

‘The whole range of instruction for young people should be designed more to develop faculties than to enrich knowledge.’

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When I was teaching at primary school there was a brickyard in the neighbouring village which gave me modelling clay to use in class and also fired the products — masks, pots — in their kilns free of charge. Once there was a disaster: the pots had obviously absorbed some moisture at the brickyard before being fired and they all fell to pieces and had to be thrown away. This was a wasted effort, then.

Really?

Let’s check with Pestalozzi. As mentioned in chapter 3, he regards the development of powers and faculties as the basic task of education. If this is accepted, it brings us to the question of the *means* to achieve this. According to Pestalozzi, it comes about *entirely through children using their faculties*. They can only develop insofar as they are *active themselves*.

As far as the body is concerned, this principle of developing through activity is immediately obvious. We can talk as much as we like about the wonderful abilities of the human hand or the whole body, it will do nothing to develop strength, suppleness and dexterity. In the same way our mental and psychological faculties only develop through use. Pestalozzi emphasises this:

But the basic natural development of each of these individual faculties only comes about through its use. Love and faith, the fundament of our moral being, only develop naturally through the fact of love and faith themselves. And as human beings we only naturally develop the fundament of our mental faculties, thinking, through the fact of thinking itself. In the same way we only naturally develop the physical fundament of the

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faculties we need in our work, our senses, organs and limbs, through the fact of their use.

'Using one's faculties' means 'doing work'. If we look at this more closely, we can see that there is a dual aspect to the word 'work'. On the one hand it denotes a *result*, the *product* of an effort; on the other it denotes the effort itself, the process. In the economy it is the aspect of work as *product* that is emphasised, and justifiably so, since producing is its function. In the schools, on the other hand, nothing is produced; faculties are developed and therefore it is the aspect of work as *process* that is central. *The activity itself* is the essential, not the product that happens to come out of it. Thus the work of a potter, whose livelihood it is, is *pointless*, if the firing goes wrong. If, on the other hand, the pots made by the pupils suffer the same fate, their work was still meaningful, for the point of handicraft was not to produce pots, but to develop manual dexterity and a sense of form, and that was not lost, even though the pots broke.

That is not to say that the results of pupils' activities are unimportant. But the value of these results is not in themselves — as it is in economic production — but comes from their relationship to the process. Thus, for example, we are quite right to insist that exercise books and worksheets be kept neat and tidy — but not so that they will sell better. Rather, the requirement adds a presentational dimension to pupils' tasks, and neatly kept exercise books are visible evidence that they have been through the process in the desired way. And we must not forget that as a rule, pupils derive pleasure from a piece of work that has turned out well. This helps to create an atmosphere conducive to learning and is a motivation to continue making an effort. Thus visible products, factual knowledge and the mastery of certain skills all have their place within a system that understands education as a process.

Pestalozzi's concern that learning should first and foremost be a matter of developing faculties can be made clearer in the contrast between what some theories call 'material' and 'formal' education. 'Material education' is directed towards specific goals, that is, towards acquiring clearly defined knowledge and specific skills. Meanwhile, 'formal education' is more generally aimed at extending the pupil's range of possible responses that comes from dealing with specific goals, which are thus a *means to*

the end of developing faculties. There is no topic that cannot be used to encourage the general development of faculties. What is essential is that we as teachers bear the 'formal education' aspect in mind when dealing with a specific topic. Therefore when reviewing a lesson we must ask ourselves: Did the pupils really make progress? Were the demands made on their faculties such that they were strengthened and such that the range of possibilities available to them were extended? Which faculties were they? And did all pupils profit from this?

In my capacity as a teacher trainer I found it fairly easy to see, during school visits, whether the faculties and natural abilities of the pupils were being engaged: no development of faculties in Pestalozzi's sense was taking place if the pupils were fooling around with their neighbours, if they weren't concentrating, if they worked in a hurried, slapdash way to get the task over with as soon as possible. When the children's faculties really are active, everything looks different: they are all concentrating on their work, the atmosphere is calm, the only talk is related to the topic and the task, the pupils do not want to be disturbed and distracted from their work. And if the teacher has to leave the room for any reason, chaos does not immediately break out, it remains as quiet as before, the pupils continue to concentrate on their work as if nothing special had happened. I have frequently seen children react with irritation when the school bell rang and they had to break off from their work.

'If only,' is what some of you will be thinking. As teachers we are well aware of the many ways pupils have of resisting, which brings us to the question: What *means* are available to the teacher to get the pupils to produce real work?

The most widespread means is psychological pressure, usually with the help of the assessment system. That is understandable because we teachers are ourselves under pressure to succeed — under a quite particular kind of pressure: our success, as accepted by society, is only indirectly dependent on us, but directly dependent on the behaviour of our pupils. When our *pupils* achieve good results and behave in an acceptable manner, *we* are assessed as being good teachers.

However widespread, however obvious psychological pressure may be as a means to motivate pupils, it is, in the final analysis, counter-productive. No one likes pressure and so the pupils respond with coun-

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ter-pressure, with the end result that they come to regard any kind of learning or effort as something to be avoided as far as possible and quite naturally put the responsibility for their progress onto the teacher. It would be naive to ignore this.

What should our goal be? It must be to get the pupils to *enjoy* work. Pestalozzi puts it succinctly: *'No amount of learning is worth a penny if it suppresses enjoyment and motivation.'* That pupils can do good work and enjoy it can be seen not only in the many classrooms where that happens, but also in the area of leisure activities. Many go riding, play football in a club, go to ballet class — and, lo and behold, they are often happy to accept any kind of effort it takes.

Why does this not work just as well in school? There are many reasons. Successful teaching is often rendered impossible by the resentment and recalcitrance of difficult pupils who have not learnt to be obedient, to commit themselves to something or to curb their own egoism. All coercion, everything which reduces individual freedom, consequently everything that is obligatory, can lessen the enjoyment of work: compulsory schooling, being forced to be part of a community, the timetable, the curriculum, prescribed attainment targets. Everything that causes fear can detract from the enjoyment: pressure from parents and teachers, the assessment system, fear of failing exams, fear of failing in front of one's classmates. Anyone who is unable to refute this is bound to agree that our school system, which is increasingly organised down to the very last detail and increasingly reduces the freedom that is essential for education to take place, is not the answer.

But despite all these impediments, experience shows that under certain conditions it is possible to create an atmosphere that is conducive to learning. The main means of achieving this are: *love of children, leading by example, recognising their individuality, encouraging them and engaging with them in their work.* The antagonism between teachers and pupils, which we come across all too often, must be replaced by an all-round sense of togetherness. Pupils who realise the teacher is on their side gradually abandon their resistance and become willing to be involved in a process of learning and development which is to the benefit of all. I would emphasise that there are no easy solutions; everything must be taken as a whole, everything is interconnected — and

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seen in that light, each single chapter of this book is designed to show how, despite everything, pupils can be persuaded to enjoy work.