Pestalozzi

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Pestalozzi was a great failure. Practically everything he tried to do went awry. He failed as a student radical. He failed as an innovative farmer. He failed as the educator of his son. He failed as a popular writer. He failed as a political reformer. He failed as a founder of schools. Yet he had great historic influence, but even as a man of influence, he failed, for the character of his influence worked contrary to his most valuable ideas.

Three ideas were central to Pestalozzi's effort, and they are three ideas that profoundly merit nurture now. First of these is the principle that all education, all development of human powers, must begin and proceed through the *Anschauung,* the intuition, the pattern of perception, of the one developing. *Anschauung* is a notoriously untranslatable expression. To me, the best equivalent is the literary critic's phrase "the stream of consciousness," that teeming rush, partly coherent, partly incoherent, partly subliminal, partly perceptible, which constitutes the inner psychic experience of each person. All education takes place in the stream of consciousness, and consequently, for the educator to anticipate adequately the effects of his effort, he must intuit how his efforts will register, if at all, in the chaotic flow of the other's *Anschauung.*

Since education can occur only within the learner's *Anschauung,* and since that *Anschauung* is the intimate flow of a person's psychic experience, education must be seen as radically personal. A mistake often made by purported Pestalozzians is to confuse this education that is always at the root personal with its ersatz of individualized instruction. Instruction is apparently individualized by using multiple norms in place of more monolithic ones; each child's "individual" program is compounded by correlating the child to a seemingly suitable selection of prepackaged possibilities. And in this process the principle of correlation is measurement, not empathy. Only rarely does the individual contact of student with teach-

This article is the second in a series of review essays in which Robert McClintock, associate professor of history and education at Teachers College, will reassess the value for education of various figures in the Western tradition from antiquity to the recent past.

er deepen into sympathic personal involvement. But empathy and sympathy were the alpha and omega of all Pestalozzi's pedagogical efforts, and they are requisites of any true Pestalozzian.

Pestalozzi's principle of *Anschauung* necessitated sympathetic personal involvement in the true process of education, which led him inexorably to the second of his fundamental ideas, namely, that the family was the fundamental educational institution, the decisive institution to any real reform that improved the quality of life. Since the development of human powers takes place only through each person's *Anschauung,* each person's intimate stream of consciousness, the institution that could best affect the process of that development was the institution that provided for real intimacy between persons, that is, the family. Most of all, the mother, who had known her children with the complete knowing, physically and spiritually, that love permits, could best intuit the *Anschauung* of the persons she had born and nurtured.

Having been inured to thinking of education as the province of professionals, we may easily overlook potential implications in improving familial education that Pestalozzi comprehended. In Pestalozzi's views, the *Anschauung* of each person was dynamic because each person was motivated by a powerful urge to self-development. If this urge was not frustrated by constrictive social and personal involvements, each person could be counted on to develop himself, to sense what was best, and to employ his creative energies in those areas. Thus unless deflected into some form of self-destruction, any person, even a very young one, could be counted on to master those traditions and skills that even appeared in his *Anschauung* as matters to be mastered. Hence the infant learns to speak. In this view the primary function of the teacher—be one mother, schoolmaster, pastor, or village bailiff—was to bring under control the manifold frustrations that could deflect a person's drive towards self-fulfillment into destructive outlets. If the family, primarily, and a host of other institutions through which people developed close interpersonal involvement, secondarily, could limit the frustrations working upon people, then the whole community would function as a locus of continuous self-improvement by all its members.

Thus Pestalozzi's program for reform through education was originally designed to work through the family, and the force that would power it was not a well-designed program of instruction, but the person's spontaneous power of self-formation. As various families perfected themselves as self-educative centers, concrete improvements in the quality of life within the village, within the nation, within the cosmopolis, would ripple out. This was the program of *Leonard and Gertrude,* and this program has not been understood properly because Pestalozzi has appeared from the very beginning to have based it on a developmental psychology when, in fact, it was one of the inspired visions of therapeutic psychology.

Pestalozzi's model of man was not developmental: He did not conceive of a person primarily as a series of *capacities* that unfolded in a natural order in the process of maturation, with these capacities to be optimally conditioned if the

pattern of their unfolding can be rightly anticipated. Rather, as we have seen, Pestalozzi conceived of a person as a *motive drive* towards self-development, which could lead one to a unique, satisfying, constructive fulfillment or which could encounter frustrating forces that turned towards dissatisfying, destructive involvements. The struggle depicted in *Leonard and Gertrude* was a struggle within a family and a village against the diverse personal and social forces that frustrated the motive drives of the protagonists and that turned them towards mutual destruction. The family was to be the fundamental educational institution, but to be such, it had to be first therapeutic and only afterwards didactic. Thus before Gertrude could teach her children, she had first to help Leonard work out the problems that drove him to dissipation, his wife to despair, and his children to dread.

In this therapeutic vision, Pestalozzi lacked a sophisticated theory of motivation. He preceded Freud by more than a century, and he had no tradition of theory or clinical observation from which to draw. Nevertheless, his insights have a comprehensiveness that is of exemplary value. Pestalozzi was by no means unaware that sexuality was a fundamental drive, the frustration of which was the cause of much inhumane and antisocial behavior. This is shown clearly by his essay on *Legislation and Infanticide* in which he argued that the sexual drive cannot be repressed except when it is sublimated into cultural aspirations and that laws and mores premised on its brute repression induce nothing but human distortion and misery.[1] In this and other early works, Pestalozzi saw the family as the best means for the fulfillment of normal sexual drives, and he argued for early marriages as the most constructive way to deal with natural passions.

Unlike twentieth-century psychoanalysts, however, Pestalozzi could not deal with sexuality as an isolated motive force, for he wrote in a time and place in which effective contraception had not yet rendered sex an end unto itself. Among the poor and the peasants whose fate concerned Pestalozzi, sex meant children, and children meant work, work under one or another form of subservience. Pestalozzi lived for many years amongst the working poor in an economy in which organic patterns of peasant labor were being displaced by rational patterns of capitalistic commerce and manufacture, and he perceived that this inexorable displacement would impose terribly destructive frustrations on multitudes. And here one encounters the third great idea that Pestalozzi advanced: More than any other group, the poor needed a therapeutic education, one that somehow empowered them to avoid physical degradation and psychic frustration in a realm of work with which one could no longer cope by relying on tradition.

For Pestalozzi, as we now might expect, one should measure the humane worth of work according to a therapeutic, not a developmental, standard. He was aware that economic development was under way and that it could, if properly modu-

1 A good summary of this work may be found in Kate Silber. *Pestalozzi: The Man and His Work*, 3rd ed., New York: Schocken Books, 1973, pp. 52-56.

lated, lessen the poverty of the many. But Pestalozzi was aware that the telos of work was not merely an ever-growing monetary reward. Rather, the telos of work was the sense of human dignity that develops in the *Anschauung* of a person who sees his work as one of his major means for the fulfillment of his drive to self-development. Thus in addition to an education through and for the family, Pestalozzi sought to create an education through and for work, but not through and for any and all modes of work, but through and for those modes of work that measured up to the therapeutic standard, that offered the worker a means of genuine self-fulfillment.

These three principles—that education is radically personal because it takes place in one's stream of consciousness, that the family is the fundamental institution upon which all efforts at reform through education should be based because it best provides for intimacy between teacher and learner, and that a constructive education must ultimately proceed through and for a mode of work to which the learner can attain self-fulfillment—are profoundly pertinent to present-day practice, for they point up that which we are egregiously failing to do. Empathy with the *Anschauung* of students is not the foundation of contemporary didactics. In the view of most the school system has become the foundation in efforts to educate the public, and the family, which is often no longer capable of intimacy, has taken on the status of an ancillary institution, one that acts more often as an impediment than as an aid to the aspirations of public educators. And, finally, work has been shaped almost totally according to the developmental model, with wage labor in its manifold forms having become notoriously unfulfilling.

Pestalozzi, understood as an unexpected, *a priori* synthesis of Marx and Freud, is of great importance to our time. But this understanding will seem impossibly forced by those subscribing to the Pestalozzian myth that has been handed down. Pestalozzi, the therapist, has been entirely obscured by Pestalozzi, the developmentalist. Pestalozzi himself did much to make possible the creation of this myth, for he was as susceptible to the effects of frustration as anyone; his mode of dealing with the frustration of his work was to give a developmental guise to his therapeutic principles. Thus the man collaborated in his myth.

Pestalozzi lived at a time when the developmental idea was triumphing in Western thought. Population totals had begun to grow steadily. The Industrial Revolution was under way. Traditions of imperial expansion were well founded. Intellectually, the conception of development was taking hold in biology, zoology, and geology; an awareness of historic development was affecting theology, law, and political theory; the understanding of patterns of growth was becoming decisive for medicine, psychology, and pedagogy. In this environment, Pestalozzi embarked upon a number of vast therapeutic projects, pursuing them with wholly inadequate means, and the anguish that he expressed poignantly in many of his autobiographical passages shows how deep the frustrations were that arose from the failure of his efforts.

Faced with frustrating failures, a person generally accentuates those aspects of

his endeavors that in the debacle offer a modicum of psychic reward. In the case of Pestalozzi's therapeutic projects, there seemed to be a certain developmental soundness to some of his methods and the climate of opinion was such that the only sustained, positive response to his work was to his didactic methods. Quite naturally responding to this response, Pestalozzi more and more accentuated his work on didactic methodology. Thus his own most successful enterprises, and his most influential books, were those in which developmentally sound methods of instruction were employed to teach children of the well-to-do. But unlike most of his followers, who were content to put their whole faith on method, using it only with those select students who had been left relatively free of frustration by fortunate childhoods, Pestalozzi always longed to dedicate himself to the education of those who needed loving care, not sound conditioning.

Now the developmental era is fast running its course, its insatiable appetite catching itself in its own gorge. Pestalozzi, the therapist, was right: Each person has his own power of self-development, and the educator's primary task is to help one overcome the frustrations and disabilities that hinder one's efforts to achieve one's potential. Unfortunately, Pestalozzi, the therapist, was unable to deal with his own frustrations, and as a result, his genius has been sorely misunderstood.