenomenon that Lévy-Bruhl would later analyse: a living society does not set itself a moral code *ad libitum*.

For Niemeyer, the moral hierarchy, in which the development of values is proportionate to the extent to which reason prevails over sentiment, corresponded to a social hierarchy. All his educational and theological work is informed by the idea that people can only attain full enjoyment of reason after having gone through a painstaking and methodical process of

education and many years of teaching. But, as he saw it, the quality of family education declined in proportion to social status. Furthermore, the poorer a child was, the shorter the amount of time he or she would spend at school. Thus society was made up of the ordinary people, who could not attain the full exercise of reason, and, at the other end of the scale, a class privileged not only in economic terms but also in moral terms.

In his *Principles*, Niemeyer advanced a significant analysis of the cultural potential of the three social classes.

The case against the lower class was quickly made. Poverty made access to ‘humanity’ extremely difficult. Giving the poor ‘an upright, pious, satisfied mind’ and inculcating in them ‘the inclination to work’⁸ was as ambitious a programme for them as could be expected. His attitude to the middle classes was quite different: ‘indisputably it is the bourgeoisie which lends itself best to intellectual and moral education’.⁹

Situated between the peasantry and urban proletariat which had not yet had access to culture, and a decadent nobility,¹⁰ the middle class, whose prosaic nature had so often been the butt of ridicule, had remained in touch with reality. Free of the basic concerns of everyday subsistence, it had time to adopt the ‘reflexive attitude of intelligence’¹¹ that was true culture. Need we recall that since the Middle Ages there had been a realist culture (*Realbildung*) which, largely free of formalist prejudices, remained close to the realities of life, and that it was going from strength to strength?¹² In the eighteenth century, the Dessau Philanthropists’ experiment and Christoph Semler’s *Realschule* were, so to speak, by-products of this movement.

As to the nobility, Niemeyer’s sober judgement was that wealth and a life of cushioned ease and dissipation were very sterile ground for culture and morality.

Consequently, in order to construct a theory of education conducive to maximum intellectual and moral progress, while ensuring social order, Niemeyer concentrated his endeavours on the bourgeoisie.

His position vis-à-vis the major conflicting educational movements at the end of the eighteenth century was consistent with this analysis. He opposed the direct rivals of the Halle institutions, the Dessau Philanthropists (led by Basedow), unwilling as he was to accept their pragmatism and the revolutionary ferment they stirred up in the higher classes of society, and Pestalozzi, that generous and brilliant bohemian of educational theory, whom he looked down upon and at the same time feared for his efforts to bring the Enlightenment to the masses.

He did, however, approve of the Pietists and Neohumanists. He found in the Pietists the realism and profound religiosity which the people and the petty bourgeoisie needed in order to play their part in the nineteenth century effectively without conflict or rash demands. From the Neohumanists he drew upon the elements of altruistic aristocratic culture, the perfect antidote to the ideas of the Philanthropists and a bridge to eternal wisdom and beauty.

In short, in the political, religious, moral, social and educational spheres, Niemeyer’s eclecticism was directed towards tradition to the extent that tradition averts revolution while leaving the way open for the free and progressive flourishing of the bourgeoisie.

Psychology and the child

In order to distinguish the main lines of Niemeyer’s educational theory, it is important to understand how he justified the very existence of education and defined its overriding principles. We will then see how he saw psychology as the systematic study of a child’s potential and how he intended to develop the aptitudes he identified.

Constructing his vast treatise on education on the basis of a rigorous method, Niemeyer set out to demonstrate, firstly, that education was not a violation of the natural rights of the child. His central argument was by nature genetic:¹³ children come into the world as fully-fledged people only in the virtual sense; they carry within them the seed of everything they might become, but the fruit will only grow out of the seed in a favourable environment. In

addition, Niemeyer wrote: 'If he does not undergo the influence of other reasonable beings, that part of the human being which distinguishes him from the animal will never reach the degree of perfection it might have attained, through the original perfectibility of his potential.'¹⁴

Niemeyer's system can be summarized as follows:

1. His entire educational theory had an ethical purpose, and indeed bore the imprint of Kant: 'May the harmony of liberty and reason be your supreme aim, for it is on that harmony that rests the moral worth of the individual, and thus his supreme, unconditional value.'¹⁵
2. Education would operate, on the one hand, according to a formal principle, that of conformity to nature, involving the development of all potentialities to the extent that an authority endowed with reason so decided,¹⁶ and, on the other hand, according to a substantive principle, that is on the basis of a subject of study, also chosen according to the dictates of reason.

The formal principle is particularly significant, since, with its premise that knowledge of the child is the basis of the educational undertaking, it leads to psychology. Without the assistance of that science, Niemeyer tells us, neither education nor teaching can function properly. Even this statement of principle is in itself highly important.

More generally, a study of Niemeyer's practical proposals shows how close the era of scientific psychology was to the age of Goethe. In fact, it had already begun. For while Niemeyer continued to take an interest in literary psychology—and who would venture to deny the psychological import of *The sorrows of young Werther* or *Levana*?—he nevertheless placed more emphasis on observation and the empirical approach to invigorate the theoretical training of the educator.

An inductive approach

He expressed some remarkable views on the schoolteacher's need for and use of introspection; even more novel were his comments on outside or objective observation. For instance, Niemeyer—who admired Jean-Jacques Rousseau—sensed the danger of subjective pedagogy as expressed in *Émile*. The science of education would make no real progress unless it was based on a series of case studies of real children.

Niemeyer wrote:

If we were to portray a person who actually exists and if we described, with the greatest accuracy possible, how education intended to shape that individual, the means employed, the changes observed and the results which rewarded the efforts deployed, we would then have both the natural history and the history of the formation of a given being. In order to enrich our theory of education, the elaboration of many anthropo-pedagogical monographs would be desirable.¹⁷

Thus, the ideas which were already to be found in Rousseau and Pestalozzi reach maturity with Niemeyer: from being deductive, educational theory was to become inductive.

In a special brief treatise entitled *New hypotheses on the evaluation of original aptitudes and capacities*, he set out to review current scientific knowledge and proposed a plan for systematic inquiry into the psychological development of the child.

Considering the psyche in relation to the body, Niemeyer gave his views on Lavater's theories on physiognomy and Gall's on phrenology, and did so with remarkable lucidity. He succeeded in separating the wheat from the chaff and showed, for example, that by studying their pupils from the physiognomic perspective teachers would at least learn not to be satisfied with a superficial impression of their pupils' characters, but to study them in a clear and precise way.¹⁸ That was indeed the great lesson of the era: did not Lavater, and even more so Gall, despite some naive assumptions and some extravagant claims, foreshadow the imminent transfer of psychology from the realm of philosophy to that of science?

We are struck by the modernism of the level of psychological observation recommended and systematized by Niemeyer. He takes as a starting point a well-known passage from Francis Bacon: 'One can discover and know a man in six different ways: by observing his physiognomy and his face, his words, his deeds, his character, the aims he pursues and, lastly, his relations with others and what they think of him.'¹⁹

With this in mind he proposed an investigation framework which is still valid today. He wrote about interviews with parents:

Even parents' mistaken judgements can be highly instructive for the investigators, giving them an insight into the child's psychological development as a result of errors made in the child's upbringing or parents' attitudes of rejection; much of what the parents say about particular attitudes of the child in the past may help them to form a judgement and may even lead them to draw quite different conclusions from those that the parents would have wished for. They should be particularly attentive to points on which the father and mother agree and those on which they do not agree!²⁰

This quotation is an accurate evocation of the approach of the modern psychologist, who, while listening to the parents, sets out to reconstitute objectively the child's background, discern the main lines of the parent's attitude and discover any traumatic incidents, is interested at least as much in what is held back as in what is apparently said quite openly, and tries to formulate a diagnosis which, very often, turns the accusers into the accused.

To Niemeyer, the mind was not just a crude mechanism of which it sufficed to know the main workings in order to be able to explain everything. On the contrary, he stressed the complexity of the child's soul, laid emphasis on the far-reaching influence of the educational environment and, whenever appropriate, envisaged problems from the social standpoint.

It is not surprising then that, in his considerations on family education, he adopted a dynamic approach very close to our contemporary one. He identified the main aspects of the child's background, defined his or her various needs and studied the most evident errors in upbringing, including rejection and over-protection.

Here too, one passage, among many others, bears witness to Niemeyer's maturity:

How often do teachers know to what extent parents are responsible for the trouble their pupils so often give them? Do they know the stuff the pupils are made of? Do they know what combination of elements make up their bodies? Do they know anything of the indelible impressions the embryo received at conception, before birth, when it first came into the world, or of the children's contact with the women who were the first to feed and care for them? Do they know how they have developed physically in adolescence, what effect the transition from non-maturity to maturity has had on their minds and how extraordinarily complicated life has so often been for them during that critical period? Do they always know what agonies they have to endure, particularly in educational institutions, with companions they fear or have to accommodate, where they have to contend with the latent violence against which no teacher can offer protection? Lastly, do we not forget too easily that it is extremely difficult for most young characters to escape outside influences?²¹

This whole psychology testifies to great broad-mindedness untrammelled by any social or economic considerations. Only the success of education, the greatest happiness of all, counted. In this it can be said that Niemeyer brought Rousseau's legacy to fruition by moving from child-centred theory to child-centred practice.

In the field of physical education we are also struck by the depth of the author's views, as he not only acknowledged the importance of physical health but showed, by his notes on gymnastics, nutrition and hygiene, how much emphasis he laid on those fundamental factors.

How the perspective changed, though, as soon as education entered the schoolroom, that is, when it was approached from the institutional standpoint!

The Enlightenment and social education

School, as a tool in the hands of the authoritative protagonists of a given culture, transmits their deep-rooted concerns, and Niemeyer proposed an approach to formal education which was altogether consistent with the aspirations of the decisive social forces of his period.

Even in family education he would have liked to have seen—alongside general, spontaneous parental action—the systematic cultivation of the three basic faculties: intelligence, sensitivity and will. Nevertheless, he knew that the influence and scope of such an enterprise was illusory because of the ignorance of many parents and the little time available to them.

In practice, therefore, school would provide almost all systematic education, which meant, on the one hand, the formal training of the faculties taken individually—culminating in the exercise of reason, love of higher intellectual culture and lofty morality—and, on the other, guidance towards truth, beauty and good, without which those faculties would be meaningless.

It is precisely here that we come up against the dividing line between ideals and reality, between the theoretical generosity of the Enlightenment and the lack of practical social sense.

The generosity is apparent in the following passage:

It is becoming ever more widely accepted that the concern to instruct the citizen must be extended to all classes of society. There is not a single citizen who, being capable of receiving instruction, should not be entitled to it, and happily the time is past when, even in civilized countries, only some people were considered to be free beings endowed with reason, and the others almost as animals and slaves, or else as beings simply destined to be used by the former and accordingly being barred from any training other than that which served the purposes determined by their masters. Anyone still harbouring such obscurantist ideas in our time and wishing to accomplish their designs must—in order to avoid exposure to public scorn—at least assume a mask of humanity, justifying their attitude by claiming that light can harm some people, that enlightenment can bring unhappiness. They would like to convince us that it is out of pure love that they are the *custodians* of the minds of the people, and withhold their rights all the better to safeguard them. But a healthy philosophy, sustained by a humane religion such as the Christian religion, sees in these manoeuvres only pride and the desire to dominate. It proclaims out loud that *everyone* has the obligation to help others to enjoy their natural and inalienable rights and that the *first of these rights* is the free use of one's own reason and the free knowledge of the truth. It further asserts that even the most worthy efforts of the State government can succeed only if they are not impeded by the baseness, unreason or ignorance of citizens or if these efforts are not rendered futile by their incapacity.²²

Two great principles of the Enlightenment are asserted here: the universal right to culture and the rejection of any form of constraining intellectual tutelage. Still, Niemeyer did add some theoretical and practical restrictions to his magnanimous assertions.

Just as Voltaire applauded La Chalotais for prohibiting study for labourers, so Niemeyer also used the specious humanitarian argument which he had himself denounced. He took it for granted that the actual living conditions of many people, 'essential for the accomplishment of the most menial work', put almost insurmountable obstacles in the way of the widespread provision of education, and he concluded:

Assuming, then, that it would be possible to raise all people to a certain degree of culture, it would not be advisable. People of the lower classes would all too soon feel wretched in their condition and would lose in peace and in happiness what they would have gained in ideas and knowledge.²³

Furthermore, Niemeyer subscribed to the principle of censorship, fearing as he did 'the ill-considered communication of truth' and 'excess of culture'.²⁴ Lastly, he considered that birth still determined social class, an inexorable fate, and justified school segregation:

It is clear that the diversity of teaching institutions must emerge very early on. This is because of the irrevocable nature of the conditions in which individuals are born; no idealistic theory can do anything to change that.²⁵

The aristocratic position is patent, and is comparable to the words Goethe put in the mouth of Werther regarding the 'little people of the place': 'I know very well that we are not equal and that we cannot be so.'²⁶

Structural innovations

On the practical level, Niemeyer proposed an organization of teaching and curricula which met those concerns. School organization was consequently to be modelled on the social order. At the base there would be elementary education. Theoretically, it was the same for all children, but private tutoring was still so common at the time and many private institutions were so restrictive in their recruitment that there was segregation from the outset. After primary school there was a clear break which corresponded to the distinction between the 'real world' and the 'world of ideas'. Those who were considered good for manual labour and were among the happy few to complete their elementary schooling were sent out to work, while the children who were later expected to apply their intelligence to material objects went on either to the *Realschule* as such, or to specialized schools such as commercial schools, arts schools and military schools. Those who were to live in the 'world of ideas' went on to the *Gymnasium* or grammar school (also known, significantly, as the school for scholars (*Gelehrtschule*)), and then possibly to university.

The proposed structures have, in essence, survived to this day.

As for the curricula, they show clearly that primary school was intended to be limited and limiting, that the *Realschulen* and their offshoots offered a scientific, realistic, modern education, while the *Gymnasien* (grammar schools) took pupils on to university via the route of the ancient classics, that of formal culture.

What is particularly striking here is the uniform stratification, with the social hierarchy corresponding exactly to what was assumed to be the intellectual and moral hierarchy.

The working-class child would have access to the three traditional skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, which were acquired not as tools for the autonomous exploration of the environment, but rather as instruments of formal discipline or the strictly guided acquisition of knowledge. Cut off from reality, history, geography and the sciences were paths to belief rather than to knowledge. Indeed, these three fields of study drew their basic subject matter from the Bible and often went no further, the aim being above all a formal one and one of edification: harnessing imagination and memory and reinforcing piety. The teaching of religion was based primarily on revelation, setting aside considered reason as being virtually unattainable.

The *Realschule* dispensed a realistic culture to the children of the petty bourgeoisie in keeping with their socio-economic needs. Modern languages were among the subjects studied. The methodology used to teach them was effective and consisted of the use of the direct method, with hearing trained before sight, words and phrases selected according to the frequency of their use in the spoken language, a global reading approach, and the theory of grammar taught on the basis of the preliminary acquisition of usage. More emphasis was laid on practising the spoken language than on written exercises.²⁷

For future 'scholars', culture would be learned for its own sake. Geometry would provide sureness of reasoning and the classical languages would train all the faculties; the sciences would be dominated by philosophy; poetry and rhetoric would enable thought, which was to have undergone gradual refinement, to flow in harmonious forms. Religion would be strongly marked with the imprint of reason.

Niemeyer referred to the intellectual agility conferred by the study of ancient languages:

The exercises, even when they concern what appears to be a trivial grammatical point, develop all at once memory, imagination, reason, quick-wittedness, wisdom, good taste and a sense of beauty. Nothing provides as much stimulus and focus for sustained attention and tireless zeal, and nothing provides as many opportunities to observe accurately and to overcome difficulties through perseverance. Such an education is a preparation for all

the undertakings of life, because it goes deep down. Furthermore, since the human mind deploys all its subtleties and diversity when it expresses itself in languages, they are the storehouses of all concepts, all forms of thought, all the means and tools for synthesis and analysis. That is why studying them stimulates greatly the flow of ideas, is so conducive to clear thinking, and structures natural logic, applying it instantly. The more advanced the study of languages, the more readily these goals will be attained.²⁸

Education for girls tended to reflect the social order in just the same way as that of boys. For girls from the working classes, Niemeyer considered compositions and recitations to be superfluous and not even advisable. To them, love of work was far more important than love of writing or reading: 'We must not go too far! By teaching them too much, we are doing girls the most serious disservice. In any case, most of what is learnt is lost in life.'²⁹

Although the daughters of the middle classes could be better educated, he cautioned against 'opening up the frontiers too widely, something which girls' curiosity, malleability and quickness to understand might easily prompt many teachers to do'.³⁰ So for them too, Niemeyer believed that restricting their knowledge did more good than harm.

By contrast, upper-class girls would have access to the broadest culture: 'Who could fail to agree that the accomplishment of *all feminine duties* [Niemeyer's emphasis] is eminently well served by a genuinely enlightened intelligence, a store of useful general knowledge, a cultivated taste.'³¹

The contradiction is so glaring that it requires no comment.

A similar gulf separated the training of teachers in mass education from that of teachers in secondary education, especially of the scholarly kind.

For the former (whom Niemeyer preferred to be from impoverished families so that they would be more likely to accept their mediocre status), access to culture, science and religion based on reason was virtually forbidden. For the latter, on the contrary, scientific university-level training was considered essential. A number of courses in educational theory and special exercises, provided in addition to the regular classes, foreshadowed the advanced teacher education system known as *agrégation* which still exists in French-speaking countries. Lastly, a detailed study of general and special methodologies showed that Niemeyer had in fact codified the whole of school life: the disciplinary system, curricula, observation and grammar exercises, monthly marks, the colour of the ink to be used to correct compositions, and so on.

Thus from the beginning of the nineteenth century, the most durable features of the daily functioning of school life, as we still know it to a certain extent, were mapped out.

The school system advocated by Niemeyer was extraordinarily successful. The *Principles of education and teaching* were translated into several languages: Danish, French, Hungarian, Dutch, Polish and Swedish. They were known from Geneva to Moscow.

As Georgii clearly perceived, the plan for the organization of teaching and Niemeyer's educational theory in general directly inspired many governments which, for the same reasons as Prussia, wanted to introduce a well-structured education system which respected the established order. At the same time, it was to be moderately progressive without appearing to be so.³¹

In 1922, Mehlhose considered that Niemeyer's influence was still making itself felt in Germany.³³ That remains true today, not only in Germany, but also in many countries of Western Europe and elsewhere.

Notes

In the references to quotations from the *Grundsätze der Erziehung und des Unterrichts* [Principles of education and teaching], the Roman figure indicates the volume and the Arabic figure the page.

1. *Gilbert de Landsheere (Belgium)*

Professor at the University of Liège, where he ran the Experimental Education Laboratory for twenty-five years. Carried out missions in forty countries for the Council of Europe, OECD, IBE, UNESCO, NATO, WHO, the European Union and non-governmental organizations to launch kindergartens, elementary schools, curriculum reform, teacher training, training for research, and evaluation of schools' performance and distance teaching. Visiting professor in sixteen universities in

- Europe, Africa, North and South America. Member of the editorial board of twenty educational journals. Author of seventeen books (translated into nine languages) and 260 articles. Honorary president of the International Academy of Education and founder member of the Academia Europaea. Doctor *honoris causa* of the Universities of Geneva and Iasi. Awarded the José Vasconcelos World Education Prize. Ennobled with the title of baron by King Baudoin for outstanding services to education.
2. We felt it was important when examining the thought and work of Niemeyer to recall briefly how close his relations were with Goethe, Schiller and many other great minds of the time.
 3. Niemeyer, A.H. 1806. *Grundsätze der Erziehung und des Unterrichts*, Halle. Waisenhaus-Buchhandlung, third edition, III, p. 326.
 4. See Gockler, A. 1905. *La pédagogie de Herbart* [Herbart's pedagogy], Paris, Hachette.
 5. Vrameld, T. 1956. *Philosophies of education in cultural perspective*, New York, Dryden Press, p. 51.
 6. Uyttersprot, H. 1949. Goethe als Humanist [Goethe the humanist], *Nieuw Vlaams Tijdschrift*, December, p. 51.
 7. Except where otherwise stated, all subsequent references are to the eighth edition of *Grundsätze der Erziehung und des Unterrichts*, as presented by Rein, W. , 1882. Langensalza, Beyer & Söhne.
 8. III/312.
 9. Ibid
 10. Mehring described this period harshly: 'Ganz Potsdam war wie ein Bordell' ('The whole of Potsdam was like a brothel'). See *Zur preussischen Geschichte vom Mittelalter bis Jena* [On Prussian history from the Middle Ages to Jena], Ges. Werke. [Complete works], Berlin, 1930, III, p. 244.
 11. Clause, A. 1951. *Introduction à l'histoire de l'éducation* [Introduction to the history of education], Brussels, De Boeck, p. 110.
 12. A general study of the realist culture (*Realbildung*) and its history has yet to be made.
 13. Or 'developmental'.
 14. I/27.
 15. I/36.
 16. 'Awaken and develop any potential and any aptitude given to the child as a person and as an individual' (I/38). Or again: 'Guide the strength thus awakened towards whatever appears to reason to be worthy of the human person' (*ibid.*).
 17. I/258.
 18. I/334.
 19. Notitia hominis sex modis elici et hauriri potest: per vultus et ors ipsorum, per verba, per facta, per ingenia sua, per fines suos, denique per relationes et iudicia aliorum (I/331).
 20. I/348.
 21. III/231.
 22. III/7-8.
 23. III/98.
 24. III/8.
 25. III/11.
 26. I. Letter of 15 May.
 27. See II/177.
 28. III/129. The historical importance of this passage is obvious. It sets forth, in well-ordered terms, many of the arguments which justify the study of ancient languages to this day.
 29. III/129.
 30. III/130.
 31. III/131.
 32. See Schmid, K.A. 1892. *Geschichte der Erziehung* [History of Education], Stuttgart, V, p. 227.
 33. Mehlhose, J. 1922. *Die pädagogischen Prinzipien des 18. Jahrhunderts in Niemeyers Grundsätze* [The pedagogical principles of the eighteenth century in Niemeyer's 'Principles'], unpublished dissertation, Leipzig.

Works by Niemeyer

Of the 125 publications of Niemeyer on record, we refer only to those which have a direct bearing on education and teaching. The publications not mentioned concern for the most part ancient Greek literature (particularly Homer, Philo Judaeus and Sophocles), the Bible, religious theatre, folk songs, the teaching of religion and theology, travel writing and many topical publications.

- . 1782. *Abhandlung über die Methode, die Moral in Sittensprüchen vorzutragen* [Treatise on the teaching of morality using edifying maxims]. Halle.
- . 1786. *Über die Mitwirkung der Eltern zur Bildung und Erziehung ihrer Kinder auf öffentlichen Schulen* [On the collaboration of parents in the training and education of their children attending public schools]. Halle, Waisenhaus-Buchhandlung.

- . 1787(a). *Nachricht, die zu haltenden Vorlesungen zur Bildung künftiger Lehrer betreffend* [Advice on the lectures to be given in the training of future teachers]. Halle, Waisenhaus-Buchhandlung.
- . 1787(b). *Über den Geist des Zeitalters in pädagogischer Rücksicht* [On the spirit of the times and education]. Halle, Waisenhaus-Buchhandlung.
- . 1790. *Pädagogisches Handbuch für Schulmänner und Privaterzieher oder Sammlung auserlesener Abhandlungen über Erziehung und Unterricht* [Teaching manual for schoolteachers and private tutors or Collection of selected essays on education and teaching]. Halle, Waisenhaus-Buchhandlung. (A second part of this work was announced but never published.)
- . 1792(a). *Über die Lesung griechischer Dichter zur Entdeckung der stufenweisen Ausbildung moralischer Begriffe. Ein Beitrag zur Methodik des Unterrichtes* [On the reading of the Greek poets as a contribution to progressive education in moral concepts: contribution to the methodology of teaching]. Halle, Waisenhaus-Buchhandlung.
- . 1792(b). *A-B-C und Lesebuch für die deutschen Schulen im Waisenhaus* [Primer and reading book for German orphanage schools]. Halle. (23rd edition in 1823.)
- . 1794. *Pädagogische Aufgaben* [Education and learning exercises]. Halle, Waisenhaus-Buchhandlung.
- . 1796. *Grundsätze der Erziehung und des Unterrichts für Eltern, Hauslehrer und Erzieher* [Principles of education and teaching for parents, tutors and schoolteachers]. First edition. Halle, Waisenhaus-Buchhandlung. (Ninth edition, finalized by Niemeyer's son, in 1834. Several German-language editions followed until 1914. The work has also been translated into various languages: Dutch and Danish (1800), Polish (1808), Swedish (1810), Hungarian (1823) and, lastly, French (Lausanne, 1835).)
- . 1799. *Über öffentliche Schulen und Erziehungsanstalten* [On public schools and educational establishments]. Halle, Waisenhaus-Buchhandlung.
- . 1800. *Übungen der Andacht und des Nachdenkens für Jünglinge* [Exercises in contemplation and reflection for adolescents]. Halle, Waisenhaus-Buchhandlung, 1800.
- . 1801. *Lehrbuch für die oberen Religionklassen in Gelehrtschulen* [Textbook for senior religious instruction classes in secondary (grammar) schools]. Halle, Waisenhaus-Buchhandlung. (Eighteenth edition in 1843.)
- . 1801. *Ansichten der deutschen Pädagogik und ihrer Geschichte im 18. Jahrhundert* [Views on German educational theory and its history in the eighteenth century]. Halle, Waisenhaus-Buchhandlung.
- . 1802. *Leitfaden der Pädagogik und Didaktik. Zum Gebrauche akademischer Vorlesungen für künftige Hauslehrer und Schulmänner* [Guide of educational theory and didactics for use in lectures for future tutors and schoolteachers]. Halle, Waisenhaus-Buchhandlung.
- . 1810. *Über Pestalozzi's Grundsätze und Methoden mit Rücksicht auf die verschiedenen Arten der Schulprüfungen* [On Pestalozzi's principles and methods concerning the various kinds of school examinations]. Halle, Waisenhaus-Buchhandlung. (This book was published in French under the title: *Examen raisonné de la méthode de Pestalozzi*, Paris, 1832.)
- . 1810. *Beitrag zur Methodik des Examinierens mit Rücksicht auf die verschiedenen Arten der Schulprüfungen* [Contribution to the methodology of various kinds of examinations]. Halle, Waisenhaus-Buchhandlung.
- . 1813. *Originalstellen griechischer und römischer Klassiker über die Theorie der Erziehung und des Unterrichts* [Extracts from the original works of Greek and Latin authors on the theory of education and teaching]. Halle, Waisenhaus-Buchhandlung.

On Niemeyer

There is a comprehensive bibliography contained in the work of K. Menne mentioned below. We would additionally like to thank Mr Goldman, director of the Stadtbibliothek of Nuremberg who, in 1958, spared no effort in helping us draw up a list of Niemeyer's works and publications about him.

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Chimani, L. 1812. *Auszug aus Niemeyers Grundsätzen der Erziehung mit Rücksicht auf das österreichische Schulwesen* [Extracts from Niemeyer's Principles of Education and Teaching, with reference to the Austrian education system]. Vienna.

Fölsch, [?]. 1834. *Erinnerungen an Dr. A.H. Niemeyer* [Memories of A.H. Niemeyer]. Wertheim.

Georgii, L. 1866. A.H. Niemeyer. In: *Encyclopedie des gesamten Erziehungs- und Unterrichtswesen* [Encyclopedia of education and teaching]. Gotha, Besser.

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- Rein, W. 1832. *A.H. Niemeyers Grundsätze der Erziehung und des Unterrichts, mit Niemeyers Biographie* [A.H. Niemeyer's Principles of education and teaching, with a biography of Niemeyer]. Langensalza, Beyer und Söhne.
- . 1841. *Erinnerungen an A.H. Niemeyer* [Memories of A. H. Niemeyer]. Crefeld.
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- Schleibnitz, O. 1899. *Herbarts Verhältnis zu Niemeyer in Ansehung des Interesses* [The relation between the interests of Herbart and Niemeyer]. Leipzig, Naumann.