

Pestalozzi International

To nurture and develop

Pestalozzi's Fundamental Ideas

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Content Summary

While Pestalozzi was primarily a pedagogue, he was also a social reformer. This document explores the philosophical and educational ideas of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, focusing on **Anthropology** (his understanding of human nature), **The Nature and Function of the State, Poverty, Religion, and his vision for Upbringing and Formative Education.**

Pestalozzi recognised that human development progresses through three states: the natural, social, and moral. He believed that the goal of education was to enable individuals to rise from their instinctual and social constraints toward a moral, self-perfected life rooted in love and responsibility. His ideas form the foundation of a humanistic vision where education, compassion, and moral responsibility are central to personal and societal progress.

Anthropology - about Human Nature

Content Summary

Pestalozzi considered humans to possess dual natures—a lower, sensual/animal side and a higher, moral/spiritual side. These two natures are interlinked, and education plays a crucial role in helping the individual ascend from the base instincts to a moral and spiritual existence.

He outlined three stages of human development:

- The natural state: dominated by instinct and egoism
- The social state: introduces rules and cooperation but is still marked by selfishness and conflict
- The moral state: achieved through overcoming the ego, love, justice, and moral responsibility

Importantly, Pestalozzi distinguished between civilisation, which stems from collective social institutions, and culture, which results from the moral actions of individuals. He emphasized that true fulfilment comes not through societal roles but through the moral growth of the individual, who voluntarily renounces egoism and strives for the common good.

In 1782 Pestalozzi wrote in a letter: 'The only book that I have studied for years is the book of man, on him and on experience about him and of him I found all my philosophy'. Pestalozzi explored what human nature is and developed his theories about society, politics, theology, psychology and education from his heartfelt ideas about human nature.

The following are some of Pestalozzi's fundamental ideas about human nature:

The nature of man is not a uniform thing; it has tensions and contradictions within it. Human nature has two definite sides: 'sensual' nature and 'higher' nature.

Sensual nature consists of the basic instincts that humans and animals have in common. (Pestalozzi sometimes calls sensual nature 'animal nature'). These instincts are mainly there to satisfy the needs of the body and so preserve the individual and the human race. They also make humans want to do things that make them feel happy.

Higher nature is what lifts humans to a level above animals. This higher nature consists of the ability to perceive truth, to show love, to believe in God, to listen to one's own conscience, to do justice, to develop a sense of beauty, to see and realise higher values, to be creative, to act in freedom, to bear responsibility, to overcome one's own egoism, to build a social life, to act with common sense, to strive for self-perfection. A 'divine spark' can be seen in a human's higher nature and this is why a human is considered to be the image of God. For this reason, Pestalozzi often calls this higher nature the 'inner', 'spiritual', 'moral' or 'divine' nature.

Animal nature and higher nature are interrelated, like a fruit and its seed. These two sides of human nature are very different from each other but they are connected because the higher nature unfolds and develops out of the lower animal nature. The higher nature is permanent and cannot be destroyed; the lower, sensual nature is temporary and can be destroyed. It is the task of education as far as possible to cultivate what is low in order to bring it to the higher level.

The process described above unfolds in a three-stage course of development; from the natural state through the social state to the moral state.

In the natural state animal nature dominates; higher nature is dormant, like a seed. Curiosity, for example, is part of animal nature, but in higher nature it can develop into a genuine interest in truth. Indolence originates in the tendency to avoid discomfort, but at the same time it is the natural basis for impartiality.

Theoretically there are two natural states – the unspoiled natural state and the spoiled natural state. One has to distinguish between these two:

The unspoiled natural state can only be imagined. It is the state when we live completely in the moment and there is a perfect balance between everybody's needs and the fulfilment of everybody's needs, as in the Garden of Eden before the Fall.

Only the spoiled natural state can really be experienced. When a human takes action to fulfil the needs he or she experiences in the unspoiled natural state, he or she cannot help being selfish, and in taking action spoils the unspoiled state. Sometimes a human does more than what is needed to satisfy his or her needs, for example, by becoming greedy and eating more than he or she needs.

In the spoiled natural state of humans, entry into the social state of being – being part of a society – becomes necessary to avoid unpleasantness and to think, plan and work together. Entry into the social state is inevitable and cannot be reversed. Through socialisation humans on the one hand get the benefit of rights, but on the other hand have to fulfil duties and accept restrictions – they have to obey.

Through socialisation humans have created and continue to create a world that does not exist in the animal kingdom, a world of rights and duties and of laws and institutions (State, economy, finance, associations of any kind, communication systems) – in short, civilisation.

Entry into society does not prevent the natural egoism of the individual; society only restricts it and thus protects people from its negative effects. Humans, in the social state live in contradiction to their natural tendencies. Out of egoism or selfishness people desire all those advantages which can only be attained through society. Out of the same selfishness people want to avoid or sometimes refuse all the restrictions and burdens of society, which exist to make social advantages possible.

The State, as the keeper of the legal order that society needs, can enforce the laws of the legal order only if it has the physical power to make disobedient individuals obey the law. The State, in guaranteeing security for the individual, has to do two contradictory things: On the one hand it has to ask everyone not to use physical force for solving conflicts; on the other hand it has to use physical force against those who break the law.

Being part of society does not bring about inner harmony for the individual. Because the need to be part of society is a selfish need, one remains selfish by continuing to be part of society. Also, the tension in the individual between need and power is increased further because being part of society brings new needs that a person as an individual would not have had, and the powers that a person had as an individual are taken away by society in return for social conveniences.

Thus, society as such can never guarantee the individual real fulfilment, but can always only set up a framework in which the individual can gain self-realisation. The individual will remain in contradiction with himself or herself and will suffer from the contradictions that lie in the nature of society. This will go on until the individual realises that real fulfilment can be attained only by voluntarily giving up egotistic or selfish claims. In this way suffering the burdens of social life can make people realise the importance of living as moral individuals.

A moral person realises that he or she has to fulfil a life-task – attaining his or her own perfection. This can only be achieved by the renunciation of selfishness and by the development of the moral powers or the powers of the heart – love, trust, gratitude, public-spiritedness, an eye for beauty, responsibility, creativity, religiousness, doing good of one's own free will etcetera. Through the realisation of morality we transform ourselves into a better form of ourselves and therefore become truly 'free'. The contradictions which are felt in the spoilt natural state and in the social state can only be solved by the attainment of individual morality.

Although ultimately morality takes shape by and large as social behaviour, it can never be ascribed to a group; it is completely a matter for the individual. Morality is not necessarily a matter of being 'good' in manners or behaviour, because this may have selfish reasons behind it; true morality is the individual's success in attaining his or her higher nature without pressure from society.

Humans as physical beings with instincts and needs cannot shed their animal nature except in death. Since each individual is a part of society, taking part in social systems, which are there for his or her self-preservation, the individual cannot live without contradiction. No one can be purely moral if he or she wants to survive physically.

Thus contradiction is part of the nature of humans. This is because different rules apply in each of the three states of being.

As beings of the natural state, humans assert themselves, are egotistical, look to their own advantage and are compelled by natural instincts. They can be called works of nature.

As beings of the social state, humans are part of a social system, the advantages of which they would like to enjoy. But the system only makes these advantages possible as long as the individuals do not refuse to be part of it, despite any frustrations they may have in being part of the system. People are therefore works of society too.

As beings of the moral state, the moral individual is a 'work of himself' or herself. He or she renounces egotistical claims, strives for the well-being of others and perfects himself or herself by developing all the natural powers and faculties that help him or her to work for others.

The natural state and the social state on the one hand and the moral state on the other hand are interrelated. The two states in which animal nature dominates (the natural state and the social state) are the necessary condition for the moralisation of the individual. Moral humans can shape a society or a State in a moral way (as legislators and in the way they observe the laws). Social life would be less of a burden if more individuals felt that their own moralisation is their life-task. Social conditions in themselves are unstable, because they are dependent on the one hand on how many people act egotistically, and on the other hand on how many people understand the real principles of socialisation. This understanding can come only from individual moralisation.

The three states must be understood as three different kinds of human existence and each human pursuit can be analysed as regards each of the three states. For example, solving a conflict in the natural state is based on the rights of the stronger, in the social state it is based on the current positive law, and in the moral state it is based on dealing with the legitimate concerns of the opponent with understanding and consideration.

All acts and achievements of society can be called civilisation, whereas culture comes about as the result of individuals acting morally. All civilising institutions consider the individual to be the bearer of definite roles, consequently the individual is seen under the collective aspect, and thus civilising institutions always refer to the collective existence of people. In contrast to this, true culture involves taking seriously the individual existence of a person, which means responding to the singularity as well as to the concrete life- situation of the individual.

To cope with certain tasks of the State and of society (like finance, the police, the armed forces) it is essential that human beings understand their roles within society. However - according to Pestalozzi – the concerns of religion, education and charity should be addressed with regard to the existence of the individual.

Everything that is civilising can be handled either by acknowledging the actual purpose of the social community (thus from the moral attitude of the decision-makers), or by following the purely egotistical interests of individuals or groups. If the latter is the case, Pestalozzi considers society to be ruined.

So, Pestalozzi believes there to be four possible ways of human existence:

- A purely natural kind of existence, which is free of social institutions and which can in fact only be imagined
- An existence in which people follow their own selfish desires and show no consideration for the purpose of socialisation
- A restrictedly egotistical kind of existence, which, by acknowledging the social purpose, sees to the legitimate care of oneself
- A moral kind of existence, in which the human lifts himself or herself above egoism and aims at self-perfection, which involves making other people happy.

The Nature and Function of the State

Content Summary

Pestalozzi argued that the state is a necessary institution arising from the contradictions within human nature—particularly egoism. It exists to regulate and protect, establishing rights and enforcing laws to prevent societal breakdown. However, he stressed that power must be bound by law and directed by moral values, not self-interest.

He advocated for a balance between individual freedom and social duty, asserting that freedom is not about indulgence but about the opportunity to live a moral and productive life. He saw education as essential for both rulers and citizens to prevent misuse of power and foster public welfare.

Pestalozzi supported government by enlightened individuals but came to embrace democracy cautiously, emphasizing that education was a prerequisite for meaningful participation. He distinguished individual existence (moral and spiritual) from collective existence (social roles and institutions) and insisted that the state must support, not obstruct, individual moral development.

Legitimisation of the State

When he was young, Pestalozzi had already decided that he would work for the people of his own country, and, as an aspect of this, he tried, throughout his life, to understand the nature of an ideal State and how it works.

Pestalozzi sees the State as an institution that can be understood by looking into the nature of humankind. He believes that humans are full of contradictions. This is based on the fact that humans develop through three different states of being, the natural, the social and – if the person wants it – the moral. In order to understand the meaning of the State, the connection between the natural state and the social state must be understood.

The 'natural' (not yet 'moral') human's problem is egoism. Egoism is important for self-preservation and leads to the increase of one's own well being but it also brings human beings into conflict with each other. Egoism also leads humans to socialisation, with all of its pains and contradictions, because a human expects his or her needs to be more easily satisfied if he or she participates in the social process. The collective satisfaction of needs requires ownership of property. Ownership of property can only be maintained if all individuals agree not to touch their fellow humans' property and only for as long as everyone follows this agreement. Likewise with the safety of humans – humans must agree not to do anything which may hurt another human. These agreements lay the foundations of rights and duties: the right to have possessions and to enjoy life in safety, and the duty not to appropriate other people's property and not to threaten the lives of other humans.

Pestalozzi believes that any obligation creates an unreasonable demand on the social man because the need to fulfil an obligation means a human cannot be led by his or her egoism and egoism cannot be removed merely by socialisation. An individual, led by egoism, believes in his or her rights but at the same time finds it a nuisance to have to fulfil any duties. Therefore conflict is inevitable. In the social state of being conflict is to be settled not with the fist, as in the natural state of being, but within the framework of the law, to which all humans in the social state are subordinated. This means that the State has a legitimate function. The State makes laws and makes sure that these laws are followed, so that the individual, when in conflict, does not revert to physical violence with everyone fighting everyone else ('the spoilt natural state'). The contents of State legislation concern the safety of the individual's life and limb and the protection of his or her property.

Power of the State

As mentioned above, the fact that a human becomes socialised (or is in 'the social state') does not necessarily mean that he or she loses his or her egoism. This means that time and again there will be people or groups who threaten others physically or who want to seize the property of others. The only way to prevent this is by use of the stronger counterforce of the State, which is responsible for the safety of others. The State, however, can only guarantee to protect individuals as long as it is in possession of power and uses it in such a way that the individual members neither want to, nor are able to, settle their conflicts by force. For this reason, Pestalozzi does not want the State to be weak. Only if the State really indisputably holds power, can it be capable of meeting the tasks, the fulfilment of which actually found and justify its existence.

Power and Law

Pestalozzi knows from experience that power can be misused by those who hold the power of the State and that it can be used for the subjugation and exploitation of the people instead of for their welfare. This is why Pestalozzi believes that those in power must never rule in a high-handed way, but always themselves be bound by law.

But what is law? Pestalozzi believes that the fact that a decree is enacted by the State and is enforced by the power of the State is not enough to ensure that the decree is truly 'legal'. He demands more of the law; that it should follow the true 'spirit of law'. Only then can it be considered truly 'legal'. The law is truly legal when the statute enacted is in agreement with the essence of human nature and with the basic purpose of socialisation. This can only be the case if the law is not understood as the individual human being's egotistical right, but as being for the protection of everyone against any form of egoism, created to provide care for everyone.

Pestalozzi states that just because a human has 'rights', it does not mean he or she should be allowed to do everything that is not forbidden. In Pestalozzi's opinion, a human's 'right' is above all the legal protection of each individual citizen against arbitrary encroachments of the State as well as the legal protection of each individual against being forced to do anything which contradicts the essence of human nature. A human also has the right to have legal protection against the possibility of others exploiting or suppressing him or her. A human's 'right' is not an end in itself, but it is a means for a humane existence.

Power is needed to enforce such 'rights'. If power is tied to law, so that justice, safety and the welfare of the people come first, then it is, to use Pestalozzi's own term, 'holy', but power used in an arbitrary way can be cruel and bring ruin. Pestalozzi believes that power and its outcomes are 'holy' if the person holding power recognises the rights of the people and abides by those rights. Ruination comes about not because of power but because of the person who holds the power. Power and law depend on one another: without power, law is ineffectual; without law, power is brutal.

Ensuring the Satisfaction of Needs

According to Pestalozzi, enactment of laws and ensuring that the law is observed so that humans and their property are safe, are direct tasks of the State, which it must fulfil by itself. There are other tasks of no less importance, which the State itself does not have to carry out, but for the fulfilment of which it has to work out the necessary legal framework.

Foremost among these indirect tasks is to safeguard the satisfaction of needs. Pestalozzi does not consider it to be the task of the State to relieve the individual of the necessity to satisfy his or her own needs, but believes that the State should enable the individual to satisfy his or her own needs without loss of dignity. The State helps by protection of the individual's property. Furthermore the State must recognise that a property owning individual tends to expand his or her property at the expense of the weaker individuals and in the process the weaker are made poorer. This is exactly what Pestalozzi wants to prevent. Social justice cannot be said to be just if the individual is allowed to increase the size of his or her property and in the process bring harm to other humans. Therefore the State does not only have to protect property, but must also intervene in the economy.

Pestalozzi, however, never considered abolishing private property, because then the duty of the individual to look after himself or herself and his or her relatives as well as possible could not be fulfilled. Pestalozzi considered this 'care for oneself' to be an essential foundation for the self-realisation of a human being because it compels the individual to exert himself or herself and, in using his or her powers, to develop them. Pestalozzi believes that it is not necessary to abolish the free availability of property, but that it is necessary to restrict ownership of it. In Pestalozzi's experience the owners of larger properties always make a large number of people dependent on them. Consequently the increasingly large property owner should be responsible for the needs of the weaker in order to stay socially legitimate. The State, by means of wise legislation, should compel the propertied classes to use their property in such a way that it works for the advantage of the weaker.

Freedom in the State

With the question concerning the free availability of an individual's property, the problem of the 'freedom' of the individual citizen also becomes an issue. To lay claim, within the State or as an individual, to the right to be allowed to do or not to do anything in order to serve one's own egotistic desires is, according to Pestalozzi, an expression of the spoilt natural state. He calls such freedom 'natural freedom' and considers it to be in contradiction to socialisation. No State can or should allow absolute natural freedom to any individual, but on the contrary must restrict the individual's freedom, wherever there is the danger of the individual using his or her freedom to the disadvantage of his fellow human beings and of society.

How much an individual's freedom should be restricted depends on the prevailing social circumstances. According to Pestalozzi, however, the individual's freedom should be restricted as little as possible; only sufficiently to enable governmental justice to ensure the general welfare of the people.

So the State must allow the individual the highest degree of freedom possible while protecting the individual's freedom from encroachments by other citizens. The clear expression of this social freedom is the independence of the citizen. Pestalozzi's ideal image of a citizen is not of an individual directed by the State like a puppet, but of an independent person, who is able and willing to make his or her contribution to the satisfaction of his or her own needs and those of his or her relatives, but also to the positive shaping of social and public life.

Thus for Pestalozzi social freedom is never an end in itself but is always a means to an end. It involves giving up a certain amount, which is worthwhile to the individual if 'domestic prosperity', seen by Pestalozzi as the 'chief blessing of mankind', is the outcome.

Freedom, like the State, does not exist for itself but should always contribute to the humane life of the individual. To simply do anything that is not forbidden cannot be considered to be the right of the individual. The demand for freedom means that the legislator leaves the individual as much freedom as possible, not for the individual to fulfil his or her greed, but to perfect himself or herself as a human being.

To Guarantee Education

The demands for a fair handling of power and for a wise use of social freedom remain wishful thinking if man acts only out of egoism, if the higher nature of the individual is not also developed. Therefore the government has to be educated to be able to govern and the citizens have to be educated to be able to live in freedom. If this does not happen, law degenerates to the mere letter of the law, a situation which the socially stronger take advantage of in order to prevail over the weaker. The State can at best keep up the appearance of a State, but can never fulfil its inner task, if it does not also attend to the education of humankind. The State must create the social framework necessary to make education possible; the success of which then depends on the moral influence of individuals over others.

The Holder of Power

Thus, in Pestalozzi's opinion, the State can only fulfil its duties – the guarantee of safety, the protection of property, the guarantee of free scope for the independence of the citizen, the guarantee of fair satisfaction of needs and education, the provision of corresponding legislation – if it holds power controlled by law.

Another question follows – who should hold the power? Until shortly before the French Revolution, Pestalozzi believed that the power of government should not be in the hands of the people, but in the hands of outstanding, educated men. (Political codetermination for women was hardly a topic of discussion at that time, at least not within the reach of Pestalozzi). He interpreted the principle of aristocracy literally; the best of people really ought to be found among those at the top.

Direct democracy, which allows the answers to many individual questions to be made by the majority, was suspect to him, for he saw that the people were not educated, and in his opinion education was an indispensable condition for codetermination and for the exercise of the power of government in the State. Pestalozzi was a democrat in so far as he demanded over and again that it should be possible for the people to elect their own government. But if someone was elected for government, then he should be able to govern for the welfare of the people as a whole, with power which is controlled by and laid down in law, and which is undisputed. Pestalozzi shows this in 'Leonard and Gertrude' through squire Arner, who resolutely puts his reformatory plans into action.

Pestalozzi's belief in an aristocratic form of government was not because he wanted to ensure that the hereditary aristocrats retained their personal privileges; rather, it is connected with the idea that the good comes 'from above', from God to man, from father to child, from prince to subject. Pestalozzi's belief in democracy grew in the same measure as he saw the possibility that by means of the right education the good comes 'from within', from the mind of every single educated person. Indeed, Pestalozzi had always recognised that the bad can also come 'from above' - he recognised the failure of the upper class to fulfil its duties to be the main cause of the ruination of the lower classes and he wrote the second version of 'Leonard and Gertrude' (1790/92) with the intention of rousing the princes and reminding them of their obligations. His hope, however, that the aristocrats would muster the strength for an inner renewal and thus be capable of averting the revolution, was disappointed. Because of this he put his faith in revolutionary France, whose national assembly, in 1792, appointed him as the only Swiss 'French honorary citizen'. But shaken by the horrors of the murders of September 1792, he again mentally turned his back on France. When, in 1798, the Swiss Confederation fell, he sided with the innovators and actively supported the reformatory efforts of the new Helvetic government (the Swiss Republic).

His experiences with the French Revolution brought back Pestalozzi's old reservations about democracy. That he considered democracy to be justified only in conjunction with very constitutive educational efforts has already been mentioned. When he saw the rage of the masses before him he could not see how they could govern themselves. He believed that only the citizens of small, easily surveyed communities, which could easily communicate with each other, were capable of taking on responsibility and choosing the appropriate individuals to govern them. Within a small State the people can develop the political maturity necessary to fulfil this task. In the case of large States, however, Pestalozzi saw the danger that the individual in the uniting mass loses his sense of personal responsibility and becomes easier to manipulate in the hands of clever operators. It follows logically that he saw the power of the large State necessarily being held by the enlightened educated aristocrat, one who is bound to the public interest.

Individual Existence and Collective Existence

The question about the nature of the State always brings up the question about the relation between the individual and the collective. In the social state of being a person is seen as a member of a collective but in the moral state of being a person's 'existence as an individual' is called upon.

In the 'existence of man as a member of a collective' Pestalozzi sees firstly a person's concrete participation in personal collectives (the people, the inhabitants of a village, a club, a public authority); secondly the collective aspect of the individual in the sense of roles (father, wife, taxpayer, nurse, voter); and thirdly a person in the concrete dynamic of a real multitude (the human being), where he or she runs the risk of losing his or her personal conscience and of delegating his or her personal responsibility to the dull will of the active and unscrupulous masses.

Pestalozzi is convinced that in none of these collective existences is the innermost nature of the individual expressed. This can only happen when the 'existence of man as an individual' takes effect. Then he or she is not realised in his or her social aspects but in his or her unique individuality and in his or her spiritual-moral relations to his or her fellow beings, to the world, to God and to himself or herself.

Collective existence in the social state is a means to the end of achieving individual moral existence; the State is there for humans and not vice versa. In giving preferential position to individual existence over collective existence, Pestalozzi does not, however, feel that anyone should evade their social and public duties for, according to Pestalozzi, a person should not lay claim to pure morality nor to the exclusive realisation of his or her individual existence. A person's collective existence is a part of his or her existence that cannot be shaken off. The individual, therefore, must recognise that he or she will time and again be seen and called upon as a collective being by State and society and must be happy to fulfil duties as a member of the social state. Moreover the person who strives towards morality, can elevate his or her collective duties to the level of morality. This can be achieved by the ability to realise the meaning of his or her collective duties and their necessity for the public welfare and by sacrificing personal advantage to a social motivation for the good of others.

With this differentiation between the collective and the individual existence of a human, politics has to decide which fields the State should deal with as part of the collective existence of humans and which it should deal with as a matter of individual existence. According to Pestalozzi the State is not in a position to guarantee equality before the law on the one hand and on the other hand to always consider each being as a unique individual. Thus it has no choice but to look upon a human, for example in the fields of public order, legislation, finance and the army, under the collective aspect. However there are other fields which have to be considered to be, and dealt with as, primarily a matter of humankind's individual existence. Pestalozzi mentions religion and formal and cultural education as well as care for the poor. These are the fields where the perfecting of things and systems is not under discussion, but the care for and the development of humankind is. Here the State cannot act itself, but can only make possible what is desirable: by providing a framework of legislation which supports self-initiative, personal responsibility and the morality of individuals.

Poverty

Content Summary

Pestalozzi was deeply moved by poverty, both through his personal experience and his lifelong work with the disadvantaged. He believed that education was the key to overcoming poverty, not by eliminating modest living conditions, but by preparing individuals to live well within them.

Pestalozzi distinguished between:

- Modest poverty (which could be a source of strength and moral growth)
- Misery (extreme deprivation that must be alleviated)

Pestalozzi believed that education should equip the poor with practical skills (e.g., spinning, weaving, small-scale agriculture), moral strength, and a sense of purpose. He saw work as developmental, not exploitative, when guided by love and respect. He also called for state responsibility in alleviating misery and supporting fair economic structures, without abolishing private property.

Pestalozzi's Life

Pestalozzi considered the problems of poverty throughout his life. As a boy he decided to do all he could to help the poor when he was older. He decided that the best way to do so would be to educate the poor.

Pestalozzi came across poverty in his childhood. His family was one of the privileged families of the town of Zurich, but his father, who never did very well financially, died at the age of 33, when young Heinrich was only five years old. As a result his family became poor and had to struggle. Staying with his grandfather, who was the pastor of Höngg near Zurich, Pestalozzi came to know the far greater need and utter poverty of the poor rural population. In Höngg he saw how the children's lives were ruined by the work they got in the cotton industry and by the indescribably bad schools. The children also lost their naturalness and strength.

In his letters to his future wife, Pestalozzi wrote about his plans to become a farmer in order to help the poor. When he later failed as a farmer, he changed his farm into a home for poor children and had a considerable number of children living with him. This undertaking also failed, and therefore Pestalozzi himself became poorer and poorer. His writing brought in a little, but it was barely enough for his family to survive on.

In 1802 Pestalozzi wrote to Heinrich Zschokke,

'Did you not know? For thirty years my life was a never-ending economic confusion and a battle against the enraging embarrassment which comes from extreme poverty! Did you not know that for about thirty years I lacked the necessities of life; or that up to this day I can visit neither social gatherings nor churches because I am not clothed and I cannot afford to clothe myself? Oh Zschokke! Do you not know that in the streets I am the laughing stock of the people, because I walk around like a beggar? Do you not know that a thousand times I could not afford lunch and at lunchtime, when even all the poor sat at their tables, I ate my piece of bread with fury in the streets?'

As Pestalozzi himself says, his own experience of poverty meant he had a clearer understanding of the misery of his fellow men, as is shown in one of his letters, written in 1802,

'Now, being miserable myself, I have come to know the misery of the people and its sources more and more deeply and in a way that no happy man can know them. I suffered what the people suffered and the people showed themselves to me as they were and as they showed themselves to no one else. For many years I sat among them like the owl among the birds. But amidst the derisive laughter of the people deprecating me, amidst their loud cry of, 'You wretch! You are less capable of helping yourself than the worst day labourer, and delude yourself that you could help the people' - amidst this scornful cry which I read on every lip, the powerful stream of my heart did not cease from striving solely towards my goal of stopping the sources of misery, immersed in which I saw the people around me.'

Pestalozzi found it difficult to get over the fact that the orphanage at Stans, where he was really able to help the poor, was closed in 1798 after being open for only five months. The direction his life took after this meant that he was more involved with the improvement of schools, but, in his mind, in his heart and in all his doings, the purpose of his life was always to educate the poor.

In Yverdon also, where his institute did very well and attracted the attention of Europe, Pestalozzi always struggled to improve the situation of the poor. In 1805, Pestalozzi wrote a whole series of important essays about poverty, for example, 'The Purpose of and Plan for a Charity School'. And in 1807, at the peak of his fame, he wrote to a colleague regarding his institution,

"What I have here is not what I want: I was looking for a home for poor children and am still looking for it, and to that end only my heart is bent." (PSB 5, 250)

When, in 1818, he saw the possibility of editing his collected works, he donated 35,000 francs of the expected proceeds to the opening of a home for the poor, before he had even made a profit of one franc. In the very same year he founded a home for the poor and a charity school at Clindy, near Yverdon, which made him extremely happy.

When, because of the unfortunate quarrel of the teachers over who should succeed him, Pestalozzi had to leave his institute at Yverdon as an old man of 79, he returned to the Neuhof, along with his colleague Joseph Schmid, with the aim of establishing a home for the poor as an industrial school and thus of rebuilding what had broken down 45 years before. Sadly Pestalozzi died before achieving his aim.

The Reasons for Poverty

Why was poverty so widespread in Pestalozzi's time? Individual characteristics, for example a lack of talent and industriousness or moral weakness, can result in a person sinking into poverty. Unavoidable troubles can also bring about a life of poverty; in Pestalozzi's time there was no insurance against illness, fire or the early death of the breadwinner of the family. The effect of any such adversity was likely to be poverty.

However the main reasons for widespread poverty were of a social nature. Over the centuries the farmers were taxed more and more. They were so severely taxed that often they had to pay out more in taxes than the income they got from farming. One form of tax was the 'tithe', a tax which had originally been paid 'in kind' (with livestock, grain, fruits etc.), and which amounted to a tenth of the agricultural produce. The tithe then started to be made higher and higher. In the area of Zurich there were two villages where the population were prosperous, whereas all the other villages were full of very poor people. The reason was that these two wealthy villages did not have to pay the tithe because of an ancient right they had. The destructive effect of the tithe was thus obvious. Not surprisingly, in the course of the Revolution, Pestalozzi called for the abolition of the tithe and wrote two pamphlets against it.

Another reason for the poverty of Pestalozzi's time was that the population was increasing and so there was not enough suitable farming land for everyone. So the children of farmers had to look for other ways of making money. They found ways of making a living in the developing textile industry. Therefore farmers without land gradually became factory workers. However, industrial production did not lead to prosperity because it weakened the ancestral crafts and trades and often badly exploited the unemployed farmers and manual workers. Even though Swiss villages did sometimes make quite a lot of money, Pestalozzi recognised that people used to poverty did not know how to handle this income and thus spent it unwisely which led to inflation, which gradually changed the owner of money into a poor man.

Pestalozzi's Understanding of Poverty

Poverty can be defined in purely economic terms as a lack of the money needed for the satisfaction of basic needs or for the satisfaction of extended needs. To remedy such poverty would also be a purely economic measure.

However, Pestalozzi looks at poverty in a more complex way. He differentiates between a reasonable degree of poverty, which nowadays we would call 'modest circumstances', and a degree of total impoverishment, when a person starves, freezes, does not obtain help and care when sick, and is reduced to a miserable state of existence. Pestalozzi refers to the latter kind of poverty as 'misery'.

Pestalozzi does not consider the first kind of poverty – the modest living conditions – to be negative. He even considers it to be positive. This is because Pestalozzi believed that the purpose of humankind's existence is not to own an ever-increasing amount. If one's basic needs are satisfied, one can devote oneself to the essential tasks of one's life. According to Pestalozzi the essential tasks are to develop one's own humanity, (i.e. to become moral) and to serve one's community. Life lived in modest circumstances is positive because it forces one to use one's strengths and so to develop them. So, Pestalozzi looks upon such poverty as a positive opportunity. In his opinion the elimination of this opportunity is not a desirable goal. On the contrary, such poverty should be utilised. The education of the poor is therefore not education 'out of poverty into wealth', but instead 'training for poverty'. As Pestalozzi famously wrote, 'The poor have to be brought up for and educated for poverty'.

This sentence has been interpreted in many ways and has also been misinterpreted. It is clear when read in context that Pestalozzi's aim is to provide an education which helps young people to manage happily in their difficult and restrictive living conditions through their own efforts. This education would help them develop the strengths which make it possible for them to develop their essential humanity. He wanted people to be happy with what they had but this does not mean that he wanted to prevent people from doing well for themselves if they were capable of so doing. The sentence also shows Pestalozzi's realism; he knew very well that the children he took from the street, or from a life of begging, would have had to return to very poor conditions after their stay in his institution and that therefore they would not really be helped if, while in the institution, they had been spoilt into expecting a leisurely life of pleasure.

However, Pestalozzi always emphasised that poverty as such does not make humans moral; on the contrary, poverty provides many temptations to behave immorally and many chances for inner dereliction to occur.

If poverty takes the form of 'misery', if one lives in filth and hunger, then such living conditions no longer offer one the opportunity to develop one's humanity. Pestalozzi believed that such abject poverty should be eliminated by the State with direct economic help, the destitute being in such bad circumstances that they can no longer help themselves.

How did Pestalozzi hope to achieve the education of the poor to a life of poverty?

Pestalozzi believed that the child should be settled into poor, but clean and organized living conditions, in which thrift, circumspect activity and regular professional work for the purpose of earning his or her daily bread are a matter of course. Pestalozzi realized that the time of the mainly agricultural way of life was over and that therefore people had to accept the new ways of industrial production and learn to live with them. In particular, a member of the landless poor could not count on being able to earn a living as a farmer but would have to do factory work, and at best, produce part of the food needed by the family in a small field.

Therefore Pestalozzi combined his Neuhof home for the poor with a small factory, in which the children learned how to spin and weave, and with a farm where they learned 'small scale agriculture' – intensive cultivation of a small field. In all Pestalozzi's later plans for the education of the poor, practical, productive activity also played an important part.

In effect, this involved child labour, but in Pestalozzi's day child labour was taken for granted, and it would hardly have occurred to him to prevent a child fit for work from helping on the domestic farm or in any domestic industry just because it had not yet reached 15 years of age. According to Pestalozzi's experience it was not work which spoilt the children, but idleness. What mattered to Pestalozzi was why the children had to work. If it was so that they learnt how to work properly and if in the process they were brought up to be humane, it was good. But if it was so that the employer could make money through cheap manpower it was terrible, a reprehensible abuse of the young human being, which Pestalozzi rejected vehemently.

"No, the son of the destitute, lost, wretched is not there just to drive a wheel, which action elevates a proud citizen – No! No! He does not exist for this abuse of mankind. How my heart is outraged!"

So education for work and by work was of great importance. Pestalozzi believed that training for work should be part of a human education. Not only the hands but also the head and the heart should be educated. Pestalozzi also taught the beggar children to use all their senses, he taught them to think, to read, to write and to calculate and he guided them to come to know and understand the world.

Initially, Pestalozzi tried to combine productive work with school learning; the children should become so skilled at spinning and weaving that they would automatically, without needing to pay much attention, have command over this activity. They would be able, at the same time as spinning and weaving, to listen to the teacher, solve arithmetical problems and practise speaking. Later on Pestalozzi dropped this idea and children did practical work and school learning at different times.

But above all, development of the inner self through moral-religious education was central. Pestalozzi believed that this could not be achieved by talking about morals, nor by reading about morals. He wrote in 'Leonard and Gertrude',

"It is futile to say to the poor man, 'There is a God', if you do not behave as a human being towards him; and futile to say to the poor and to the little orphan, 'You have got a Father in Heaven'. Only if you make it possible for the poor man to live before you as a human being, only if you educate the little orphan so that it is as if it had a father, only thus can you show him that there is a God and that there is a Father in Heaven."

Pestalozzi always emphasised that the heart of an individual can only be guided to do good by seeing the example of love and positive actions from others and by being loved by others. He believed that love from the heart shows itself in solicitous acts.

Thus the success of moral education depends upon the children being able to experience as acts of love the actions of whoever seeks their welfare. The children should see all the efforts and restrictions that they are burdened with as an inseparable part of a loving relationship, which connects the educators with them.

Thus it becomes clear that the education of the poor is not a special, separate area of education, but that it is the same as the general education of humankind. It is true that Pestalozzi first searched for the right way of educating the poor, but since he respected the human being in the poor and wanted to develop that human being, he founded a type of education quite generally appropriate for all humankind.

Pestalozzi believed that with inner strength one can make use of one's external circumstances, whatever they are, to strengthen one's inner self yet further, so that when one is unable to change one's external circumstances, one can lift oneself spiritually above them and live a life of poverty and misfortune as happily as one would live a life of wealth and good fortune.

So, one who lacks financial means need only be outwardly poor; if, because of poverty and in poverty, one's strengths are harmoniously developed through a suitable education, then one is internally rich. It is this internal prosperity that matters. Over and again Pestalozzi states that external poverty (but not destitution!) is generally a better condition for the development of internal prosperity than is external prosperity. This is why, when he educates the poor, he does not want to guide them from external poverty into external prosperity, but rather wants to use external poverty to develop their internal prosperity.

Religion

Content Summary

Pestalozzi's Christianity was influenced by Pietism and Rousseau and were closer to Rousseau's natural religion than to traditional Protestantism. He considered religion to be a personal and heartfelt experience rather than adherence to doctrine. For him, God lived within the human heart, and true religion manifested in moral behaviour and love.

Pestalozzi distinguished between:

- The natural state which lacks religion and is filled with superstition
- The social state in which religion is often used for political manipulation
- The moral state where true, individual spirituality emerges, unmediated by rituals or institutions

While rooted in Christian ethics, Pestalozzi's beliefs have made some question if he can be called Christian in the normal sense in which the word is used. He rejected central dogmas such as original sin, that faith alone is enough to redeem a person. He never stated whether Jesus was God or not; instead, he wrote of Jesus as the perfect moral human and model for conduct. He championed a tolerant, action-based spirituality that emphasized love, justice, and inner transformation over external religious displays.

Pestalozzi was brought up to be a very religious Protestant Christian. His grandfather was a pastor in the village of Höngg, near Zurich, and Pestalozzi's school education would also have been religious. Pestalozzi considered becoming a pastor but later decided not to. However, he continued to be a religious person throughout his life and always believed that man was answerable to God. Throughout his life, Pestalozzi thought about the nature of religion and about the importance of a religious life. Pestalozzi's wife, Anna Schulthess, also came from a religious family and was educated to be very pious. Both of them would have wanted to marry only someone who shared the same basic religious beliefs.

Pestalozzi's theological convictions were influenced by the religious education he had received, meaning that they were determined by Pietism. The Pietists rejected rationalist discussions about the texts of the Bible and held themselves distant from culture and the fine arts. They thought that religion was a matter of the heart and not of the head. They strove for simplicity in their worship and for a life without luxury, in which they worked for the service of fellow humans. Affiliation to a particular Christian church was unimportant to them; to them it was essential to live in small communities and have love for each other.

Rousseau was the other main influence on Pestalozzi's religious beliefs. Rousseau was not an atheist, as many comrades-in-arms of the European Enlightenment were. However, Rousseau did not base his faith on the Bible and he questioned the authority of the church. His religious beliefs were rooted in his own emotional convictions and in his own rational thinking.

Pestalozzi came across Rousseau's way of thinking in the latter's famous educational novel 'Emil'. In it, Rousseau explains his basic philosophical and theological ideas, the summary of which is as follows:

There is an intelligent will. This will moves the universe and gives life to nature. Rousseau calls this intelligent will 'God'. With this 'intelligent will' or 'God' he connects intelligence, power, will and kindness. He knows that God exists and believes that his own existence is subordinate to God's. Therefore he worships and serves God. He perceives God in all his works and feels Him inside himself. In human nature he recognises two clearly distinct principles. One elevates humans so that they search for the eternal truths - love, justice and morality - and so that they are lifted into the regions of the spirit. The other drags humans down into themselves, to be ruled by the senses and the passions. Humans are free in their actions. They are free beings animated by an immaterial substance which survives physical death. Evil does not come from God, but from humans. God does not want evil, but does not stop humans from committing evil, because he does not want to restrict their freedom. God creates humans as free beings, so that they can choose to not commit evil and to do good. The conscience of humans knows what justice and virtue are and always tells them what is good. As for the Bible, it speaks to Rousseau's heart, but he does not accept it as binding revelation.

Pestalozzi links Rousseau's ideas with Pietism. Both Rousseau and the Pietists give the heart priority over the intellect and emphasise the importance of simplicity of faith. These ideas are found in Pestalozzi's theological convictions throughout his life. He is often actually hostile towards theology. Pestalozzi believed that people should feel God in their hearts, not by using their intellect or basing their beliefs only on what they are told by religious authorities.

Pestalozzi also shares with Rousseau the simple emotional certainty that after death humans live on in an immaterial world and that this existence after death depends on their conduct in life in this world. This idea is also part of orthodox Christian thinking, but orthodox Christians believe this because the Bible says this, whereas Pestalozzi – just like Rousseau – bases his belief on his own thoughts and feelings. Also like Rousseau, Pestalozzi refused to think any further on life after death, and did not wish to form concrete ideas on this topic.

In contrast to some Christian theologians – and in agreement with Rousseau – Pestalozzi also felt that he did not have the right to say too much about the nature of God, so he only said that he felt that goodness, justice and love are all godly qualities. He believed in the idea of God as Father and thus saw himself as a child of God. He therefore reciprocated God's love with love for God, with trust in God and with gratitude towards God.

Pestalozzi understands God as a being who lives outside people's hearts as well as a being who acts inside people's hearts. He speaks of the 'Father in Heaven' or of man as the 'Child of God' and he also speaks of 'God at the core of my nature'.

Like Rousseau and like traditional Christians, Pestalozzi is convinced that the belief in God felt really deeply in a human being's heart is what stops him or her from seeking the pleasures of life at the expense of fellow human beings and is the main reason for people wanting to overcome their own egoism. Therefore Pestalozzi's moral education is closely connected with religious education; indeed he often speaks of 'moral-religious education' as an inseparable unit.

Pestalozzi believed that religiousness should be evident in people's day-to-day actions and should bring about moral behaviour and acts of love. He did not believe in a religious practice which paralysed a person's interest in worldly affairs and which alienated him from the world.

Many of Pestalozzi's statements about religious issues have made people wonder if he can be called a Christian, in the normal sense in which this word is used. Throughout his life Pestalozzi tried to live according to the teachings of Jesus but his theological opinions show that he refused to be pinned down to certain central dogmas of Christian theology. Pestalozzi's religious beliefs were certainly closer to Rousseau's natural religion than to traditional Protestantism.

One way in which Pestalozzi was not an orthodox Christian was that he never thought that the bible contained the ultimate revelation on which a person's faith should be based. This did not stop him from reading the Bible very closely and from allowing himself to be enriched by it. He did not feel the need to evaluate the Bible theologically or to draw conclusions from it, but he tried to live his life and take action based on his heart's understanding of the bible. He would never have relied on only the Bible in making a decision to act, but reading the Bible was his incentive to seek truth and to realise love.

Pestalozzi believed that human life must be understood from three different points of view; as a natural, a social or a moral process. This perception, indeed, makes it possible for Pestalozzi to differentiate religion and to show its anthropological importance.

According to Pestalozzi, in the 'unspoilt natural state' humans do not have any religion, because animal innocence does not sacrifice or bless or curse. In the spoilt natural state religion is superstition; humans pray to the inexplicable aspects of nature and call them God. Humans imagine a God who has human characteristics.

In the social state, religion is a source of advice and help and leads to the invention of various arts, but according to the needs and advantages of a State it soon becomes egotistical, hostile and vindictive. The religion of humans in the social state of being can easily become the servant of the State and therefore a deception. God, according to the social person, fights for those who worship and adore Him and rewards them for this worship and adoration.

Only in the moral state is true religion possible for a human being, when it helps him or her to strive for being the noblest that he or she can be. Just like morality, religion is absolutely individual, a perception of the divine reality in the innermost core of the heart. It does not exist in words but in actions of love.

Pestalozzi characterises the religiousness of a person in the natural and in the social state as merely ritualistic. All outer ceremonies, religious customs and rites, and also everything ecclesiastical and canonical are part of such religiousness. In contrast to these rituals, the religiousness of man in the moral state is divine

It is typical of Pestalozzi that these thoughts do not make him object to the ritualistic religion of the natural or of the social man. He recognises that both forms of ritualistic religion are essential as ways of conveying God to humans through the senses.

However the rituals of religion – i.e. everything externally visible, everything graphic, everything ecclesiastical or social – should not prevent the divine, since the means would then defeat the end.

Pestalozzi believes that the best religion is the one which is the most divine in its inner nature, while being the least possibly ritualistic in its form. He does also say that it needs to be sufficiently ritualistic to ensure that it is a sufficient help to man in his struggle against the animal side of his nature. In Pestalozzi's opinion Christianity best fulfils these conditions, for he is convinced that Christianity is totally moral and that it is therefore also entirely an affair of the individual.

The conviction that Christianity was the best religion did not stop Pestalozzi from showing religious tolerance in living together with his fellow humans. He is never known to have tried to change another person's religious opinions. The only people he could not tolerate were hypocrites who pretended to be pious in order to exploit or suppress their fellow men. Then he spoke out and showed what he believed to be the truth.

Pestalozzi saw himself as a Christian but since certain theologians were of a different opinion, so it is important to illustrate how Pestalozzi thought about the most basic Christian dogmas.

Traditionally Christians believe that Jesus is God, that humans are all guilty of 'original sin' (original sin is the Christian belief that every human is born with a tendency to evil, inherited from Adam in consequence of the Fall), that humans can be redeemed by faith in God, and that Jesus is the saviour of humankind because he washed away collective human sin by his sacrifice – his death on the cross.

Pestalozzi's beliefs differ from the beliefs of traditional Christians. He avoids making a definite statement as to whether Jesus is God or not. All of his writings prove that he considered Jesus the divinely perfect man, in whom the divinity generally possible in a human has come to perfection. Jesus was Pestalozzi's model and redeemer through his example and his teachings.

Pestalozzi did not consider people to be guilty of 'original sin'. He only believed that humans are shackled to their sensuality and egoism.

Pestalozzi did not share one of the most important dogmas of the reformers – that faith is enough to redeem a person. He did not agree that simply by believing in God people could be redeemed in any sense.

Pestalozzi did not believe that humankind's collective sin was washed away by Jesus' sacrifice of himself on the cross. Rather, he sees Jesus as saviour because he believes that humankind could be free of all unkindness and ensnarement by living like Christ did. With so much misery and suffering in the world, Pestalozzi believed that everyone could live as a saviour.

In the end, the question, 'Is Pestalozzi a Christian?' has a different answer according to the different definitions of 'Christianity' that different people have.

Upbringing and Formative Education

Content Summary

Pestalozzi defined education as the holistic development of heart, head, and hand, aimed at creating moral individuals. He believed children are born with latent capacities that must be developed naturally through love, example, and structured experience.

Key components of his educational philosophy:

- Moral education begins with the development of love, trust, and gratitude
- The home is the essential environment for moral growth.
- Schooling must support and extend the education begun at home
- Perception gained through experience via the senses is the basis of all knowledge
- Obedience is essential but must be based on love and respect, not force
- Intellectual and manual skills must be cultivated through active use and linked to the child's emotional and moral development.

He saw the harmony of powers (intellectual, physical, and emotional) as the highest aim of education - fostering a self-reliant, loving, and socially responsible individual.

The Task: Revival of Moral Life

In Pestalozzi's opinion, the chief goal of education should be to create the 'moral man'. The moral individual attempts to do good and to love, his or her actions are rooted in religious faith and he or she puts aside his or her selfishness wherever possible. The moral individual is self-made.

Pestalozzi knows that it is not easy to live as a moral person, because of the tension in human nature. On the one hand instincts and selfishness take control, because a human's 'sensual, animal nature' makes him or her want to feel pleasure and avoid any displeasure. On the other hand humans have a conscience and are able to make well thought out judgements. A human's conscience and ability to make properly thought out judgements are expressions of his or her 'higher, eternal, divine nature'. They allow a human to understand that, when he or she lets his or her animal nature dominate, strife, lack of love, war and misery develop and a human cannot reach true fulfilment.

A fundamental belief of Pestalozzi's is that it only becomes possible for the individual to do justice to his or her higher destiny and to develop his or her own moral life if that individual receives an appropriate education.

How does an individual's morality develop?

Natural Development of Natural Powers and Faculties

Pestalozzi believes that the basic requirements for a moral lifestyle can be found in human nature. Every child is born with natural powers and faculties – originally in an undeveloped state. These can be developed – they even contain an urge to develop and push for development – on the basis of an inherent instinct.

"The eye wants to see, the ear wants to hear, the foot wants to walk and the hand wants to grasp. In the same way the heart wants to believe and to love, the mind wants to think. In every faculty of human nature there is the urge to raise itself out of its state of lifelessness and clumsiness to the developed power which, while still undeveloped, is in us only as a seed of the power and not as the power itself" writes Pestalozzi in 'Swansong'. It is of course important to the child's development whether these natural powers and faculties are allowed to be used selfishly or are directed towards moral conduct.

Nature has given each child particular natural powers and faculties which help lead it towards moral conduct. They make it tend to overcome its selfishness and turn towards its fellow human beings. Pestalozzi calls this natural social instinct 'goodwill'. Out of this will gradually develop – if the formative education is good – the basic moral emotions of love, trust and gratitude, on which all further moral-religious powers are based.

In addition to these 'powers of the heart', intellectual and manual skills must also be developed. However heart, head and hand must each develop according to their own natural laws. The educator must get to know these laws and educate according to them.

'Conformity with nature' is Pestalozzi's supreme demand on education. Only education which follows the laws of nature can truly be called 'education'. Any influence on a human which is not in accordance with nature is not fit to be called education.

Moral Sense by Satisfaction of Needs and A Life Lived in Composure

According to Pestalozzi the mother-child relationship is fundamental to the healthy development of the child. The three basic moral emotions (love, trust and gratitude) can only develop optimally in the child if the mother satisfies the child's natural needs in an atmosphere of loving security.

Therefore Pestalozzi favours the home as the true basis of any formative education. Any other educational experience, including school, that the child has must be continued and completed by home education. A school education can never replace home. After all a female teacher is not the mother and a male teacher is not the father. School education can only be productive if everything educational is supported by a warm-hearted, open human relationship.

According to Pestalozzi, a human develops his humanness only face to face, only heart to heart – for example only through the experience of being loved can a child learn to love. For Pestalozzi formative education is always a personal process and it is the most important skill of the teacher to be able to be aware of each child's individuality and to respond to its emotions lovingly.

Pestalozzi believes that the moral development of the child is only possible in the basic mood of composure. This state of inner composure develops in the child on the one hand through the above-mentioned satisfaction of its needs (but not the fulfilment of its wishes) and on the other hand if the teachers radiate loving calmness.

Pestalozzi writes in his last great work, 'Swansong' (1826), 'The nature of humaneness only develops in composure. Without it love loses all the power of its truth and of its blessing. Restlessness is by its nature the result of sensual sufferings or of sensual desires; it is either the child of dire misery or - even worse - of selfishness; in any case, however, it is the mother of coldness, of godlessness and of all consequences which by their nature develop from coldness and lack of faith.'

In this atmosphere of composure and of acceptance by fellow human beings, a 'moral mood of temper' develops in the soul of the child. The child is willing to share with others, to help others and to do them favours. Thus the powers of the heart develop.

The powers of the heart can never be activated by pressure, coercion or compulsion, but only by the emotional, mental or spiritual life of the educator. Love in the child can only be evoked by love for the child. Trust only develops if the educator shows trust in the child. Respect for life, religious faith, affection towards all creatures – all can only be brought about in the child if it feels these attitudes in the adult. For this reason the inner life of the educator is fateful for the moral development of the child. What lives in the souls of parents and teachers sets vibrating a corresponding chord in the child's soul.

Sense-impression and Perception

Pestalozzi has described sense-impression as 'the absolute foundation of all knowledge'.

By 'perception' Pestalozzi means fully formed, internalised conception, (the child forms a concept as a result of sense-impression which is understanding achieved through using the senses on real objects). Sense-impression (or 'Outer' perception) concerns the development of the powers of the head (see 'The Additional Powers: Head and Hand' on the facing page). Conception (or 'Inner perception') concerns inner moral judgement – the powers of the heart - within the frame of the outer understanding of any experience gained through sense-impression.

To live with inner perception involves: feeling inwardly elevated by the moral life of fellow humans; feeling the importance of spiritual values for human life; intuitively experiencing a sense of responsibility for one's actions; and understanding the meaning of one's actions.

The morality of an individual is the direct consequence of that individual as a child having been given the opportunity to gain the inner perception of morality. This can be achieved through human contact or through fictive experience from listening to stories.

The Transition to One's Own Actions: Obedience

Obedience must develop in the child in parallel to the three basic moral emotions of love, trust and gratitude. Natural childlike obedience has nothing to do with suppression, but on the contrary is the basis of freedom. Such obedience involves the ability to obey one's own conscience, freed from one's own selfishness and instincts. A child can only achieve this obedience to its own conscience if it first comes to know about obedience from its educators and practises obedience towards its educators. Pestalozzi calls obedience the 'basic moral skill'.

Pestalozzi asks himself how obedience develops naturally. It first appears as passive obedience, as having to wait and being able to wait, and only later in its active form, i.e. as the ability to defer to the will of the educator. Obedience, however, can only develop if the educator distinguishes himself by firmness, which is embedded in love. If the educator behaves in this way, the child does not feel burdened or hurt by the demand for obedience, but usually accepts it as a matter of course.

Love without the expectation of obedience, is, according to Pestalozzi, weakness. However, if love is combined with firmness and a sense of responsibility, it becomes 'seeing love'. Such love sets standards and necessary limits and gives the child moral stability.

Moral behaviour, based on obedience, is the second step in the development of moral powers. The third and last step is the distinct moral notion of thinking and talking about morality. So firstly the child should feel moral life (heart), then it should do good (hand) and finally it should reflect on morality (head).

Holding this opinion, Pestalozzi opposes rationalism, which believes that moral life can only be based on reason. Pestalozzi rejects this for two reasons; firstly because one cannot possibly wait for the moral education of the child until its reason has developed, and secondly because a human's actions are based far more on emotions than on rational thinking.

The Additional Powers: Head and Hand

The powers of the heart are of central importance to Pestalozzi. Intellectual and manual skills (head and hand) serve the developed powers of the heart. When Pestalozzi writes of the development of the powers of the heart he writes of 'upbringing' whereas the development and strengthening of mental and physical powers he usually refers to as 'formative education'. Upbringing and formative education should not be separated, but connected with each other, namely in such a way that formative education becomes a tool of upbringing.

Pestalozzi did not consider educational instruction to be the task of schools only, but believed in the 'mother school'. The parents, primarily the mother, in addition to the moral education of their children, should also take care of the specific training of head and hands within the scope of daily work and natural life at home.

This education should also be carried out with the loving care of the educators and is always done in connection with language. In fact a child does not learn language in any other way than by social contact.

It is of practical importance that the child intensely experiences the things in its surroundings, if possible with all its senses. At the same time, the child should learn to name the appearance of these things in all details as precisely as possible. This then is the basis for the child's independent judgement. Pestalozzi speaks out vehemently against letting a child rashly judge things before it has a proper understanding of them, believing that the time of learning is not the time for passing judgement. Judgement, like a ripe fruit falling spontaneously out of its shell, should develop of its own accord out of mature inner perception.

The education of physical powers (hand) concerns physical strength, skills, dexterity and practical use. There is an inseparable connection between the development of physical powers and the development of mental powers. In the field of the arts Pestalozzi describes a four-step course, which begins with the child firstly mastering the correct execution of a skill. At the end of the development there is 'freedom and independence', i.e. creative mastery.

The Essential Means for Development: Use of the Powers

The 'development of natural powers and faculties' is basically different from the idea of the filling of an empty vessel with information. According to Pestalozzi's educational concept, the actual subject matter is relatively unimportant. What is essential is what happens in the child in the course of dealing with the subject matter.

The child should not simply absorb the subject matter, but by dealing with it be changed, i.e. become stronger. The acquisition of ability is central, not the gaining of knowledge. The child's powers of thought, memory, imagination and judgement should be strengthened; its hands, its whole body should become stronger, quicker, more skilful and more dexterous.

How can this be achieved? To Pestalozzi the answer is obvious, "Essentially each of these individual powers develops naturally only by the simple means of using it". Only by actually thinking, the power of thought is developed, and only by actually imagining, the powers of imagination get developed. The same applies to the powers of art; only by using it does the hand become skilled, only by strenuous effort does the body get stronger. And finally the same applies to moral powers; love only develops by the act of loving and not by talking about love; religious faith only develops by believing, not by talking about faith nor by the knowledge and learning by heart of things believed by others.

That the development of powers can only take place by the child itself taking action, Pestalozzi sums up in the notion of 'one's own activity'. Only active children get educated. The central importance put on one's own activity also makes us understand why Pestalozzi thought positively about child labour. In thinking so, he was not interested in exploitation, but in the challenge to all powers by useful and necessary work.

The Aim: Harmony of Powers

Pestalozzi insists that all natural powers and faculties should be developed in such a way that moral life is made possible for humankind. This is achieved if the powers of head, heart and hand are each optimally developed, but at the same time if the physical and intellectual powers are subordinated to the powers of the heart. The result is harmony of the powers. According to Pestalozzi this harmony is ensured by the 'common power' which connects everything and is identical with love.

In the end it is about upbringing and a formative holistic education in love, by love, for love. So we read in Pestalozzi's speech to his institution in the year 1809:

"The people around us realize that with our activities we do not make your reason, your art, but your humanness our ultimate objective. ... By my actions I seek to elevate human nature to the highest, the noblest – I seek its elevation by love and only in its holy power I recognize the foundation of the education of my race in everything divine, in everything eternal which lies in its nature. I consider all the faculties of the mind and the art and the insight which lie in my nature to be only instruments of the heart and of its divine elevation to love. Only in the elevation of man I recognize the possibility of the education of our race towards humanness. Love is the only, the eternal, foundation of the education of our nature to humanness."