Moravian Memoirs
as a Source for the History of Education

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Like all historiography, the history of education lives from its sources and our theoretical approaches to them. In this essay, I am interested in a particular body of sources—the memoirs (or Lebensläufe)—that are preserved in a richness unique for autobiographical texts at the Moravian Archives in Herrnhut. These archives house more than 30,000 such handwritten memoirs, which can be used in quite different ways for historical research: as illustrations of the experiences of religious refugees, missionaries, or travelers; by literary scholars interested in the genre of devotional literature; by social historians concerned with issues of gender or race; or by proponents of the new cultural history or historical anthropology from the perspective of devotional practices. In this essay, I would like to examine Moravian memoirs as sources for the history of education and childrearing. I am especially interested in their potential contribution to the history of childhood, or, more precisely, a history of childhood inspired by historical anthropology, which considers the modes of perception and room for maneuver available to historical subjects. As I will demonstrate, what makes Moravian memoirs so special from the perspective of the history of education—and particularly the history of childhood—are the insights they offer into practices of dealing with children, and into how individual children dealt with themselves. After preliminary remarks on the history of education and on Moravian memoirs, I will examine how the texts address Moravian education and childrearing, including sending children away to boarding schools.

Moravian Memoirs

We owe the wealth of Moravian memoirs to the fact that, since the early 1750s, members of the church were expected to leave behind a description of their “passage through time” and, above all, to give an account of their faith. We read in one memoir from 1786: “When one of our own departs from time, we do so like to hear what the Lord our Savior wrought in his soul, and with what patience and grace and wisdom He guided him through the world. Because this is best known to each person himself, the accounts that each leaves of his own self have their own blessing.” The memoirs were either autobiographical or written by someone close to the departed, such as a spouse, child, or fellow choir member. Memoirs could be quite brief, encompassing only one or two pages, or they could extend to more than thirty-five pages. The account of the time in a person’s life between the writing of the memoir and their death was then written by a person close to the deceased, because Moravian memoirs always ended with a description of the person’s death, which was sometimes longer than the actual memoir. As a rule, this addendum expressed joy in the impending transition from, in Moravian parlance, the “congregation below” to the “congregation above” (obere Gemeine), or to put it more generally, in a proper death as part of a proper life. Memoirs were read aloud during the burial and formed a central component of the funeral liturgy. Because those who composed a memoir had their own end, and perhaps even their own funeral, in mind, they subsequently formulated a largely public text for their remaining church community.

Some of the memoirs, presumably those of particularly pious or prominent individuals, were incorporated into church diaries and into the Gemeinnachrichten, handwritten journals filled with events from various congregations, which were circulated among Moravian communities worldwide and read aloud during worship or individually. To that extent, the memoirs represented a “special, ritualized form of expression of Moravian piety.” They constituted a specific communication in the church communities, or were located within a common communicative field. Among Moravians, the memoirs represented an important medium of community creation. As a genre, the memoirs followed the tradition of Pietist biographies, of funeral sermons, as well as of the exemplary tales of devotional literature.

Among Moravians, writing a memoir constituted a cultural and social practice and proceeded within a formal tradition. Those who wrote
a memoir were familiar with other memoirs and had notions of what belonged in such a text and what did not. The memoirs expressed a Moravian "culture of writing" based on a "culture of narrative and rhetoric." The purpose of writing a memoir, as it is of autobiographical writing in general, is to present one's own life as a meaningful whole. For Moravians, the meaning of a life consisted, above all, in being and remaining in "true connection" with the Savior. They believed life should be lived in love for the Savior, in the knowledge that one was in His hands, and, almost as important, in the hands of their congregation. However, as Moravian brothers and sisters knew from personal experience, this meaning was always subject to perils emanating from the "world" or from the pious individual's own "self."  

**Introductory Passages**

Introductory passages have a special significance in autobiographical texts. They generally set the basic tone, the leitmotif of the life to be related, and offer an interpretation of its meaning. For the Moravians, as we have noted, the meaning of one's existence was clear: to lead a pious life, as measured by one's relationship to the divine, which in the case of Christ-centered Moravian theology meant one's relationship to the Savior.

There were essentially two modes of introduction in Moravian memoirs: the extensive discussion of one's parents and upbringing, or the examination of the first stirrings of religious feeling. Often, the first was followed by the latter, as in the case of Anna Dorothea Christoph (1716-1793): "I was born on the 21st of March 1716 in Grosshennersdorf. My father was Johann Neumann, and my mother Maria Herberger. My dear parents sought to raise me carefully and above all to shield me from all evil, they loved the good and, according to their own understanding, the Savior as well." As she wrote, she was raised by her parents—who in eighteenth-century memoirs are almost universally referred to as dear parents—to be pious, but only as best they could, "according to their own understanding" and not, one might add here, Moravian "understanding" (Erkenntnis). "In my 11th year," she continued, "the dear Savior took a firm grip of me, and as a child I was much blessed, and also testified to other children how much the lord Jesus loved us, so that he shed his blood for us."  

The pious tone could also be underlined by dramatic scenes in which the author recounted having been saved from dangerous situations, whether drowning, falling out of a wagon, or even an encounter with wolves. For example, the memoir of Anna Elisabeth Layritz (1718-64) began with a detailed description of her rescue as an infant from a fire in her town, in which "extraordinary divine providence" had been proven: "As lovingly as the good Creator watched over her tabernacle [that is, her body], so careful and tender did he prove in preserving her soul." The particular closeness to God alluded to here could be read as an indication that she was particularly chosen by God from childhood.

**Education in the Moravian Community**

Except for brief mentions of "dear" workers, that is, the persons responsible for pastoral and educational work, or of edifying singing or story-telling, Moravian memoirs rarely explicitly, let alone extensively, mention institutional education, whether in a nursery, a children's institution, a boarding school, or the choir. They do, however, provide some hints. Moritz Christian Friedrich von Schweinitz (1739-1822), later a prolific architect for the Moravian Church, arrived at the Neusalz boarding school at the age of nine. While there, his "disinclination for the educational methods of those days increased to such a degree" that he made an agreement with his cousin that they would "leave the place" as soon as possible "where our yearning for freedom was subject to the most onerous shackles." He did not explain what these educational methods were, or what these shackles looked like, but one can assume that his Moravian audience knew what he was talking about.

Anna Schulius (1743-1827), who later worked in various educational capacities in Moravian communities, was a bit more precise. She was sent to a Moravian girls' institution at the age of seven, where she spent "five happy and blessed childhood years with her playmates." In the next sentence, however, she wrote, "If, however, one compares the educational methods of those days with those of our own, one must admit that they were strict, serious, and, as they say, legalistic; small offences were often punished out of all proportion, and we knew little or nothing of entertainments or outer pleasures. They didn't know any better." When she wrote this Moravians did know better, since Paul Eugen Layritz's *Thoughts on a Sensible and Christian Education of Chil-
had introduced the ideas of philanthropist pedagogues into Moravian educational theory. By 1765, the following educational principle was written down for the Herrnhut boys' school: “The chief aim is not to suppress their temperaments through careless treatment; on the contrary, though, also to check all unseemly free and cheeky [behavior] where possible, so that, to the best of our ability, we preserve and guide their common childish character.” It is difficult to say whether children generally found themselves treated harshly and unfairly in Moravian institutions of the mid-eighteenth century. As a nobleman and Moravian officeholder, von Schweinitz may have had the necessary self-confidence to express such criticisms, especially since they were mitigated by his abandonment of plans for a military career—unlike his cousin, who was soon mortally wounded in battle. To that extent, his critique was ultimately imbedded in an account of his preservation from an early death. Schulius' critical remarks may perhaps be attributed to the fact that, as a teacher devoted to her work, she felt justified in making them.

The age at which children entered Moravian boarding schools is another point to be considered. Parents sometimes sent their children away from home at a very young age, which presumably affected the children and, later, the adults they became. Eighteenth-century Moravian memoirs are among the extremely rare sources that document this widespread practice and consequently should be systematically studied from this perspective. To be sure, some children asked to go to boarding school. There is evidence that children whose parents lived in the same community were happy to live at the children's institutions. But some of the pupils, perhaps even a majority, were sent to distant educational facilities by their parents at a very young age, probably often after they were weaned. As we know from developmental psychology, this would generally have had a profound impact on a child's emotional development, causing an experience of loss they were not equipped to understand. The necessity of giving away one's own children occurred when parents were relocated within the church or sent on missions, both situations in which children would have been a hindrance. We do not know how children experienced being sent away so young or what it meant for their later life, but some indications are evident in memoirs like that of Anna Dorothea Elisabeth von Schweinitz (1754-1813), a granddaughter of Zinzendorf.

"From birth," she wrote, "my dear parents dedicated me completely to the Savior as his property. As their situation and their service for the church and their many pilgrimages made it impossible for them to raise their own children, on the 22nd of May 1755 they already enrolled me in the girls' institution which so flourished in those days, where I however was made to enjoy the particular care of a faithful attendant, and even today I recall with the deepest gratitude all the good for body and soul that I enjoyed in that dear house over a period of 14 years.” As the fifty-year-old noted in retrospect, her parents had been compelled to send her away. Serving the Savior took precedence over childrearing, and indeed, caring for their own daughter. Nevertheless, certain details in this passage can be read as objections. She wrote that she was sent away at an early age, but had had a faithful attendant, or more precisely, was made to enjoy (zu geniesen batte) the particular care of a faithful attendant. This passive construction could indicate that something happened to her early, indeed too early, but that she had, in contrast, been fortunate to the extent that she was placed in the hands of a caring person. The experience and consequences of being sent away at an early age will have depended on whether the child in question found "significant thirds,” people with whom they could develop a close relationship. The attendant of little von Schweinitz appears to have been such a person, and the child encountered more sympathetic persons during her childhood and youth. That may have been why she could recall that, “My childhood years were happy and pleasant, and I remember few hours of sadness, I was fond of people, and my playmates were fond of me in turn.” Von Schweinitz seems to have seen her parents only rarely, if ever. Apart from two mentions of seeing them at the age of 17, and then again at 24, she recounted only one meeting with her father: “In 1765, a very serious conversation with my dear father, in which, among other things, he said quite emphatically: "Were I to know, daughter, that you did not desire to grow before our Savior, I would wish for you immediately to be called home" moved me to self-reflection according to my understanding at that time, and in tears I submitted myself anew to the Savior.”

To be "called home" is in Moravian parlance "to die," and in Moravian theology dying marks the transition from the congregation below to that above to be united with the Bridegroom of the soul in eternal bliss. Nevertheless, the memoir recounted a harsh scene: to hear from one's own rarely ever seen father that he would prefer his own child to be in the congregation above rather than to be less pious than he deemed proper, even if this may have led to a purified relationship with the Savior.
There is no explicit indication that the authors of the memoirs ever 
resented being sent away so young or that they even missed their pa-
rents. It may be that they simply accepted it, or were made to behave as 
if they did so. Complaining, let alone criticism, was unthinkable be-
cause the parents acted not on their own whims, but in the service of 
the church and, thus, of the Savior. A member of the Moravian Church 
could not seriously object to this. Furthermore, parents were, as a rule, 
beyond all criticism anyway; the fourth commandment (“Honor thy 
parents”) saw to that well into the twentieth century. In retrospect, von 
Schweinitz saw her life as one in which she had had the “good fortune” 
to “walk through this life calmly and quietly on the hand of the Savior 
and in the care of the church.”

The remainder of this article will explore what the memoirs reveal 
about devotional practices. I will distinguish here between practices 
used in dealing with children and youths, and the practices that indi-
vidual children or youths used in dealing with themselves. First, I will 
examine these remembered practices under the perspective of the la-
titude available to children and adolescents of eighteenth-century Mo-
rovian communities, and then discuss them as technologies of the self 
(that is, techniques used to understand oneself).

Zinzendorf frequently conducted pastoral conversations with chil-
dren and youths. Several memoirs mention such conversations as a 
crucial biographical experience, and Zinzendorf’s outstanding position 
in the congregation doubtlessly intensified the effect. Zinzendorf’s afo-
renmentioned granddaughter, von Schweinitz, recalled a “remarkable 
day of blessing” on her sixth birthday, when her grandfather “saw 
me alone, and conversed with me in an unforgettable, kindly and fa-
therly way, demonstrating ... how fortunate one would be when one 
submitted oneself completely to the Savior, and I had to give him my 
hand and promise to dedicate my heart to the Savior completely, 
whereupon he prayed over me and laid his hand upon me and blessed 
me, which gave me an unforgettable feeling.”

While von Schweinitz recorded a calm and beneficial experience, 
Anna Sophia Molther, nee von Seidewitz (1718-1801), wrote about a 
rather unsettling one. After spending over a year at the Berthelsdorf 
girls’ school, where she admittedly had difficulties with the “quiet, re-
tiring life,” she attended one of the “weekly children’s hours,” where 
she “listened with indifference at first,” but then Zinzendorf spoke so 
powerfully that his “words penetrated our hearts with such force ... 
that we all dissolved into tears. From that day forward I began to be 
concerned for my salvation, and often cried and prayed silently to the 
Savior to make me a child pleasing to Him.” Although the effects on 
the children are described differently—for the one, a quiet experience 
in the hands of her loving grandfather, for the other, a rather dramatic 
and tearful scene—both experienced the same result in that they came 
into a closer “connection with the Savior.” Viewed from outside, they 
succeeded in adapting to the pious standards of their community where 
being and remaining in “true connection” with the Savior was, as men-
tioned above, the most important issue of one’s life.

In everyday Moravian life, special lay workers were responsible for 
the spiritual care of children. Generally only a few years older than the 
children and youths entrusted to them, they probably found easy ac-
cess to them. Anna Maria Andresen (1729-93) vividly recalled the 
“love and care, especially from the then-worker [of the single sisters], 
the late Sister Layritz,” who was only five years older than her charge. 
These young adults were presumably closer to the children and youths 
than older adult members of the congregation, such as pastors or 
teachers, and were more apt to serve as role models. Andresen later 
worked with children herself, becoming likewise responsible for the 
spiritual care of younger girls.

A particularly important Moravian practice in dealing with young 
people was that of “speaking” (Sprechen). This term was used to de-
scribe individual conversation with the choir worker. The topic of the 
“speaking” was primarily the child’s or youth’s spiritual state, which 
was discussed by asking about their relationship to the Savior. During 
“speaking,” the child was to give an account of whether his or her rela-
tionship was intact and the connection with the Savior existent and 
deeply felt or whether it was troubled.

Christiane Friederique Sophie von Schulenburg (1726-87) arrived 
at the Marienborn girls’ school at thirteen, and was asked by her choir
worker during one of their weekly conversations whether her sins had been forgiven. She wrote: “I replied, that I was not aware of any sin, and did not believe that the Lord Jesus had had to suffer so terribly for my sake, as I did not think I had contributed to His death. I nevertheless made this declaration in tears.” This tearful declaration did not satisfy her choir worker, as plausible as it might seem that a girl living in 1739 could not be held personally responsible for the suffering of Christ. When shortly thereafter Schulenburg wished to participate in an undisclosed joint pious endeavor, her choir worker replied: “You wish to come along, and yet you do not believe that the dear Savior died for your sins. You do not yet belong here.” Schulenburg recorded in her memoir that this response “cut me to the quick.” 39 She thus learned that the appearance of insufficient piety could lead to exclusion from a common activity. Presumably this was a humiliating experience, since the other girls in her choir witnessed it.

However, choir workers could react quite differently in similar cases. From her early years in the Moravian community of Marienborn, Andresen recalled a situation when she was 18, and plagued by her “perplexity”—a topos of religious self-doubt—over not yet feeling “for certain that (her) sins were forgiven” and not having received “words of comfort” from the Savior. In this case, her “dear worker” had tried “in the kindest way to comfort her, and sought to assure her of the Savior’s love.” 40 Unlike in the case of Schulenburg, she was not admonished and excluded. Instead, the worker sought to give her confidence that an unclouded relationship to the Savior would come in time. In this case, “speaking” served to reassure the bewildered young woman’s sense that she was on the right path.

As a rule, these private conversations were intended as “preparation for the Communion celebration,” or, as was mentioned previously, for reflection on one’s spiritual condition with an interlocutor. As Katherine Faull has shown, “speaking” could also be used to discuss more personal problems, particularly those connected with puberty. This was in keeping with the intentions of Zinzendorf, who had recommended to the audiences of his Children’s Addresses that they should turn to adults, to their choir workers, if they were worried or confused. 41 This could be interpreted as control, which was certainly present, especially since children were urged not to discuss such matters among themselves. 42 However, “speaking” also provided adolescents space for personal reflection. It offered them an opportunity to have a serious conversation with adults regarding topics that perplexed them, in addition to personal pastoral attention. They were taken seriously. If one keeps in mind that in eighteenth-century Moravian communities all activities, prayer, singing, sleeping, eating, and work, were conducted in groups, “speaking” was probably one of the few “intimate” social contexts in which there was room for individual experience and personal discussion. 43 Once again, I find the dimension of latitude a particularly important aspect of devotional practices involving children and youths. Adolescents found a sometimes strict, sometimes gentle, interlocutor, and they could express, and perhaps even test, themselves and their personal beliefs. The encouraging reaction of the choir worker to Andresen’s “perplexity” can be understood in this manner.

Apart from these devotional practices for mentoring young people, the memoirs also address practices that individual children and adolescents used in dealing with themselves. I use the term “dealing” here because it presupposes a subject-object relationship like that involved in “speaking,” in order to show that these individual devotional practices also involved an interlocutor. This interlocutor was less immediately tangible as a person than in the case of “speaking,” but omnipresent in the pious everyday life of the Moravians: the Savior (the memoirs sometimes also speak of God or the Holy Spirit). One dealt with oneself through the medium of dealing with the Savior.

There were essentially two modes of dealing with the Savior that were alike for children and adults: self-doubt when the relationship was experienced as “troubled” and self-assurance when it was experienced as “intact.” As a rule, the memoirs relate the alternation between the two states of closeness to, and distance from, the Savior. 44 One memoir uses the metaphor of falling down and getting back up again. 45 Another example is found in the memoir of Antoinette Elisabeth Schemel (1739–69). She joined the Moravian community of Herrnhaag with her parents and siblings when she was four, and thus was raised as a Moravian. She wrote: “I joined the children’s congregation in the year 1745, and my heart was gladdened, for I felt their love. In 1751 I came into the girls’ choir, where my wretchedness and corruption became clear to me, but I hadn’t the heart to speak with my sisters. Because I remained uneasy, and could not be happy, I asked the dear Savior to grant me the grace of candor, and He did so.” 46

Schemel’s text described various pious emotions in a sort of religious pendular movement. The ability to notice such inner stirrings, and to describe them, was cultivated at an early age in Moravian com-
The community, whereas everything else was done together. These devotional practices of seeking solitude appear to have been socially acceptable. There is no evidence that this quest of solitude led to admonitions or expulsions.

These two aspects of Moravian memoirs—the formula of ineffability and the topography of corners and woods—represent practices of dealing with oneself that Michel Foucault referred to as technologies of the self. This concept describes techniques people use to understand themselves. According to Foucault, these techniques permit individuals to act upon themselves in such a way that they attain a certain inner state deemed higher and better. Eighteenth-century Moravians achieved an untroubled relationship with the Savior by means of a “deciphering of inner thoughts.”

What took shape in Moravian memoirs was not the unique self that has populated middle-class biography since at least the Age of Sentimentality; that would be going too far, because the situating between the religious community and the writing individual had to be maintained and created through writing. The memoirs, nevertheless, reveal religious individuation in the perception of an inner human being, in self-observation, or to use Foucault’s terminology, the “hermeneutics of the self.” To return once again to the formula of ineffability and the talk of corners and woods: the formula of ineffability is to be understood as a reference to the uniqueness of a given religious experience. It is important that a consensus existed regarding this incommunicability, because it represented a trait of the numinous. Incommunicability can also refer to the essentially unique experience of the pious subject. After all, retreating to “corners” and “woods” documented practices of active isolation, which point in the same direction. Committing a memoir to paper, which was expected of each Moravian (and, if necessary, was done by others) may be regarded as a process in which religious individuation was trained and practiced. The Moravian memoirs, as a genre and a technology of the self, are thus evidence of the genesis of subjectivity within the medium of religious community creation.

Translated by Pamela Selwyn

Notes

1. Apart from the history of scholarship, pedagogical historiography encompasses the history of childrearing, education, and socialization processes. In one respect, it includes the study of theories, of what was thought about childrearing, education, and
socialization, particularly by the so-called pedagogical classics. In another respect, pedagogical historiography deals with past pedagogical practices. It studies institutions (family, kindergarten, school, and university), as well as, more recently, more informal contexts (the “street,” youth groups, etc.), life phases (childhood, adolescence), occupational groups (teachers and social workers), and individual fields of endeavor (the emergence of social work), as well as individual and group biographies. In this second field, pedagogical practices of the past, scholars are interested in understanding how childrearing, education, and socialization were “done” in the past. Pedagogical historiography is concerned with a history of ideas about pedagogy, as well as education as a social and cultural relationship.

2. I have consulted the memoirs as sources for the study of women’s lives in the eighteenth century as well as of children’s culture using the example of the Moravian children’s awakening of 1727, and studied them as ego-documents from the perspective of devotional practices and self-reflection, and the genesis of subjectivity in the medium of religious community creation.


7. I apply Siegfried Bernfeld’s thesis that diarists have an idea of writing a diary when they start writing because there exists a formal tradition of diaries to the genre of memoirs. Siegfried Bernfeld, Trich und Tradition im Jugendalter. Kulturpsychologische Studien an Tagebüchern (Berlin: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1931).


9. Anna Catharina Eckberg (1735–54), non-autobiographical Lebenslauf, R.22, 117,90, UA.


11. For this essay I have consulted 88 memoirs of Moravians who lived in the eighteenth century, some until the beginning of the nineteenth century. All persons had their childhood in the eighteenth century. Sixty-four of the memoirs were handwritten, 24 printed in the nineteenth-century Nachrichten aus der Brüdergemeine (hereafter cited as NadB). Thirty-seven memoirs were written by women born in eighteenth-century Frankfurt/Main; 24 by persons who were involved or mentioned in connection with the Herrnhut children’s awakening in August 1727. Besides this, I consulted the memoirs of Benigna von Watteville, her husband, and her four children. The remaining memoirs had in common that they were published in the Gemeinnachtschriften.

12. In the case of nobility, the antecedents and rank of father and mother are generally noted in detail, while in the case of commoners, reference is made to the father’s occupation or office, or to pious genealogies.

13. Anna Dorothea Christoph, née Neumann (1716–1793), handwritten Lebenslauf, R.22,81,16. UA. One finds a comparable but lengthier introduction by Georg Heinrich Müller: “I was born the 31st of May 1794 at Gross-Erkmannsdorf near Radegg in Saxony. My parents raised me to piety according to their knowledge. I was admonished to go to church punctually, and on Sundays also had to read a sermon at home; I often grew so weary of this, however, that I would gladly have traded places
with my playmates, who by that time were enjoying themselves in their own way. . . . They thus encouraged me to be good the best they knew how. They probably had no personal experience of salvation in Christ.” Georg Heinrich Müller (1794–1823), handwritten Lebenslauf, Nadl. (1825): 149–57, here: 148. These parents also raised their child to be pious, but only to the best of their knowledge, a statement that appears frequently among Moravians who were not born and/or raised among the Moravians.

14. Anna Elisabeth Layritz, née Günther (1718–1764), non-autobiographical Lebenslauf, R.22.02.a.l40, UA. The complete introductory narrative is as follows: “Soon in tenderest childhood an extraordinary divine providence was revealed in her. On St. John’s Day a great fire broke out in that town, and her parental home was also threatened. Her parents, brother and nurse had all left the burning house; the six-month-old child, however, still lay in her cradle and was forgotten. A close kinsman dared to enter the house and rescued the child from a little room through whose door the fire was already rushing. He carried her to another house, in a lane rather distant from the fire, and laid her upon a bed. The child, however, was soon covered by several (feather) beds thrown upon it, and forgotten during the three-day fire so that her mother could only assume that her little daughter had burned to death. After three days passed she finally met the child in a lane not far from the fire. She returned home with the child in her arms and at once placed the little girl in the hands of her nurse. Upon hearing this story she wrote to her parents, Werner Lachenall, a physician from Basel, and Charlotta Henrietta Erdmuth von Seydewitz, who was sent to the Betthelsdorf girls’ school as a child, that he had saved her, and where he had brought her. When she ran to the house and removed the (feather) beds, she found her healthy and unharmed child, who also smiled at her. As lovingly as the good Creator watched over her tabernacle [that is, her body], so careful and tender did he prove in preserving her soul.” Preservation by God could assume other forms as well, as we see from the memoir of Johanna Sophia Molther, née von Seldewitz (1718–1801): “I still recall from my earliest childhood years that I enjoyed listening to people read about Christ’s Passion, and was often quite moved by it, especially during Lent, and felt a childish love for the Savior in my heart. Because of my lively and merry disposition, I was much loved, and also often praised by friends in my presence, which increased my pride and self-complacency early on, so that all my efforts were directed at standing out still more and making myself pleasing by proper conduct towards everyone. My faithful Savior, however, had peaceful sentiments towards me.” Handwritten Lebenslauf, R.22.79.Schw. M-Sch.4, UA. Preservation, here not from external perils but from her own complacency, from becoming a “worldling,” consisted in the impoverishment of her parents, who then sent her to the Moravian girls’ school in Betthelsdorf at the age of eight.


16. Anna Schulius, married Stegmann (1743–1827), handwritten Lebenslauf, R.22.84.33, UA.

17. Paul Eugen Layritz, Betrachtungen über eine verständige und christliche Erziehung der Kinder (Barby: n.p., 1776).

18. Catalogus der Knäbgen-Anstalt in Herrnhut den Iten May 1765, R.4.B.Va.7.3, UA. The “careless treatment” that “suppressed” the pupils’ temperaments may have been an allusion to the harsh educational methods criticized above. The following characterizations in this catalogue suggest a gentle mode of dealing with pupils: “Is very active in nature, hardworking, changeable, possesses ability in drawing. Is quite backward in languages, but otherwise straightforward and easy to manage” or “he is very impetuous and precipitate in his actions. When treated with understanding he is not headstrong, but candid and straightforward.” Ibid.

19. Elisabeth Ernestine Fassius (1736–81) had come to Marienborn as an infant with her parents. She recounted the loss first of her mother, and then of her father, and her “longing to live among the children at Herrnhaut; this desire became so strong that I often felt as if I must hurry to get there more quickly. For that reason I asked the late Count von Zinzendorf for permission, and received it. I moved to the girls’ house at Herrnhau in 1748, and was most grateful and pleased to do so.” Handwritten Lebenslauf, R.22.62.89, UA. The girls’ school seems to have been attractive to her as an orphan, and she actively sought admittance to the girls’ house.

20. Anna Elisabeth Enderlein, née Förster (1745–86), came to Neusalz with her parents at the age of four and immediately (entered) the children’s institution there, where I quickly felt at home, but I soon had to return to my parents because I fell gravely ill, so that it was (feared) I might be called to my Maker. . . . When I was well again, to my great pleasure I moved back to the institution. I cannot describe the indefatigable closeness to the dear Savior I sometimes felt in my heart there, so that I . . . would doubtless thank Him in all eternity that I had the good fortune to spend my time as a happy child in the congregation.” Handwritten Lebenslauf, R.22.62.83, UA. Enderlein enjoyed thinking back on her time in the children’s institution, perhaps also because her parents seem to have stayed nearby, otherwise they could not have nursed her during her illness. Nevertheless, she seems to have felt drawn to the children’s school again.


22. She mentions two relatives by name: a maternal aunt, from whom she received “true maternal love and care.” After her aunt’s marriage “the Savior allowed her,” as she wrote, to “find another loyal friend, in Marienne von Watteville,” ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. The memoirs of the siblings Anna Elisabeth (1744–85) and Christian Ludwig Lachenall (1753–1801), which were not written by themselves, are interesting in this context. Their parents, Werner Lachenall, a physician from Basel, and Charlotta Henrietta Erdmuth von Seydewitz, who was sent to the Betthelsdorf girls’ school as a child, were married in 1743 at Herrnhaut, so that the children were born and raised among the Moravians. Anna Elisabeth Lachenall, born in Marienborn, was seriously ill as a child, and was nursed by her “loving” father, but still left with a crippled arm and nervous weakness. At the age of five (no reasons are given), she was sent to the boarding school at Lindheim and then to Herrnhaut when the school moved there. Of the twenty-something-year-old Lachenall it is written, “Since her nerves became progressively weaker with time, with her understanding suffering greatly thereby, and being clouded with all manner of absurd fantasies, she could no longer enjoy Holy Communion and had to be treated from then on with extraordinary patience and sympathy. She remained among the girls for as long as possible; then, however, she became a constant inmate of the hospital.” She moved to the sisters’ house at the age of twenty-five “and was cared for as well as possible as a woman sick in mind and body.” Although she was “universally loved as an object of pity, and one was glad . . . to remove anything
that might give her occasion for displeasure," she was almost consistently excluded from celebrating communion, the focal point of congregational worship, because she was mentally ill. Her brother Christian Ludwig, born in Marienborn, was sent to the boys' boarding school at Großhennersdorf "early" with no year being given. Here, too, no reason is given for sending him away. Although he led a "normal" life as an apothecary, he was described as a "timid and silent man, about whose life little can be said." Both the sister's mental illness and the brother's shyness and perhaps melancholy may have been results of being sent away from home so young. Anna Elisabeth Lachenall (1744–85), non-autobiographical Lebenslauf, R.22.63.71, UA; Christian Ludwig Lachenall (1753–1801), non-autobiographical Lebenslauf, R.22.108.123, UA.

27. Some of these conversations were published under the title Sammlung Einiger von dem Ordinaria Praenun während seines Aufenthalts in den Teutschen Gemeinen von Anno 1751 bis 1757 gegebenen Kinder-Reden (Barby: Seminario Theologicum, 1758).

28. Anna Dorothea Elisabeth von Schweiniz, née von Wettin (1754–1813), handwritten Lebenslauf, R.22.79.37, UA. This passage on the "kindly and fatherly way" of her grandfather, who took her seriously with his handshake, immediately precedes the above-cited single narrative passage about her father, Johannes von Wettin, in which he told her that he would rather see her dead than less pious than he thought proper. If we keep in mind that the memoirs arrange events in a narrative, that the authors gave some thought to their sequence, then the dramaturgy of Schweiniz's Lebenslauf may be read as a contrast between her understanding, "kind" grandfather and her uncomprehending, "harsh" father, as well as a statement about parents (fathers) who sent their children away.


30. The woman in question was Anna Elisabeth Layritz, née Günther (1718–1764), who later became a deaconess and presbyter, the highest offices accessible to women in the Moravian Church. Together with her husband, Paul Eugen Layritz, she led several Moravian educational institutions the last of them the Paedagogium in Großhennersdorf. Like Andrese, she came from a respected Frankfurt family.


32. Christiane Friederique Sophie von Schulenburg (1726–87), handwritten Lebenslauf, R.22.64.81, UA.

33. Nothing in Schulenburg's Lebenslauf suggests that she was shamed. I assume that, as in other memoirs, she denied the subject by interpreting the event as the catalyst for a breakthrough in piety, which was expected and which she presumably also desired. Further on she recounts, "I went into a corner, wept, and asked the Savior to grant me the grace of believing that he had died for me, too, and so I continued weeping and praying for 3 days and nights; for now I felt utterly that I too was a poor sinner ... I also did not cease my petitions until I had received the assurance and comfort in my heart that He had forgiven all of my sins." Ibid.

34. Anna Maria Andresse, née Stauber (1729–93), handwritten Lebenslauf, R.22.76.01, UA.


37. "As soon as one notices the slightest change in you, that you are more timid and full of doubts than otherwise, it is our duty to ask how you are faring ... You (should) report in the proper place all of your sentiments, and all things that seem strange to you, that you encounter for the first time in life, indeed, when you hear something new to you, of which you do not know whether it is true or not, whether you should believe it ... But do not say it to your fellows, but rather to those who are in a position to protect you, your visible angels, who are given to you to watch over your souls, who, when you ask them about this or that, are there to give you an account of the matter." (Zinzendorf, Kinder-Reden, 238–39 ["43. Rede, an die Mägdelein in Herrnhut, den 14. May 1756"]). In another address, this time to boys, he wrote: "During these precarious years, it is very wise not to keep anything worrisome or doubtful to yourselves, but rather immediately to unburden yourselves candidly in the proper place, complain of anything, no matter how small, that seems to you troublesome or unseemly for soul and tabernacle, seek refuge from inner corruption of the mind with the Savior ... [and in case of] outward difficulties, seek counsel from the brothers, who have blessedly survived such trials, that they may pray for you, and you may come through safely." (Ibid., 900–901. ["47. Rede, an die Knaben in Bethel den 11. Jan. 1756"]).

38. I have found no explicit indication in any of the memoirs that "speaking" in childhood or adolescence was perceived as control, or that young people felt that they had been treated unjustly as a result. In memoirs, the practice is rather consistently mentioned in positive terms. There are hints, however, that adult members of Moravian communities sometimes found that "brothers and sisters" had been judged hastily or too harshly. For an example, see the Lebenslauf of Susanna Hennig, née Kühlner (1716–85) Gemeinhabensten (1786), 1. Bei. 4. Wo. 12, 11–35.

39. In the "Entwurf für ein Gemeinhaus und Chorhaus für die ledigen Schwestern und Mädchen in Herrnhut (1755)" ("Plan for a Community House and Choir House for Single Sisters and Girls in Herrnhut"), a "little room for the custodian (Pflegerin)" was planned for the girls' tract, which presumably was intended to be used for speaking; this plan was never carried out, however (TS.MP.15.12, UA). A further aspect of the devotional practice of "speaking" consisted in training the inward gaze by talking about and reflecting upon it with another person.

40. See Selbert, "Charlotte Schleiermacher."


42. Antoinette Elisabeth Schenel (1739–1769), handwritten Lebenslauf, R.22.114.41, UA.


44. See Elisabeth Enderlein (1745–86), handwritten Lebenslauf, R.22.62.83, UA.

45. Thus Elisabeth Ernestine Margarethe Fassius (1736–81) recalled having gone "into the woods in her distress" and "beseeched the Savior (sighing)." Elisabeth Ernestine Margarethe Fassius (1736–81), handwritten Lebenslauf, R.22.62.89, UA.

47. Ibid., 48. In the second volume of his *History of Sexuality, The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault attempts to write a history of sexuality as "a history of ethical problematizations based on practices of the self" (13), beginning with "the slow formation, in antiquity, of a hermeneutics of the self" (6). He was interested in a certain relationship to the self, with "the way in which individuals are urged to constitute themselves as the subject of moral conduct" with models "for setting up and developing relationships with the self, for self-reflection, self-knowledge, self-examination, for the decipherment of the self by oneself, for the transformations that one seeks to accomplish with oneself as object" (29). Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1992).


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Moravian Education in a Transatlantic World

Edited by
Heikki Lempa and Paul Peucker

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