

## More than a Theologian: Friedrich Schleiermacher's Mark on Education

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### Abstract

This article examines Friedrich Schleiermacher's contribution to the field of education as regards both the founding of the University of Berlin in 1810 and the reform of the Prussian schools during the early nineteenth century. Schleiermacher is widely known as a theologian, but within the German-speaking field of education, he is also considered a key reformer and theorist, who laid the conceptual groundwork for the modern research university as well as Prussia's public school system.

Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is viewed as a foundational theorist within the German-speaking field of education. Despite this, Schleiermacher's work on education is barely known in the anglophone world, where he is primarily recognized for his Protestant theology, his hermeneutics, and his philosophy of language and translation. The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy features an entry on Schleiermacher some thirty pages in length, but less than one of those pages is dedicated to his contributions to education (Forster, 2017). Theodore Vial (2013), who authored an often-referenced English introduction to Schleiermacher, acknowledges the limited attention he has received beyond his theology. He specifically states his desire "to provide an introduction that covers a wider range of disciplines than is currently available" (p. 2). Yet there is no mention of Schleiermacher's thoughts on education and only a brief section on his involvement in the founding of the University of Berlin (pp. 18-20). In his brief overview of Schleiermacher biographies available both in English and German, Vial names Kurt Nowak's (2001) as "the definitive one" (p. 120). This volume is more than six hundred pages in length, only roughly fourteen of which are dedicated to Schleiermacher's academic work on education (Nowak, 2001, pp. 318-327 & pp. 500-507). Even Wilhelm Dilthey's (1870) seminal

biography, *Leben Schleiermachers* [Life of Schleiermacher], does not include his pedagogy (Redeker, 1966, p. LXIII).

The chief reason for the neglect of Schleiermacher's educational thoughts possibly lies within his limited number of academic publications in the field. He published a review of Johann Friedrich Zöllner's (1804) *Ideen über National-Erziehung* [Ideas on National Education] in 1805. In 1808, he wrote an essay on his *Gelegentliche Gedanken über Universitäten in deutschem Sinn; nebst einem Anhang über eine neu zu errichtende* [Occasional Thoughts on Universities in a German Spirit, with an Appendix on One about to be Founded], which he pointedly declared to not be "scientific" (Schleiermacher, 1808, p. III). Beyond that, he presented three lectures on pedagogy at the University of Berlin in the years 1813/14, 1820/21, and 1826. In these, he examined the nature of education as an art (in the Greek sense of *techne*) and pedagogy as its corresponding theory. In his works, Schleiermacher uses the term *Erziehung* [education] to refer to the act of educating itself. *Pädagogik* [pedagogy], by contrast, refers to the scholarly engagement with education practice and theory, i.e., *Erziehungswissenschaft* [philosophy of education / education science]. Together with the work of Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841), his arguments are credited with establishing education as an autonomous academic discipline (Nowak, 2001, p. 502; Kenklies, 2012, pp. 272f). Although Schleiermacher's lectures were not published at the time, they have since been reconstructed, from his notes, and those of two of his students (Beljan et al., 2017).

Schleiermacher's contributions to the field of education as a whole go beyond his academic work. His 1808 text had a profound influence on the founding of the University of Berlin in 1810. Although Wilhelm von Humboldt is widely credited with what has become to be the model of the modern research university, and the

University of Berlin is named in his and his brother Alexander's honor, there is an argument that its blueprint bears "more Schleiermacher's signature than the one of Humboldt" (Kenklies, 2012, p. 266). He also contributed to the reform of Prussia's schools as member of the government's Deputation for Public Education, into which he was invited by Wilhelm von Humboldt in 1810. He served first as member, then as interim Director and finally as Director. The Deputation was tasked with laying the conceptual groundwork for the reform of Prussia's schools in the years after the Napoleonic invasion and to advise the members of the Section for Cultus and Public Education (Beljan et al., 2017, p. XXXVII). These reforms still reverberate in the German school system today.

In this paper, I introduce Schleiermacher as a philosopher of education, much as he was introduced to me. Specifically, I will show how his work on education was shaped by personal as well as political circumstances, which had a profound influence on both his understanding of the pedagogic purpose of schooling and university education.

#### *Historical and biographical context*

As Wilhelm Dilthey (1870) maintains, Schleiermacher's philosophy can only be understood against the background of his personal life and historic context (p. I). Hence, I will give a brief, biographical introduction, focusing on his formative years and early career.

Schleiermacher was born in November 1768 in Breslau (today's Wrocław, Poland) to Johann Gottlieb Adolph Schleyermacher, a Prussian military chaplain, and his wife Maria Catharina. By all accounts, Schleiermacher's first experience of schooling was "disastrous" (Nowak, 2001, p. 20) and disenfranchised the boy, despite his performing well. He was particularly troubled by his inability to organize the fragmented knowledge he was taught into a cohesive whole. Yet, he did not observe that same concern in his classmates, which led him to doubt his own abilities as he assumed what vexed him so must be clear to the others. He feared he would be discovered a fraud (Nowak, 2001, p. 20).

Following his father's regiment during the War of Bavarian Succession (1778/79), the family moved to the small town of Pless (today's Pszczyna, Poland). There, his father came into contact with a colony of the pietist Moravian Church and experienced an "awakening" (Nowak, 2001, p. 21). As a result, he sought to place his children in the highly sought-after schools of the Moravian Church. Since Schleiermacher's father was neither of noble birth nor wealthy, the Church initially declined his request, but granted the family a providential test. After Moravian custom, a lot was cast, which coming up positive indicated God's favor. Accordingly, in May 1783, Schleiermacher, now aged fourteen, was admitted into the *Pädagogium* at Niesky (Nowak, 2001, p. 23).

Here Schleiermacher received a comprehensive education in various languages, mathematics, history, the natural sciences, as well as music and art. Moreover, Schleiermacher found faith, as he professed in letters to his sister, Charlotte. This set him on the path of becoming a preacher. In 1785, he matriculated at the Moravian teacher seminary in Barby, about eighty miles south-west of Berlin (Nowak, 2001, p. 25f). The rules at the seminary were strict. The works of Enlightenment and Romantic authors such as Kant and Goethe were censored. Yet still, Schleiermacher and his friends secretly acquired and read this literature, leading them to question the seminary's strict practices and narrow pietistic curriculum. Eventually Schleiermacher experienced a crisis of faith, prompting him to ask for his father's permission to leave the Barby to study theology at the University of Halle. His father agreed to finance his studies for three semesters, despite his serious disappointment in his son not following through with his education. Schleiermacher enrolled at Halle University in April 1787 (Nowak, 2001, pp. 30ff).

These early educative experiences seem to be relevant to Schleiermacher's later works in two ways. Where, as a young child, he found that his instruction lacked meaning and order, his mature conceptualization of schooling stressed the systematic progression of learning. The reductive approach to content based on the pietistic beliefs that he encountered in Niesky and Barby stood in opposition to Schleiermacher's

desire for a more academic and culturally open education. To him, religion obscured reason as the true source of morality (Nowak, 2001, p. 43).

At the University of Halle, Schleiermacher appears to have attended only few classes, preferring, it seems, to pursue his studies in solitude. To this end, his philosophy professor, Johann August Eberhard, became an important mentor (Nowak, 2001, p. 35). The university had seen an academic struggle between pietistic theology, established by August Wilhelm Francke, and the naturalistic teachings of Christian Wolff, from which the followers of Enlightenment had emerged victorious. However, pietism still had a strong standing at the university (Nowak, 2001, pp. 32f). During Schleiermacher's time, Kant's critical philosophy gained momentum, but it was not well-received at Halle. Eberhard, who followed the tradition of Wolff, sought to return philosophy to its roots. At the core of Eberhard's approach was a dedication to thorough critique, which Schleiermacher shared. He had read Kant even before enrolling at Halle, but he also was impressed by the university's philosophical tradition. Thus, he tried to balance the two, merging "elements of [Kant's] transcendental philosophy with the empirical-psychological system of the Halle philosophy" (Nowak, 2001, p. 39). In this way, Schleiermacher can be seen as a scholar of his time, schooled in the values of pietism, but open to the intellectual thought birthed by German Enlightenment.

After the three semesters granted by his father came to an end in early 1788, Schleiermacher was faced with a lack of employment opportunity, as "the university cities were bursting at the seams with young academics looking to make a living" (Nowak, 2001, p.41). For lack of options, Schleiermacher remained at Halle a further year. Still without any employment prospects, and encumbered with debt, he then moved to his uncle's house in rural Drossen, just east of Berlin. With little intellectual stimulus to pursue his scholarly interests Schleiermacher's academic ambitions waned (Nowak, 2001, pp. 42-46). Eventually, he gave in to his father's request that he take the theological examination in Berlin. It seemed to be the only viable option for the impoverished

young man. He travelled to Berlin and acquired his *licentia concionandi* in July 1790 (Nowak, 2001, p. 47).

At this point, Schleiermacher was hired as a private tutor to the sons of Count Friedrich Alexander zu Dohna-Schlobitten, one of Prussia's foremost noble families. He would also deliver sermons to the Dohna family at the Count's request, for which he received high praise. Schleiermacher remained in rural Schlobitten (today's Słobity, Poland) until May 1793. During that time, he formed lasting friendships with the family's two eldest sons, Wilhelm and Alexander, who were close to his age. This friendship with Alexander would have a profound effect on Schleiermacher's life in at least two ways: In December 1796, Alexander introduced him to a social circle of romanticists in Berlin that included, amongst others, Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt (Vial, 2013, pp. 11f). Also, Alexander zu Dohna-Schlobitten would serve as Prussia's Interior Minister from 1808 to late 1810, overlapping with Schleiermacher's service to the Deputation for Public Education.

After his time as tutor in Schlobitten had come to an end, Schleiermacher moved to Berlin. Driven again by financial need, he attended Friedrich Gedike's *Seminarium*, Prussia's first independent normal school catering to teacher candidates rather than university students (Nowak, 2001, p. 59). Gedike's *Seminarium* focused on instruction practice rather than educational theory. Students would serve as adjunct teachers at the *Friedrichswerder Gymnasium* in Berlin, where they initially attended classes of experienced teachers, including Gedike himself, before they were entrusted with their own teaching load of eight to ten hours per week. The candidates' lessons would be observed by Gedike and discussed afterward. In addition, candidates were required to write pedagogical and philosophical papers on the practice of teaching, which were discussed within the group on a monthly basis (Paulsen, 1960, p. 90). Schleiermacher's time at the Gedike *Seminarium* ended in 1794, when he moved to Landsberg to assume the office of adjunct pastor (Nowak, 2001, p. 69). Even so, as Nowak argues, Schleiermacher's experience as a tutor in

Schlobitten and Gedike's supervision were fundamental to him becoming "a notable theorist of education" (Nowak, 2001, p. 61).

At the behest of Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III, Schleiermacher was appointed extraordinary professor of theology and philosophy as well as university preacher at the University of Halle in 1804, after he had been offered a professorship at the Bavarian University of Würzburg, as the King wanted to secure Schleiermacher's scholarly talents for Prussia (Nowak, 2001, p. 145). He could now pursue his academic interests without having to give up on his passion for preaching. The following year he published his review of Zöllner's (1804) *Ideas on National Education*. But his time at Halle ended shortly after, when Napoleon's forces occupied the city on October 17th, 1806. By November teaching was suspended and university was closed. The following May Schleiermacher moved to Berlin.

#### *Schleiermacher's conceptualization of public schooling*

Johann Friedrich Zöllner published his *Ideas on National Education* in 1804, asking for critical responses to his thoughts on the reform of Prussia's schools (p. VI). Hermann Patsch, editor of Schleiermacher's *Schriften aus der Hallenser Zeit 1804-1807* [Writings from the Halle times 1804-1807], identifies Zöllner's work as the "prologue of Prussian education reform" (1995, p. XXX). It was set in motion by King Friedrich Wilhelm III in 1798 by instating Julius Eberhard von Massow as minister of state with orders to create a plan to reform Prussia's schools. Zöllner was a member of the Department for the Lutheran Church and the Schools and thus directly involved in von Massow's undertaking. He himself was a respected scholar. He had studied theology and philosophy and held high offices within the Protestant Church in Berlin. As such, he was closely involved in questions of schooling, which were under the purview of the church, and he had the ear of both the King and von Massow in questions of education (Wienecke, 1910).

In the introduction to his review of Zöllner's first volume of the *Ideas*, Schleiermacher identified two parallel

approaches to the question of public education at the time; on the one hand were those who sought to apply philosophical principles to pedagogy. According to Patsch, this included Kant's 1803 *On Pedagogy*. On the other hand were practitioners who developed new methods of instruction unworried by theory, which Patsch suggests was a nod to Pestalozzi (Patsch, 1995, p. 3). As the Prussian state sought immediate reform of schooling it was no longer possible to wait for a philosophical solution to the questions of public education. But blind reproduction of revered practices was equally unacceptable. Given the political situation, Schleiermacher (1995, pp. 3-4) recognized that Zöllner's work (a defense of the traditional social order) had to be submitted to careful critique, which he regarded as the only viable way forward in this imperfect situation.

Schleiermacher's first point of criticism concerned Zöllner's definition of education [*Erziehung*] as "the continuous, purposeful concurrence to prepare the young human to become what he ought to become at an older age" (Zöllner, 1804, p. 1). This conceptualization, Schleiermacher argued, lacked clarity in regard to several, fundamental questions. For instance, education cannot be reduced to the role of the educator alone. It would always be partly determined both by the learner's development, their needs and interests, as well as by random, circumstantial influences. These three elements must be balanced against each other, and Zöllner's understanding of education did not address how that might be accomplished. Nor did it stipulate the specific ends educators should aim at. Zöllner's definition postulated the existence of a specific purpose guiding all educative measures. It remained unclear on how this purpose could be determined, which by necessity must precede any education for otherwise it cannot be purposeful. Schleiermacher argued that this determination must be negotiated between the teacher and the learner. Since it cannot be ascertained *ex ante* what the student's role in life would be, a general education had to be the main focus of instruction, ensuring that the specific knowledge required in future life could be readily acquired. Given the complexities of life, this raised the question of how disparate elements of

the curriculum could be harmoniously ordered. How should the constituent subjects—reading, writing, mathematics, ethics, and so on—be combined into a coherent and purposive course of study? (Schleiermacher, 1995, p. 6) His own answer was that students ought to “learn how to learn and to acquire the skill to acquire skills” (p. 9). For this, Schleiermacher pointed toward Pestalozzian tenets of education, which Zöllner had positioned himself against (pp. 9-10).

Schleiermacher also criticized Zöllner’s failure to differentiate between education [*Erziehung*] and instruction [*Unterricht*]. To explain this dualism, Schleiermacher distinguished disposition [*Gesinnung*] from knowledge [*Kenntnisse*]. Instruction aims at developing knowledge (and skills) through example: Students emulate their teachers and thus learn mechanically to replicate what they are shown. Education, on the other hand, aims at instilling a moral disposition in students, which cannot be achieved through mere example. By its very nature, an example is always an external, immediate representation of a given subject matter. For instance, writing a word or carving a piece of wood can be observed and copied by the student. However, in the case of a moral disposition, no example will in and of itself allow the student to grasp the internal motive. At best, students could learn the specific, exemplary contexts in which a moral disposition appears, but they could not grasp its universal, generative nature as a whole. Yet the title of Zöllner’s book, *Ideas on National Education*, clearly implied the object of his deliberations was the moral disposition of Prussia’s future citizens. But in his considerations of how to achieve this, he consistently referred back to examples and knowledge as the means of such education, “so that, if one believes this account,” Schleiermacher concluded, “the intention is merely to improve the disposition through assorted knowledge taught to the people, which is a highly hollow and unfortunate thought” (p. 7).

Schleiermacher then turned to the purpose of public schooling that was set out in Prussia’s *Allgemeiner Schulplan* [General School Plan], authored mainly by von Massow around 1800, which Zöllner’s work heavily, if implicitly

referred to. First and foremost, it addressed the need to unite the various ethnic groups under Prussian rule into a nation (p. 11). He then discussed Zöllner’s suggestions how to design public education to achieve this aim. Schleiermacher agreed with Zöllner’s assessment that the differences in language were the main obstacle to the purpose identified. He argued that “the appreciation of another as human initially originates from communication” (p. 12). Like Zöllner, Schleiermacher firmly opposed the forcible suppression of non-German languages. Zöllner suggested that all elementary school books should incorporate parallel texts in German and the locally spoken language. Instruction would begin in the latter and slowly transition to the former. Schleiermacher was not convinced. The more prudent approach, he argued, was to make German language schoolbooks more accessible. Zöllner also suggested that classes should be ethnically diverse, so that students learn from each other. Again, Schleiermacher saw this as impractical since regions were usually populated by people of the same language and there was barely any mixing of cultures (pp. 12-13).

Another major obstacle for the formation of a nation was the unfamiliarity most of the population had with the whole idea of Prussia as a nation state. For Zöllner, this had to be acquired through instruction in Prussian history and geography, including knowledge of the heroic deeds of the King and his predecessors. On this, Schleiermacher laconically commented that “it might be awkward [...] to foster the allegiance of the new subjects to throne and state based on the very deeds that preceded their annexation” (p. 16). Comprehending such deeds properly, he argued, demanded an understanding of the historical context, the inner and outer circumstances of the state—a task far beyond the orbit of elementary education (p. 16). To the contrary, Schleiermacher argued that initial instruction should focus on regional specificities rather than the national whole. Hence his opposition to Zöllner’s nation-wide, unified schoolbooks, which would prohibit the teaching of localized content. Schleiermacher favored a common plan of how to organize such books but suggested leaving any curriculum decisions to

the provincial school authorities (p. 17). In conjunction with his disapproval of the idea of unified books, Schleiermacher also positioned himself against a uniform organization of schools themselves. Both Zöllner's and von Massow's plans sought to standardize not only books, but the entire curriculum and school regulations as well. So much so that "it almost seems as if no difference other than that of method should find room" (p. 20). But teaching method alone, Schleiermacher argued, cannot give a school its own character, especially when considering the high teacher turnover prevailing at the time. Such character can only be achieved if school regulation is adaptive to the specific needs of the student body. Trying to enforce uniformity was futile, because eventually principals would allow for deviations from regulations that were at odds with their school's context, and supervising authorities would tolerate them, thus reproducing the "malady" (p. 20) prevalent in the Prussian state as a whole: the existence of laws which were knowingly not enforced. And public education, he insisted, must not replicate this practice, but instead instill "disgust" (p. 20) towards it.

On the question of girls' schools, Schleiermacher found both Zöllner's and von Massow's plans rather brief, "as if they are not viewed as substantial components of the overall scheme" (p. 21). He criticized this and maintained that any state—and Prussia specifically—should take the education of its daughters into account when reforming its schools. Otherwise, their education would be left to chance and the influence of untrained governesses and parents. It must be noted, however, that Schleiermacher failed to offer any alternative to their plans.

Schleiermacher's review of Zöllner's *Ideas* demonstrates his fundamental approach to the question of schooling. He posited that there must be a systematic progression of content knowledge, beginning with the particular and expanding into the general. From the understanding of the specific, its interconnectedness with the whole can then emerge. A broad, general education would be the foundation of learning vocational skills and knowledge later in life. In a way, it can be argued that Schleiermacher advocated for what he

himself lacked in his own school education, which was characterized by a profound lack of systematized content progression and coherence.

Schleiermacher's conceptualization of public schooling exhibited in his 1805 review was clearly progressive for the time. He was opposed to religious education in schools and even argued against the introduction of the Bible, as "nothing, absolutely nothing in the Bible, apart from a few disembodied sentences, is understandable to children in its true sense and context" (p. 19). He argued against a standardized approach to schooling, especially as regards elementary education, and in favor of individual school character (pp. 19-20). He demanded the inclusion of questions of girls' schooling in any revision of the school system (p. 21), and even proposed schools be granted land to make them less dependent on the state and to ensure that they were not exploited financially (p. 24).

In 1808, Schleiermacher published his treatise *On the University in a German Spirit*, outlining his ideas on the organization of higher education. The second chapter of this essay includes an examination of the interconnectedness of the university with its preparatory academic school, the *Gymnasium*, and the national academies, which serve as the ultimate institutions of scholarship. He likened the organization of these three steps to the structure of a guild: "School as the gathering of masters and apprentices, then with journeymen at the university, and the academy as the masters amongst themselves" (Schleiermacher, 1808, p. 23). As such, the ultimate goal of academic education was to first lead the individual to insight based on the systematic pursuit of knowledge or *Wissenschaft*, the collective achievement and property of all educated peoples. This was primarily the task of the *Gymnasium*. Subsequently, individuals would then contribute to the furthering of *Wissenschaft* itself as members of an academy (pp. 23f). The university, therefore, was to be the bridge between the two.

To Schleiermacher, admission to the *Gymnasium* must be based on the students' "better nature and outstanding gift, which suggest he might be receptive to *Wissenschaft* or at least

be capable of gainfully processing a variety of knowledge” (p. 24). To prove themselves truly suitable for higher education, students had to display two traits. On the one hand, a specific talent binding their interest to a single field of knowledge. On the other hand, a “systematic, philosophical spirit” (p. 24), that is, a sense for the unity and coherence of all knowledge central to *Wissenschaft*. No doubt drawing upon his own experience, Schleiermacher was insistent that attending university must under no circumstances be dependent on the parents’ wealth. In fact, he demanded that those who cannot afford attending university should be financially supported by the state, so long as they demonstrate a modicum of talent and philosophical spirit (p. 156). The same logic applied to the preparatory *Gymnasium*. All citizens would have access to an academic education, so long as they displayed a certain potential. Indeed, Schleiermacher was prepared to admit students who appeared insufficiently capable, as it was near impossible to predict early on if a student possessed the mind necessary for university studies. Even if the majority of students admitted were not capable, “this would be far less disadvantageous than if one single, great, and staunch talent were to be deprived of the beneficial influence of [the university]” (p. 52). Those students who did not progress to the academy would surely still be of great service to the state in a different capacity than that of a scholar (pp. 53f).

Every student brings different talents and scholarly interests to their schooling. Both must be fostered according to the uniqueness of the individual. This requires directed, intentional effort—Schleiermacher here referred to art in the sense of *techne*, a bringing forth, or shaping of character. The *Gymnasium* thus had a twofold task; on the one hand, students must be presented with a basic outline of all content knowledge, “so that any dormant talent may be drawn to its subject matter” (p. 25). On the other hand, *Gymnasium* instruction should demonstrate the unity and coherence of knowledge basic to the concept of *Wissenschaft*. Given that students need the simplest and most reliable operations to approach any given subject matter, Schleiermacher placed mathematics and grammar at the center of the curriculum (pp. 25-

26). However, he acknowledged that there would inevitably be differences between schools. Some would focus more on the development of talent, others on the fostering of the academic mindset. This can be seen as corresponding with his 1805 assessment that schools ought to have a distinct character. Yet one-sidedness needed to be avoided, which is why he suggested installing a superordinate administration tasked with guiding each school to its full academic potential (pp. 26-27).

Given the *Gymnasium*’s integral role in academic education, the school principal had to possess the same “prudence, the same immaculate spirit of observation as one who furthers *Wissenschaft* itself, and the development of the youth that he oversees is probably more difficult than any single study” (p. 43). As such, the position of *Gymnasium* principal must be held in as high a regard as that of the university professor or a member of an academy. Ideally, all three would spearhead academic matters in unison, infusing a sense of community among scholars (pp. 44f). He thus decried those university professors who felt themselves superior to teachers, and those teachers who regarded professors as otiose, ungrateful, and contributing only little to society by comparison. Such prejudices were at odds with the overall goal of *Wissenschaft* and must be prevented (pp. 42f).

Schleiermacher not only extolled the unity of knowledge, he also insisted on the unity of those who foster it. Here was the distinct vocation of the German people, the advancement of *Wissenschaft* would make Germany the “center of all *Bildung*” (p. 22). This project brings the reader to the core of Schleiermacher’s 1808 text, his discussion of the university. Arguably, it is these thoughts which proved most influential, notably for the founding of the University of Berlin. This becomes apparent when one compares Wilhelm von Humboldt’s *On the Inner and Outer Organization of the Higher Academic Institutions in Berlin* (1809/1903) with Schleiermacher’s proposals.

*Schleiermacher’s influence on the founding of the University of Berlin*

Wilhelm von Humboldt is widely credited with the founding of the University of Berlin, which is known today as the Humboldt University, a name bestowed in 1949 to honor both Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt. Before that, it bore the moniker of King Friedrich Wilhelm from 1828 until 1945 and was called simply the University of Berlin under Soviet occupation (Berlin University Alliance, 2019). Its founding mission—the model of the modern research university—has also been associated with Humboldt, but again not during his lifetime. With these qualifications in mind, Humboldt’s role has to be read in the context of numerous other works, most notably the writings of Fichte (1807/1960) and Schleiermacher (1808) (Weischedel, 1960; Ash, 2006).

Schleiermacher met Wilhelm von Humboldt during 1796, when he was introduced to the Berlin literary circle by his friend Alexander zu Dohna-Schlobitten. Between 1802 and 1808 Humboldt served as a Prussian envoy to the Vatican. Although it seems they did not communicate during these years—there is no known correspondence before January 1808—Schleiermacher initiated contact to request contributions to the *Museum der Alterthums-Wissenschaft* [Museum of Classical Studies], an anthology of historical scholarship (Gerber & Schmidt, 2015, p. 34). In his response that March (Gerber & Schmidt, 2015, pp. 76f), Humboldt tactfully declined but expressed his interest in reuniting upon his return to Berlin, which he anticipated for the summer of 1808. Eventually a friendship was formed around their mutual interests.

In July 1809, as head of the Section for Cultus and Public Education, Humboldt petitioned the king to compensate Schleiermacher for his lost income after the University of Halle was closed by the French. Humboldt also mentioned that Schleiermacher was strongly considered for a professorship in the 1807 plan for the to-be-founded University (Humboldt, 1809/1903, p. 80). Schleiermacher served on the *Implementary Commission*, adding his voice to the foundation of the institution’s official charter, and was eventually appointed dean of the faculty of theology in 1810 (Nowak, 2001, pp. 220f).

Humboldt’s treatise on the *Organization of the Higher Academic Institutions*, written during 1809 or 1810, set out the basic principles for what would become the University of Berlin. It bears strong parallels with Schleiermacher’s (1808) *Thoughts on Universities*, suggesting a close intellectual relationship between both texts. With Schleiermacher’s text preceding Humboldt’s, it can be assumed the former left its mark on the latter. Both discussed the nature of *Wissenschaft*—which would be the central goal of the university—and its relation to teaching. They also reflected on the relationship between the university and the state, and the question of financing.

The task of any higher academic institution, Humboldt insisted, was to promote “*Wissenschaft* in its full depth and breadth” (Humboldt, 1809/1903, p. 251). Along with Schleiermacher, he understood *Wissenschaft* as the unity of all intellectual pursuits. “The success of one should inspire another, and make apparent to all the universal, primordial force that is only ever singular or derivational in the specific” (Humboldt, 1809/1903, p. 251). For both men, *Wissenschaft* was the overarching, conjoining theme of human endeavor at the core of German philosophy and the spirit of its people (Schleiermacher, 1808, p. 22f; Humboldt, 1809/1903, pp. 253f).

*Wissenschaft* demanded the freedom necessary to pursue knowledge and bring it into the fold of the “academic edifice,” as Fichte put it (1960, p. 30). Both Schleiermacher and Humboldt pointed to this prerequisite (Schleiermacher, 1808, p. 56; Humboldt, 1809/1903, p. 251), and both combined the liberty of scholarship with the rights of individual insight (Schleiermacher, 1808, p. 43; Humboldt, 1809/1903, p. 251). This had profound implications for the role of the state, which traditionally exercised strict control over the production and dissemination of knowledge. Toleration of ideas was not sufficient. For Schleiermacher, government involvement must not go beyond the founding and financing of institutions. This was the true interest of the state as *Wissenschaft* would always be beneficial to the nation and its citizens. Indeed, the principle is even more expansive as *Wissenschaft* is by its

own nature an endeavor of all educated peoples and therefore cannot and must not be confined to and by a state for narrow political interests (Schleiermacher, 1808, pp. 6-9; pp. 45-48). Humboldt, whose *Limits of State Action* (1851), offered a classic defense of limited government, took the argument further. Independence of thought and diversity of ideas are essential to human development (*Bildung*). Even in society at large, “one man would muse and compile by himself, another would seek association with his peers, and yet another would gather a circle of disciples to himself” (Humboldt, 1809/1903, p. 252). In order to give this natural process a more orderly form, the state must recognize that its involvement will always be a hindrance to the natural course of the scholarly endeavor, including education. Its only positive role was to provide what was necessary to support the pursuit of *Wissenschaft* within society (Humboldt, 1809/1903, p. 252).

Humboldt also embraced Schleiermacher’s institutional triad of the *Gymnasium*, the university, and the academy. Although the *Gymnasium* worked with a body of finalized knowledge, it was conceptualized as a preparatory institution whose goal was to prepare students with the skills for independent learning, thus laying the groundwork for the scholarly approach at the university. It should instill curiosity in its students and thus set them on the path to *Wissenschaft*, enabling them to transition to university where they would engage in independent study without the supervision of teachers (Schleiermacher, 1808, p. 26; Humboldt, 1809/1903, pp. 255f). The university, in turn, would treat *Wissenschaft* as a yet unsolved, unfinished problem in need of research. Both authors agreed that schools must not overstep their allotted function and try to “anticipate university teaching, and neither are universities merely a congeneric complement, merely a higher school grade” (Humboldt, 1809/1903, p. 255; see also Schleiermacher, 1808, p. 31). The academy would then form the pinnacle of academic pursuit and scholarly exchange among peers (Schleiermacher, 1808, p. 31; Humboldt, 1809/1903, p. 258).

The ideas first expressed in Schleiermacher’s (1808) *Thoughts on*

*Universities* were clearly in accord with Humboldt’s views on knowledge and society and surely influenced his arguments on the organization of higher academic institutions in general, and the University of Berlin in particular. But Schleiermacher’s influence did not end there. He served as the university’s sixth president in 1815/16 (from the early years of the university until 1934, its president would be elected for a one-year term). It was not uncommon for them to serve for multiple terms, albeit not successively (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2016). As dean of theology in Berlin, he was a leading voice on the commission that drafted the university’s statutes, which were presented in 1817 (Weischedel, 1960, p. XXIV). Most significantly, perhaps, as a member of Prussia’s Academy of Sciences, he presented lectures in 1813/14, 1820/21, and 1826 on the nature and importance of pedagogy as a distinct field of study (Beljan et al., 2017, p. XVIII). These influential arguments, as historians of German education attest, “marked the beginning of a modern, explicitly academic thinking on pedagogy [...] that conclusively detached pedagogy from theology and philosophy” (Beljan et al., 2017, p. XVII, see also Nowak, 2001, pp. 318-319).

Following Kant, Schleiermacher’s philosophy of education starts with the generational imperative of instruction, and frames teaching as an acquired art that is instrumental to the progress of society (Schleiermacher, 2017, pp. 548). Like Herbart, he acknowledged the primacy of practice (Kenkies, 2012, p. 267). But he also recognized—in line with the concept of pedagogical tact—that the informed use of education theory could improve teaching. Combining the “dignity of practice” and the efficacy of self-reflection, the promotion of *Wissenschaft* and *Bildung*, Schleiermacher’s lectures became foundational texts of the German education tradition—despite the fact that pedagogy was never at the center of the many and diverse academic subjects he pursued in his tenure at the University of Berlin until his unexpected and swift death from pneumonia in 1834.

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