

‘Only something that can take hold of a person in the power of his common humanity, that is as heart, mind and hand, really and truly forms him according to nature.’

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Here in Switzerland people mostly know two things about the great philosopher and best-known Swiss, Heinrich Pestalozzi: in the first place he was a simpleton because he would give away the shirt off his back ('I'm not Pestalozzi' is a phrase that is generally even today understood in Switzerland), and in the second he was perpetually muttering 'Head, heart and hand' to himself all the time.

Joking aside, Pestalozzi did indeed take the famous trinity as his guideline when he wrote about people, their potential, their upbringing and education. We find it articulated in hundreds of sentences, but it is also used to order his thoughts in wider contexts. He does not always use the same words, but varies his vocabulary, though in such a way that the gist of what he is saying is always clear. The precise sequence 'head, heart and hand' occurs only once in the forty-five volumes of his writings, in his argument with the Prussian pastor, Karl Heinrich Gottfried Witte. It was about the question of whether Pestalozzi's ideas on elementary education were suitable for the poor alone or for all people. For Pestalozzi the answer was clear: his 'method' was equally valid for poor and rich because it corresponded to human nature.

This view incurred the hostility of many nobles. On the one hand they felt that for the poor such education went too far, and on the other not far enough for the rich. Pestalozzi found this outrageous: *It would be taking people too far, would it, if the poor of the country were helped in a way that is in accord with human nature, if they were enabled to become, with head, heart and hand, what all people in the country ought to be*

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with head, heart and hand for God, themselves and their native land?

Interesting in this respect is the final clause, in which Pestalozzi makes it clear *for whom* the individual ought to *be* a whole person: God, himself and his native land (i.e. society and the state).

Let us take a closer look at this famous trinity. As I have shown, Pestalozzi's basic concern as a teacher was to develop the child's natural faculties. Now clearly, we humans have very many and very varied powers and faculties at our disposal to shape our lives. Pestalozzi arranges them in three groups, following the division of the psyche into thought, feeling and action, that goes back to ancient Greece. This trinity is represented symbolically by the organs *head, heart and hand*.

Easiest to understand is what Pestalozzi means by 'head': all the psychological and intellectual functions that allow us to understand the world and form rational judgments about things. They include perception, memory, imagination, thought and language. Pestalozzi often refers to these faculties as 'mind', as 'mental' or 'intellectual' faculties.

More difficult is Pestalozzi's concept of 'heart'. By that he did not simply mean the diverse feelings that accompany our perceptions and thoughts, but first and foremost the basic moral feelings of love, faith, trust and gratitude, plus also the activity of our conscience, our sensing of beauty and goodness, the ordering of our lives according to moral values. Instead of 'heart' he often talks of basic 'moral-religious' or 'moral' faculties.

The area covered by 'hand' is also very complex. Pestalozzi often also calls this area 'physical faculties', 'manual faculties', 'faculties of art', 'faculties of profession', 'domestic faculties' or even 'social faculties'. What he has in mind with 'hand' is our practical activity in which manual dexterity and physical strength combine with common sense and will power in productive action.

It has to be admitted that, looked at from the point of view of logic, this arrangement is problematic. Pestalozzi was aware of this and in various places emphasised that when he talked of 'hand', for example, the intellectual faculties had to be included in the concept. Despite that, he stuck to the trinity and derived two basic demands from it: in the first place, none of the faculties were to be neglected, all should be developed to the full and in harmony; in the second, we must recognise and accept that each of these groups of faculties develops according to its own laws.

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Notwithstanding that, Pestalozzi does not see all three groups as equal in value. It is only the *faculties of the heart* whose value he accepts unconditionally. Only these enable us to reach our true goal of full humanity. The faculties of head and hand do have to be developed as far as possible, but they are only beneficial to us insofar as we allow ourselves to be guided by our fully developed faculties of the heart in employing them. However intelligent or physically skilful anyone is, if they do not combine their intelligence and skill with a sense of responsibility, with the desire to do good and, wherever possible, with love, they will make themselves and other people unhappy.

At this point a short *digression* is necessary. Given the subject of this book, I continue to talk about ‘heart’, ‘the heart’s faculties’, ‘the development of the heart’. But there is something inside me resisting it, namely my awareness of how out-of-date these expressions are. As ‘modern’ people, we feel that talk of the ‘heart’ — as long as we don’t mean our blood pump — is melodramatic, sentimental or even kitsch. It is certainly ‘unscientific’. More acceptable would be ‘affective faculty’, ‘emotive functions’, only they do not express what is meant. For Pestalozzi, ‘heart’ means above all our moral faculty. But that does not get us much farther, since the question of whether morality is based on rational consideration or on impulses from our inner being is still a matter of debate. Pestalozzi is in no doubt that the basis of moral action is not the head, but the heart.

My way out of the dilemma is to point out that every concept, whether modern or out-of-date, is merely an attempt to make the ultimately unfathomable mystery of life available to our consciousness and thus allow us to talk about it. Every use of language rests on the unspoken agreement that the content one is formulating will only reach the other person insofar as the words and sentences used are able to arouse images and understanding *of their own* within them. Trusting that this is what will happen, I will continue to adhere to Pestalozzi’s mode of expression, well aware of the problems associated with it.

The demand for harmonious education - that is for the development of all three groups of faculties - is fundamental for the teacher who wants to teach in the spirit of Pestalozzi. It is, of course, not possible to address all three groups every minute, for in some subjects the ‘head’ is

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central, in others the 'hand'. But in every case it is desirable and also, in principle, possible to bring the heart's faculties into play. A pupil who approaches lessons with keen interest, indeed enthusiasm, but also with consideration for his fellow pupils, will always be putting his 'heart' into his work. That is why Pestalozzi demands: Put your heart into everything! *Only when teacher and pupils put their hearts into teaching and learning can true education as Pestalozzi intends it take place.*

As indicated above, 'heart' does not simply equate to feeling. Fury, anger, hatred, boredom, displeasure, pain, depression — these are also feelings, but they are not included in what we understand by 'heart'. A person has 'heart' when the determining elements in their make-up are the 'moral emotions' such as sympathy, love, joy, gratitude. Such a person is always a good person. They have a rich inner life; they are sensitive and open to impressions; they appreciate beauty, the finer things of life; they are unreserved in their love of truth but do not reject absolute clarity of thought. They are people endowed with genuine reason, which they do not confuse with cold intellect.

Pestalozzi's insights encourage the teacher to appeal to the pupils' 'hearts' in everything that is done as part of learning. It is a good start if they keep *feeling a sense of wonderment*. Nowadays that is very difficult, given the way children are constantly bombarded with images and superficial knowledge. It is probably only possible when the teacher himself has not lost his own sense of wonderment and his pupils hold him in high regard. Then the children may even come to the point where they can feel *respect* when confronted with examples of the great, the sublime, and thus develop an attitude to life which is ultimately the basis on which men can build a fruitful life together.

One can always tell that the 'heart' is involved when the pupils are working with real pleasure. As is well known, teaching is not just a trade, it is an art. If a teacher has mastered it, he is able to teach with pleasure and to motivate the pupils to learn with pleasure. They feel this especially when they *achieve the goals that have been set* and thus *really get a sense of their own ability*. But that is only possible when they feel they are *accepted and loved* by their teacher and classmates. 'You're good — you can do it — we're all pleased when you make an effort and are successful' should run like a ground bass beneath all communica-

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tion between teacher and pupils. Such a basic atmosphere is the opposite of the aggressiveness that often exists between pupils and teachers and to a large extent derives from a lack of mutual respect.

In everything that happens in school there should be a place for beauty, the pupils should be able to feel it. Learning 'with heart', combining respect, joy, friendship and beauty, can then gradually arouse in them a love of the things they undertake and perhaps also *love of life*.

The endeavour to develop all faculties harmoniously and to give priority to the heart's faculties has far-reaching consequences for schools. Whenever a teacher succeeds in approaching this Pestalozzian ideal, lessons become what one can accurately describe as an *experience*. If that occurs, pupils will learn out of genuine interest. They will no longer simply be trying to get a good mark, but will throw themselves into their task with head, hand and heart. The path that leads to the learning outcome will no longer be felt as tedious, but as exciting and fulfilling. The pupils will work hard and with commitment, and the conflicts between them, or with the teacher, which keep disturbing the class when the teaching is not in accord with their nature, will largely disappear.