



## **Pestalozzi on Upbringing and Formative Education**

*By Dr. Arthur Brühlmeier, summarised by Dr. Joanna Nair for PestalozziWorld*

### **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 humaneness 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.

The formation of concepts as the basis for mature judgement is central in the development of the mental powers (head). In principle the point is that the child learns to use its senses and gains sense-impression, which gives it the necessary basic understanding to be able to form concepts. 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 humaneness 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 humaneness. Love is the only, the eternal, foundation of the education of our nature to humaneness.”