

the USA. Even that is not complete as chronological book numbering systems have not been studied, except that of W.S.Biscoe and that too cursorily. Ranganathan's system of book numbers gets no more treatment than a passing mention by Comaromi. Lehnus perhaps had no knowledge of the existence of Ranganathan's system. It is a pity that such a highly developed, sophisticated, and universally applicable system has remained in abeyance. However, this void in literature is being filled (6). Nevertheless Lehnus and Comaromi have tried to revive a long neglected topic from libo and have given an academic face-lift to the subject and have underlined their deserved importance. We, for our part, in addition to reviving interest, are yet to ponder on the form and roles in store for book numbers in the Lancasterian era of paperless libraries when the book itself along with the "shelf" will vanish.

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Note:

(1) It may be reminded that in the first edition of the DDC no class number consisted of more than three digits; and the standard subdivisions were also not used then.

References:

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- (3) Comaromi, John Phillip: The eighteen editions of the Dewey Decimal Classification. Albany, N.Y.: The Forest Press 1976. p.99
- (4) Library of Congress: Shelf list rules. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office 1902.
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Obituary

In memoriam Prof. Alwin Diemer

On Christmas Day 1986 Prof. Dr. med. Dr. phil. Alwin Diemer, the co-publisher of this journal, died at the age of 67. Although he had been ill for a long time, his death nevertheless came unexpectedly.

Born in 1920 in the Palatinate town of Eisenberg, (West) Germany, A. Diemer started studying philosophy shortly before the outbreak of World War II, soon to switch to human medicine after having come into conflict with the spirit of the age then reigning in Germany. After the end of the war he took his state medical degree at Heidelberg University and went on to obtain in 1947 the degree of a Doctor of Medicine on a thesis "On the Problem of Blood Catabolism". Turning then again to philosophy, Diemer became of Doctor of Philosophy at Mainz, Germany, in 1950 on a thesis "On the Problem of the Unconscious in its Historical Development", to habilitate 4 years later in philosophy at the same university through a thesis on Husserl. There followed years of fertile publishing activity and teaching as a university lecturer and extraordinary professor, likewise at Mainz. In 1963 Diemer received a call to Düsseldorf, where he was named full professor and director of the Institute of Philosophy, which he headed until his retirement in 1985. Intermittently he was Dean of his department as well as President of Düsseldorf University from 1968 to 1970.

Diemer's devoted efforts and personal engagement in building up his institute library – now a favorite rallying point for guest researchers from all over the world – as well as, in connection therewith, the designing of a subtle systematic catalog for this library and, last not least, the idea of documentation of journal articles realized as of 1967 as one of the very first computerized documentation projects in the field of the humanities, brought him into contact with the institutionalized I & D field and induced him to play an active part there, too. Thus he served as a Council member of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Dokumentation (DGD = German Documentation Society) from 1969 to 1972 and went on to serve on its praesidium from 1972 to 1975. From 1967 to 1974 he headed the DGD Committee for Classification and Thesaurus Research (DGD-KTF).

But more so than the documentation practice at his Institute and his preoccupation, necessitated by it, with the theoretical and methodological preconditions of documentation it was Diemer's fundamental philosophical orientation which explains his profound interest in concept-theoretical and order-theoretical problems, an interest even extending to information-scientific problems in general.

Alwin Diemer never ceased to invoke, on the one hand, Aristotle and, on the other hand, Socrates as godfathers of his work. To him, Aristotle was the prime example of encyclopaedic thinking, a way of thinking

which out of natural curiosity is open for the fullness and variety of the entire world of the living, a manner of thinking for which orientation and information constitutes the point of departure for all scientific activity, even for all problem-solving and action. To escape, however, the danger of remaining stuck in the mere collecting and recording processes, Diemer always had Aristotle be joined by the even greater thinker Socrates, the inexorable seeker after meaning and significance, after the invariants in the phenomena, after the prerequisites, after the conditions of the possibility not only of the things, but also, and particularly, of the information on the things as a condition for the possibility of dialogue and discussion. Or, to express it not only in the categories of these two thinkers from antiquity but rather to put it in more contemporary terms: Diemer's philosophical interest was guided, on the one hand, by Kant's transcendentalism and at the same time by Husserl's phenomenology. In his very last days Diemer fittingly announced his intention to write a new, namely a "Transcendental Phenomenology". Death took the pen from his hand.

His orientation to ingenious Aristotelian analytics always made Diemer look with fascination on classification systems and systematics and made him work himself on designing classification schemes of various contents; yet the Socrates in him, the seeker after the prerequisites, the invariants, the contexts, the conditions of validity, always made him at the same time a critic of classifications and systems. Thus he always reproached documentation (as well as the theory of sciences, however) with having committed, in developing or applying classifications or proposition systems, the serious omission of neglecting diachronic relativity. The matter at issue here eventually crystallized out in Diemer's interest in the historical dimension of science. Thus he was from 1971 to 1977 at first vice-president, then president of the "Gesellschaft für Wissenschaftsgeschichte" (Society for the History of Sciences), and as of 1973 he served on the executive or advisory board of the "Georg-Agricola-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften und der Technik" (George Agricola Society for Promoting the History of Natural Sciences and Technology). Here he was concerned not so much with the historical-factual as with the action-historical and especially with tracing down the effectiveness of pre-understandings and prejudices as the parameters which in effect establish significance and found meaning.

Around the mid-70s his external connections with the information field loosened rather abruptly but probably inevitably when the International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP) entrusted Diemer with organizing the 16th World Congress for Philosophy to be held in 1978 in Düsseldorf. At this successful congress A. Diemer was elected world president of the FISP, which he remained until 1983, following which he served

as its honorary president up to his death. In this role his activities were directed first and foremost at the intensification of efforts to promote transcultural understanding in the philosophical world (East/West relations, Europe/Africa, Europe/Latin America). To Diemer, the starting point for such attempts to promote under-



standing was always marked – and this shows that even in these years his relations with the I&D thematic field had not been severed – by the comprehensive and unprejudiced exchange of information, the collecting, opening-up and reception of sources on the various cultures as a prerequisite for understanding the alien and for being able to dialogue. The supreme hermeneutical maxim in this connection was in his eyes the demand for a de-ideologization of classificatory thinking. Diemer's legacy may well be expressed thus: Questions of the ordering of thinking and knowledge cannot be restricted to the questions as to our relation to and understanding of the world as if they were mere factual questions; rather, they always have first and foremost an anthropological dimension. And the answers we try to give should be measured by whether they give expression to the respect of the alien confronting us at all times, thus improving the preconditions for a proper understanding of it, him and her: classification research as a contribution to a xenology as dictated by ethics!

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