

JOHANN HEINRICH PESTALOZZI

Education, the key to freedom



Texts by

Rebekka Horlacher, Fritz Osterwalder, Franco Cambi



From subversive to farmer to writer, headmaster and prominent figure of European standing: the life of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi

by Rebekka Horlacher *



Page I

Georg Friedrich Adolph Schöner (1774-1841),
*Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi with his grandson
Gottlieb*, c.1804, oil on canvas, 120x89 cm.

Left:

Georg Friedrich Adolph Schöner,
Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, 1808,
oil on canvas, 69x56 cm.

This page:

Johann Jakob Aschmann (1747-1809),
Neuhof and Birr, at Braunegg (BE),
c.1780, coloured etching, 17x22.3 cm.

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi was born in Zurich on 12 January 1746 to Johann Baptist Pestalozzi (1718–51), a surgeon, and Susanna Hotz (1720–96), from a rural upper-middle-class family. He inherited the Italian surname from an ancestor of his father's who had left what is now Sondrio province, in Lombardy, in the 16th century – then under the Three Leagues' control – to study in Zurich, the city on the River Limmat. Johann Heinrich was also educated there, doing his higher studies in theology followed by law at the Collegium Carolinum, a forerunner of Zurich University.

Pestalozzi's thinking on education was rooted in the republican tradition, a hotly argued subject in Switzerland in the second half of the 18th century. The republicanism debate took a radical turn, especially in Zurich, influenced by historian and literary critic Johann Jakob Bodmer (1698–1783), who taught at the Collegium Carolinum. It developed into a reform movement that made a big impression on Pestalozzi in the years around 1760. The young activists were inspired by the ideal of a patriarchal, virtuous aristocratic republic, where education had to be an integral part of political awareness.¹ Imbued with this “anti-consumerist” ideology, Pestalozzi dedicated himself to agriculture and to achieving the dream of an upstanding life away from the vices and temptations that were rife in the commercial cities.

In autumn 1767, then, he began an apprenticeship in “modern agriculture” in



Kirchberg, Austria, under agronomist and “model country farmer” Johann Rudolf Tschiffeli (1716–80) from Bern, although he left after just nine months. Before moving to Kirchberg, indeed, he had become engaged to Anna Schulthess (1738–1815), even though her well-to-do Zurich family did not look kindly on the union, as Pestalozzi had no qualifications, having abandoned his earlier studies. In 1769, he acquired a farm, the Neuhof in Birr (in the Canton of Aargau), married Anna, and set to work to achieve the ideal virtuous life in which he believed. Two years later, however, the farm suffered badly from the wave of bad harvests that was afflicting the whole of Europe. Other local farmers also found themselves in serious difficulties. Pestalozzi then decided to install some looms in his cellar, to give the poor local peasants the chance to work by making cotton textiles. Alongside this workshop, he established an institute for poor children in 1774, to enable the little ones to earn a living by working on the looms while learning the basic notions and skills that would prepare them for life in the rural society of the time.²

This project led him to distance himself from the ideals of the “patriotic economists” from Bern, who gravitated around Tschiffeli, for he considered it pointless to teach new agricultural methods to poor rural people who would never have the chance to buy a plot of land to farm themselves. Pestalozzi's realistic assessment of

Above:
Georg Friedrich
Adolph Schöner, *Anna
Pestalozzi-Schulthess*
(1738–1815), 1804,
oil painting.

Below:
Johann Heinrich
Füssli (1741–1825),
*Bodmer and Füssli
with a bust of Homer*,
1778–1780,
oil on canvas,
163x150 cm.



Anton Hicel
(1745-1798), *Isaak
Iselin (1728-1782)*,
oil painting.

the farming population's socioeconomic conditions contrasted starkly with his inaccurate estimation of the children's productivity and their parents' faith in an investment in education of uncertain outcome. Indeed, in 1780, the institute had to declare bankruptcy.

Successful publications

Pestalozzi's efforts to establish his institute for the poor on a sound financial footing brought him into contact with the most influential Swiss publicist and publisher of the 18th century, the philosopher and philanthropist Isaak Iselin (1728-82) from Basel, who had a significant bearing on his theoretical ideas.³ Iselin supported Pestalozzi in publishing his first novel, *Leonard and Gertrude* (1781), which was a great success. The work – the tale of a patriarchal social reform enacted by a worthy bailiff in a village blighted by corruption – effectively transposed the Neuhof project into literary form. Around the same time, Pestalozzi wrote other works dedicated to social and political problems, such as the treatise on infanticide, a subject that his contemporaries also often tackled (see Kerstin Michalik, 1997, and Iris Ritzmann/Daniel Tröhler, 2009, pp. 7-31).⁴

Pestalozzi was losing faith in the idea that human nature was fundamentally good. He became increasingly alienated from Iselin's belief in an optimistic, religion-infused utopia of republicanism founded on natural law. In his essay on property and crime, *Memoire über Eigentum und Verbrechen*,⁵ Pestalozzi termed man an egotistical, presocial or antisocial wild animal. This conviction led him to view education primarily as an instrument of socialisation and instruction. Schooling and the imparting of knowledge had an important function in preparing for later professional work – but no more than that – while the social function of religion had to confine itself to achieving stability. That is the idea that he conveys in *The evening hours of a hermit*,⁶ a volume published in 1780.

After the French Revolution broke out in 1789, Pestalozzi's ideas focused on the importance and the role of liberty. Influenced by the critics of the German Enlightenment, he developed his own concept of personal

and inner freedom. In 1797, he published his most mature philosophical work, the *Enquiries*, drawing parallels between the development of the individual and that of humanity. Based on a legal discussion of the natural state vs. the social state, the text sought to resolve humanity's fundamental social problems by introducing a moral state, which was strongly infused with the Pestalozzian interpretation of the true Christian religion.⁷ When read carefully, and despite its anthropological nature, the text shows that the moral state is especially desirable for the political elite, to enable it to resist the temptation of power that leads to corruption, to which Pestalozzi attributed society's problems.⁸ Any idea of



democracy based on equal rights is rejected on the grounds that the people are not educated enough and thus too egotistical and (as yet) insufficiently wise.

The *Enquiries* present pedagogical ideas that, at best, can be termed “cryptopedagogical theories”:⁹ to achieve the moral state, the only one that can resolve society's problems, social relationships first need to be developed within the social state. This “introduction” destroys the egotistical nature that springs from the imbalance between needs and faculties, which is where education in the family comes in. Love is the feeling at the heart of the family environment. It enables the child to cultivate

primordial “benevolence” and to perpetuate it through a more mature feeling.¹⁰ When social order and a general sense of injustice, on one hand, conflict with love and compassion, on the other, it takes the individual’s strength of will to make decisions from a moral perspective – a perspective that, Pestalozzi says, shows “authentic truth” and enables ethical man to act and judge according to moral principles.

The institutes founded by Pestalozzi

The Swiss Revolution of 1798 changed Pestalozzi’s life radically. Firmly convinced that the event would restore the old virtuous republic, and certain of the new governors’ moral integrity, he immediately put himself at the new regime’s disposal and began making plans for an educational institution for the poor.¹¹ Thus, that December, the government sent him to Stans, where French troops had inflicted a heavy defeat on the conservative Catholic opposition, leaving a trail of destruction and a great many orphaned or semi-orphaned children in its wake.

Pestalozzi’s experiences in Stans,¹² which his colleague Johannes Niederer (1779–1843) described in *Pestalozzi und seine Anstalt in Stanz*, published in 1807, are often considered “the birth of modern education”.¹³ Niederer records that Pestalozzi attempted, without outside help, to devise an educational system there on three levels, inspired by the model of family life and largely devoid of institutional structures. The first level, concerned with satisfying primary needs, encouraged children to open their heart; the second enabled them to act on the altruistic impulses coming from their “open heart”; the third, a reflection on everyday life, helped them to develop moral judgement. School had to fit into this all-embracing human education endeavour, and knowledge always had to follow moral principles.¹⁴

His project in Stans was so short-lived that it is surprising how important the educational approach that Pestalozzi devised there has become in the history of education. At least two significant and, in a sense, contradictory factors may be behind that. The first was Pestalozzi’s disillusionment with the new political system. In particular,

the parliamentary debates on the introduction of a new tax system convinced him how egocentric the new governing elite was and showed him that changing the system was not enough to change the mentality. Pestalozzi thus concluded that only education could move the political and social systems forward;¹⁵ that realisation led him to completely overturn the old republican principles. Whereas his ideas had previously centred on a political programme in which educational policy should develop within the patriarchal social structures, he came to the view after 1800 that politics could be “good” only if enacted by people with firm moral principles and if education were conceived as “education at the bosom of the family”.¹⁶ In line with this new perspective, the central figure was no longer the prince but the mother, who became the fundamental hub linking God, the child and the perilous world outside the home.

With this new approach to pedagogy, however, the nation’s social and political destiny became wholly dependent on the correctness of the education imparted; in turn, the development of a suitable education system demanded a wise government. This second factor implied a contradiction that was not spotted at the time and that, oddly, became one of the reasons for Pestalozzi’s incredible success after 1800. At the very moment when it “did a U-turn” from republican ideas towards education at the heart of the family, the Swiss government appointed him to implement the new secular school system. The prime mover behind this decision was the Swiss minister for science and the arts, Philipp Albert Stapfer (1766–1840). In light of Pestalozzi’s life experience and method, which promised to



Heinrich Thomann (1748–1794), *Stans, capital of Canton Unterwalden*, c.1790, etching, 24.7x34.9 cm.

Konrad Grob
(1828-1904),
*Pestalozzi with the
orphans in Stans*,
oil painting, 1879.

make knowledge easy to convey,¹⁷ Stapfer considered him the best person to meet the young nation's educational ambitions.¹⁸ The Zurich educationalist was duly appointed head of the country's first teacher-training college, in 1800.

His method hinged on the belief that everyone possesses elementary faculties, determined by eternal natural laws. Education, then, must focus exclusively on developing those faculties, at a natural and psychological level, although that cannot happen "without making all forms of teaching subject to the eternal laws that govern how the human spirit is elevated from sensory intuitions to clear concepts".¹⁹ Human nature's three fundamental elements – head, heart and hand – are seeds awaiting the chance to germinate. Once they have sprouted and grown naturally, they form a harmony determined by morality.

Despite the theoretical paradox inherent in the idea of turning nature (already intrinsically moral) into morality, and despite its educational techniques' focus on developing the intellectual skills of preschool children through interminable mechanical exercises, Pestalozzi's institute in Burgdorf in Canton Bern became famous throughout Europe.²⁰ The sharp contrast between the aim of creating a new education system for a modern state that emphasised intellectual skills and the idea of founding that system on the principle of maternal or family love was either not noticed or was considered a decisive benefit, because of its inherent virtue of simplicity or naturalness. In any event, the method was a success despite the changeable political situation of the time, because it was context-independent and based on eternal natural laws. Pestalozzians rejected criticisms of its "mechanical nature", maintaining that the key aspect was the "spirit of the method" – that education's primary concern was not knowledge but a harmonious development of all the faculties.

Pestalozzi had great success in the first decade of the 19th century, and it was surely down to him that pedagogical themes and matters gained such wide currency.²¹ When his institute had to leave Burgdorf castle, in 1804, he was offered alternative headquarters in various locations. After a



brief collaboration with Philipp Emanuel von Fellenberg (1771-1844) in Hofwil, at Münchenbuchsee (Canton Bern), Pestalozzi set up an institute in 1805 in Yverdon castle, where he stayed until 1825. Convinced that his method could provide the foundations for a national renaissance, he requested the Federal Diet to perform an official inspection to approve it as the basis for school education. But the official report, published in 1810,²² stated that neither the mechanistic teaching method nor the institute's family-based structure could work as a model for state schools.

Public debates

The 1810s was a decade of great confusion. The continuing arguments among staff, Pestalozzi's inability to run such a large institute, and his refusal to appoint a successor led the organisation's fortunes to decline. At that time, Pestalozzi also began to distance himself from his own method and from the idea of basing the theory of education on eternal natural laws. In a phase in which the Christian perspective was progressively regaining ground, he was concerned that his institute was increasingly attended by children from affluent families. He therefore decided to found another for the poor in Clindy, near Yverdon, which opened in 1818 in parallel with the existing institute. With this new endeavour, Pestalozzi returned to principles he had developed back in 1770, when founding the institute in Neuhof and writing *Leonard and Gertrude*²³. His main goal was to teach the children the necessary skills to enter a trade and thus earn a living. But various financial difficulties would undermine this

undertaking, and the institute in Clindly had to close after just a year, to be incorporated into the Yverdon complex. Nevertheless, the merger created new problems, as the different treatment of rich and poor children caused friction.

Back in 1813, Pestalozzi had begun to write a book, *Swansong*, which would be published only in 1826, a year before he died, and can therefore be considered his “legacy”. Surprisingly, it has numerous parallels with the *Enquiries* from 1797. It still considers human faculties in a teleological sense, but the “pedagogical reference” to eternal natural laws is limited exclusively to the principles of initial development, while the fundamental factors for concrete actualisation are the various social and family contexts. Moreover, every individual is unique and therefore cannot be framed within a universally valid theory. That realisation also put an end to the dream of a theoretical definition of education based on a “decontextualised eternity”. The foundation of education can only be real life, in its specific context; the quality of family life determines the quality of education, too.

Withdrawal from public life and idolisation

Swansong was published after Pestalozzi returned to the Neuhof, where he died the following year, in 1827. He was no longer active in the public debates in those years, for this was the era of the Restoration, and schooling reform and educating children were not a high priority. The situation in

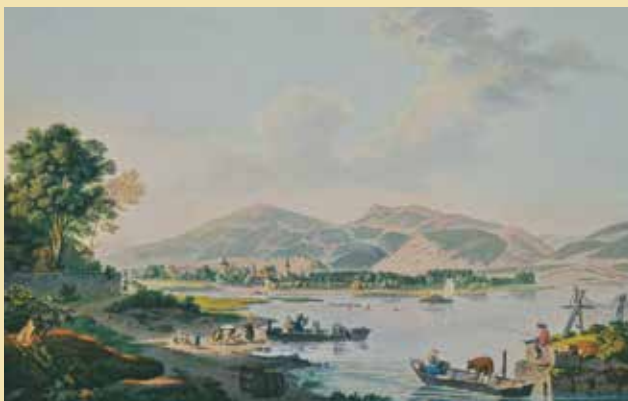
Switzerland changed with the liberal movement, which gained a political foothold in the 1840s. This movement, as in the republican traditions, needed heroes to guide it: who better than Pestalozzi – the instigator of many ambitious educational projects and a peaceable, altruistic personage who could inspire trust? At the end of the 19th century, the Zurich educationalist rose to become a key figure in the national integration, so much so that the 150th anniversary of his birth became Switzerland’s first national holiday.²⁴ Beyond this political albeit (in a sense) educational use of his persona, pedagogical research has continued to debate the central issue that Pestalozzi undoubtedly raised: the link between schooling and the public virtues of an educated individual.

* **Rebekka Horlacher**

PhD, research assistant in the school of education at Zurich University and teacher at the Pädagogische Hochschule in Zurich.



Caspar Wyss
(1762-1798)
Burgdorf, 1760.
colour engraving.



Johann Ludwig Aberli (1732-1786).
View of Yverdon
taken from Clindy,
1770. colour
engraving.

Notes

¹ DANIEL TRÖHLER, *Republikanismus und Pädagogik. Pestalozzi im historischen Kontext*, Klinkhardt, Bad Heilbrunn 2006, pp. 37ff.

² JOHANN HEINRICH PESTALOZZI, *Sozialpädagogische Schriften I: Die Neuhof-Schriften (1775-1779)*, Pestalozzianum, Zurich 2005.

³ MARCEL NAAS, "Mit einer Methode, zu welcher ein Lehrer nicht aufgelegt ist, wird er gewiß nichts ausrichten". *Isaak Iselins Ideal von Schule, Lehrern und Unterricht*, in "Jahrbuch der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für die Erforschung des 18. Jahrhunderts", no. 5 (2014), pp. 76ff.

⁴ Infanticide was, "in the second half of the 18th century, the first type of murder offence for which – in the wake of the ideas in Cesare Beccaria's 1764 work *On crimes and punishments* – the death penalty was questioned". MICHAEL NIEHAUS, *Wie man den Kindermord aus der Welt schafft. Zu den Widersprüchen der Regulierung*, in Maximilian Bergengruen, Johannes F. Lehmann, Hubert Thüring (Eds.), *Sexualität – Recht – Leben. Die Entstehung eines Dispositivs um 1800*, Wilhelm Fink, Munich 2005, p. 22. In 1780, the magazine *Rheinische Beiträge zur Gelehrsamkeit* published a competition for the best essay on the subject "What are the most effective means for curbing infanticide?" Pestalozzi had decided to enter, but since his work, *On infanticide*, had become very large, he elected not to submit it to the magazine but to publish it separately as a monograph, in 1783.

⁵ JOHANN HEINRICH PESTALOZZI, *Memoire über Eigentum und Verbrechen* (1782), in Id., *Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Ausgabe*, vol. 9, Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin/Leipzig 1930, p. 200.

⁶ JOHANN HEINRICH PESTALOZZI, *Abendstunde eines Einsiedlers* (1780), in Id., *Abendstunde eines Einsiedlers/Stanser Brief*, Pestalozzianum, Zurich 2006, pp. 49-63.

⁷ "Man can nullify in himself the contradictions that seem to exist in his nature and can mitigate

their effects, which pain him so much in his social state, only when he understands that this state significantly obstructs his inner ennoblement and when he recognises his own needs as simple needs of his own animal nature, which as such are cursed, for himself and for the human race." JOHANN HEINRICH PESTALOZZI, *Meine Nachforschungen über den Gang der Natur in der Entwicklung des Menschengeschlechts* (1797), Pestalozzianum, Zurich 2004, p. 172.

⁸ DANIEL TRÖHLER, JÜRGEN OELKERS, *Pestalozzis "Nachforschungen" (1797) im Kontext der schweizerischen Diskussionen über die Französische Revolution*, in Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, *Meine Nachforschungen...*, op. cit., pp. 7-32.

⁹ DANIEL TRÖHLER, *Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi*, Haupt/UTB, Bern 2008, pp. 53ff.

¹⁰ JOHANN HEINRICH PESTALOZZI, *Meine Nachforschungen...*, op. cit., p. 162.

¹¹ JOHANN HEINRICH PESTALOZZI, *Sämtliche Briefe*, vol. 4, Orell Füssli, Zurich 1951, p. 15.

¹² The institute founded by Pestalozzi was short-lived, lasting only seven months, as the government requisitioned the building as an isolation hospital.

¹³ MICHEL SOËTARD, *Pestalozzi ou la naissance de l'éducateur. Étude sur l'évolution de la pensée et de l'action du pédagogue suisse (1746-1827)*, Lang, Bern 1981.

¹⁴ "Leave to last the dangerous signs of good and evil that are words; link them to the everyday matters of the home and the environment, so that words are based only on them, to clarify to your young charges what happens in and around them, and use words to foster a right and honest way to conceive of their life and their social relations." JOHANN HEINRICH PESTALOZZI, *Pestalozzi über seine Anstalt in Stanz* (1799/1807), in Id., *Abendstunde eines Einsiedlers/Stanser Brief*, Pestalozzianum, Zurich 2006, p. 94.

¹⁵ DANIEL TRÖHLER, *Pestalozzis pädagogische «Klassiker» und die deutschsprachige Pädagogik. Anmerkungen zu Pestalozzis Abendstunde eines Einsiedlers und Stanser Brief*, in Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, *Pestalozzi und seine Anstalt...*, op. cit., p. 24.

¹⁶ REBEKKA HORLACHER, *Die Familie als Keimzelle der Gesellschaft bei Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi*, in Michèle Hofmann, Lukas Boser, Anna Bütikofer, Evelyne Wannack (Eds.), *Lehrbuch Pädagogik. Eine Einführung in grundlegende Themenfelder*, hep Verlag, Bern 2015, pp. 113-130.

¹⁷ "I repeat: the essence of these ideas is practical and so complete that the lesson, within the

forms created to this end, must become a purely mechanical, artisanal task. And I can guarantee that, with the means currently at my disposal, any mother and any teacher, even if they lack the knowledge that they wish to impart to the child, could obtain the results that the method itself must produce through its internal organisation. In just a few days, trained people can understand the spirit of the means provided and can independently find new ways to use them; for people with no education at all, I would like to have three months to train them in the skills required for the method.” JOHANN HEINRICH PESTALOZZI, *Ankündigung über das Lehrerseminar in Burgdorf* (1801), in id., *Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Ausgabe*, vol. 13, NZZ, Zurich 1998, pp. 175–179.

¹⁸ REBEKKA HORLACHER, *Standardisierung durch Vorbilder? Das Beispiel Pestalozzi*, in “Bildungsgeschichte. International Journal for the Historiography of Education”, p. 20.

¹⁹ JOHANN HEINRICH PESTALOZZI, *Die Methode. Eine Denkschrift Pestalozzi’s* (1800), in Id., *Schriften zur “Methode”*, Pestalozzianum, Zurich 2008, p. 46.

²⁰ In the first four years after *How Gertrude teaches her children* (1801) came out, almost 200 texts analysing Pestalozzi’s method were published: see DANIEL TRÖHLER, “Methode” um 1800: *Ein Zauberwort als kulturelles Phänomen und die Rolle Pestalozzis*, in Daniel Tröhler, Simone Zurbuchen, Jürgen Oelkers (Eds.), *Der historische Kontext zu Pestalozzis “Methode”. Konzepte und Erwartungen im 18. Jahrhundert*, Haupt, Bern 2002, pp. 22ff.

²¹ DANIEL TRÖHLER, *Pestalozzi and the Education-alization of the World*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2013, p. 2.

²² ABEL MERIAN, GREGOR GIRARD, FRIEDRICH TRECHSEL, *Bericht über die Pestalozzische Erziehungs-Anstalt zu Yverdon, an Seine Excellenz den Herrn Landammann und die Hohe Tagsatzung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft*, Ludwig Albrecht Haller, Berlin 1810.

²³ REBEKKA HORLACHER, *Volksbildung als Berufsbildung bei Pestalozzi*, in Hanno Schmitt, Rebekka Horlacher, Daniel Tröhler (Ed.), *Pädagogische Volksaufklärung im 18. Jahrhundert im europäischen Kontext*, Rochow und Pestalozzi im Vergleich, Haupt, Bern 2007, pp. 112–124.

²⁴ DANIEL WINTER, *Ein Fest für Pestalozzi – ein Fest der Nation oder: Die Inszenierung des Pädagogischen*, Lang, Bern 1998, p. 14.

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Head, heart and hand – Pestalozzi, the legendary educator, and his promise in modern society

by Fritz Osterwalder*



Left:
Albert Anker (1831-1910),
Pestalozzi in Stans, 1870,
oil on canvas, 95x73 cm.

This page:
Albert Anker, *Pestalozzi
teaching children to count*,
1902, wood engraving,
22.6x28.2 cm.

“At its Alpine bosom, our country raises its children full of hopes, that in their country they will have a youth full of magic and enchantment, that in stormy times a road will open in the rocks and in the fields towards distant destinations, that with their swift stride, the sons of the mountains will go beyond the confines of German, Gallic and foreign lands. Blessed are the ways that they tread. [...] But even in the remotest valleys, on every possible path, a part of this blessing returns, this blessing that has helped to speed the Swiss rivers to remote shores. [...] ‘Father’ Pestalozzi! We who share his roots and speak his language, who have seen him live and suffer his tribulations, who have always seen him place his spiritual aspirations before material wellbeing, we Argovians and Swiss [...] – we were not the first to call him Father. [...] And on his head now shines the everlasting halo of the merciful Father. But before the halo, the crown of thorns did gird his brow.”¹

It was with these passionate, patriotic words that Josef Jäger, a teacher, journalist and politician from Aargau, inaugurated the national celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Pestalozzi’s birth in Birr church on 6 January 1896. The pathos of his speech, a typical motif of sermons and veneration of saints, was anything but unprecedented.² In effect, Pestalozzi had already been presented as a “prophet” and “seer” in the first monumental scientifically inspired biography by Heinrich Morf,³ which dutifully documented his life and the repeated *failure* of his educational ventures. Morf described them as obligatory stations on the path to redemption from the wretched meanness of the world and the human race, in a clear analogy with the Passion of Christ.

The official commemorative brochure for the government-sponsored event was written for schoolchildren by the Schweizerischer Lehrerverein (the Swiss teachers’ association) and published in all four national languages, with a state subsidy, in a print run of 367,000 copies. The publication went even further, in its aim to raise

Pestalozzi to the status of spiritual father figure par excellence not just for modern schools but also for modern Switzerland itself. Without mincing words, it placed the hero of education and peace alongside the Redeemer: “he carried the cross as once did Christ himself”,⁴ reads the concluding section, ascribed Eucharistic value in the commemoration event. Seminar leader and much-loved popular poet Otto Sutermeister crafted some apposite verses to seal this comparison: “*Was Grosses ihr auch sonst zu seinem Lob ersonnen, / Fasst’s in das Wort: In ihm hat Christ Gestalt gewonnen*” (Do not dream up high-flown words to pay him tribute / Suffice it to say that Christ became flesh in him).⁵

From social reform to pedagogical method: Pestalozzi’s failures

Pestalozzi’s educational efforts can be considered a string of failures. None of the institutions that he established or ran achieved lasting results, and the same can be said for his innovations in the educational system.

Pestalozzi turned to the world of education for the first time when the recession spread to the “experimental” farm that he had established at Neuhof just outside Zurich to prove the validity of the agricultural reform propounded by the progressives. He had bought the land in 1771 using gifts from the wealthy banking family of his wife, Anna Schulthess. After his farming project failed, Pestalozzi reinvented Neuhof in 1774 as an institute to educate poor children. In an approach that ran counter to the nascent reforms of the church schools for the rural populace, he aimed to set the children “free” from institutional schools and integrate them into the incipient industrialisation movement. He contended that work and education must proceed in parallel in a family setting and in an almost profitable form. The project was a complete flop and had to be abandoned in 1780, mainly for lack of funds, as the children left or the parents kept them at home. Nevertheless, Pestalozzi continued to promote his concept as a socio-political reform in the noble courts of Western Europe through his fictional writings. On one hand, in his novel *Leonard and Gertrude*

Cover and frontispiece of Enrico Pestalozzi's book, *Biografia illustrata per la gioventù* (Illustrated biography for young people), published to mark the 150th anniversary of Pestalozzi's birth (12 January 1896).

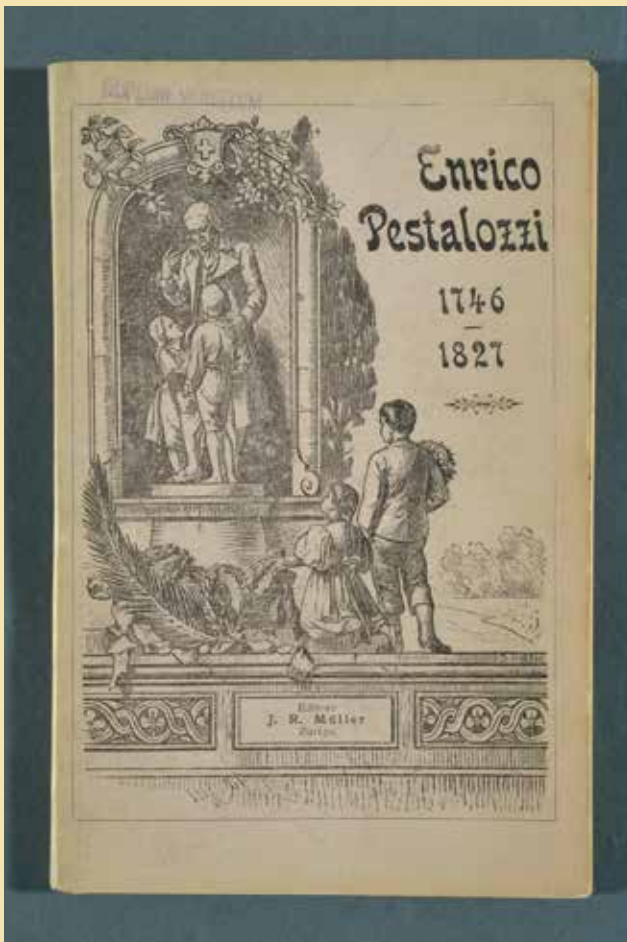
– first printed in four parts between 1781 and 1787⁶ – he described the reform in a village near Zurich involving the integration of youth work and schooling at the “heart of the family”, which transformed the entire village into one big family headed by the authoritarian father figure of its bailiff. On the other, Pestalozzi explicitly addressed his ideas to the enlightened princes, who would become the great patrons of this reform.⁷

In 1798, Switzerland was occupied by part of the French revolutionary army. The Helvetic Republic (the first unified Swiss state) was established, and the new regime and the French troops suppressed the vehement rebellions in the hostile Swiss hinterland. Almost as a gesture of atonement,⁸ the revolutionary government sent Pestalozzi to the revolt's epicentre, in Stans, to gather the war orphans and provide for their education in an institute modelled on the Neuhof. But not even this orphanage proved to be the right opportunity for the educationalist's star to shine. On the contrary, the experiment was shot

down by merciless criticism from both the rebels and the supporters of the new regime, forcing Pestalozzi to bail out after just six months.

Nevertheless, he withdrew from Stans not as a loser but as the inventor or discoverer of an educational method. And not just any method, but his own personal one, the only true method. He asserted that this new approach was universally valid and applicable to schools and professions of all kinds, an approach that offered sure and certain results and embodied the strictest moral and religious standards. In 1800, Pestalozzi was then appointed as a *methodologist* to establish and run a teacher-training college in Burgdorf as part of the Swiss government's great educational reform. Both his institute in Yverdon, founded in 1804, and his educational books and publications – printed by a typographer set up specially to that end and sold at premium prices – were totally “devoted to the method”.

“If a man invents a machine to carve wood more cheaply, then he too should profit from the economic savings; and as,



without any doubt, I have now invented a better machine for the intellect, allow me the exclusive right to reap the rewards for a while”,⁹ wrote Pestalozzi when announcing his new method, thus also justifying the high cost of his books.

His method was based on the idea that an individual’s physical, practical and moral activity and their perception of the empirical world are structured according to an *elementary* order. The order of the empirical world comprises three elements: the number one (arithmetic), the shape of the square (geometry and drawing) and name (language and the precise naming of objects and of the parts of the human body, in alphabetical dictionary order). The order of physical and practical activity is shaped by training in elementary activities such as pushing and pulling. And the order of moral activity is formed by love, gratitude and trust.

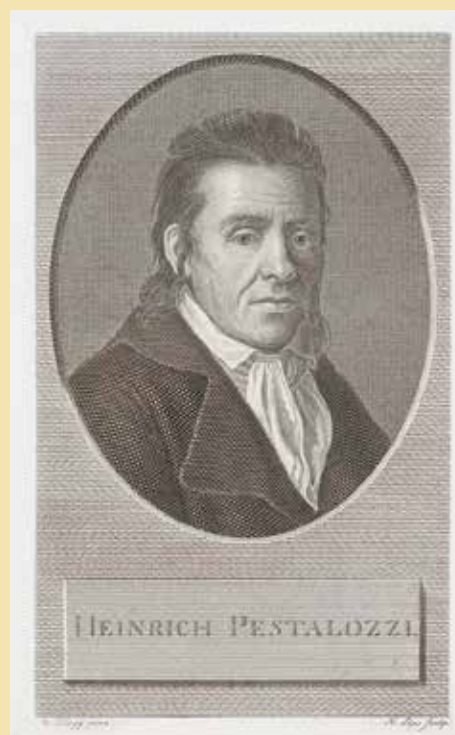
These elements were used to perform entirely mechanical exercises, endlessly repeated. The intention was to teach the child a fixed external order and to foster self-training of the psyche or soul based on the stability of this external order, through self-reflection and observation of their own activities. Thus, the child is guided by that order only and externalises it spontaneously even in entirely new settings or environments that no longer exhibit the due order.

In *How Gertrude teaches her children*, Pestalozzi tells of a three-year-old who, after just a few days of instruction with his method, could independently recite Buffon’s entire natural-history system (44 volumes in the original edition), “even the most unusual animals and the trickiest names in the right order”.¹⁰ Similarly, some movement exercises were to provide all the basic knowledge for manual work, while the “practice of the virtues”¹¹ and the “practice of love, gratitude and trust”¹² in the family would foster true inner morality, the Christian religion and a stable social order.

The method had to be “natural”, “mechanical” or “psychological”, tying the pupil’s education to the observation of an external order but not, as typically occurred in the empirical method, to its individual component objects¹³. That external order perceived in its elements nevertheless had

to represent a divine, all-encompassing system that developed in the individual’s inner life – in their soul – and permeated the external world of things, activities and society itself. With St Paul’s “head, heart and hand” formula,¹⁴ the method and its inventor sought to open up the child’s entire person, their indivisible whole, to education.

In that sense, Pestalozzi’s method contrasted fundamentally with the empirical educational sciences of the Enlightenment. He considered the limited and improvable empirical knowledge of science, on which the schooling reforms of the modern age are founded, as “general Enlightenment” and “fragmentalism” (*Verhack*),¹⁵ which ought to be eradicated, as it was responsible for the wretched condition of the lower classes. His method, in contrast, aimed to develop an inner link between these social strata (i.e. individual poor people, in the role to which the social structure confines them) and the sole universal divine order. In those revolutionary times when the Napoleonic storm was raging throughout Europe, Pestalozzi therefore maintained that his method was an effective antidote to social and political disorder.¹⁶ Indeed, he claimed an absolute moral exclusivity compared to all the other celebrated methods: “there is only one good way”.¹⁷



Felix Maria Diogg
(1762-1834).
Portrait of Pestalozzi,
1801, engraving on
copper and etching,
oval 9.4x7.4 cm.

His method enabled mothers to teach their children knowledge that they did not even possess themselves.¹⁸ It also freed teachers from the need to think,¹⁹ as they could avoid any “unplanned” digression, thus enabling the child to effectively cement a connection to the immutable order. It was not stated whether the method was intended for schools or whether it could even render them superfluous, replacing schools entirely by education with the mother.

The method certainly attracted global interest in Pestalozzi and his institute – which had since moved to Yverdon after a brief interlude in Münchenbuchsee – and not just for the new concepts. Indeed, a key factor in his contemporaries’ interest was the commercial aspect, with the distribution of teaching materials and other applications. These educational tools were based on very simple rules and were easy to use. They promised a radical solution to the problems of state-school reform that was affordable, highly economical, quick and practical to implement even in poor countries while, moreover, assuring the full moral stability of the social fabric. In the great European debate on how to develop modern education systems, Pestalozzi’s method offered immediate and secure value, and all the reformers in Napoleonic Europe beat a path to the Yverdon institute’s door. Pestalozzi schools opened in Italy, Germany, Spain and even Russia. Prussia sent young teachers and future heads of teacher-training colleges to Yverdon to learn the method directly from the Master.

The method, however, did not deliver what was expected of modern schools. On one hand, contrary to the fanciful promises, pupils learned neither reading, writing and arithmetic nor geometry and geography; on the other, the “mothers’ book” did not become the tool of family education for the poor classes that it should have, thus failing to achieve its author’s avowed intent that it would replace both the school and the church in this role. And as for the method’s other ambitious challenge – to shape the individual’s indivisible moral whole – how could the results ever be objectively verified? Matters came to a head, and the state schools were not slow to seek alternative

approaches; the method and the teaching materials were shelved and forgotten. And in 1825, Pestalozzi’s institute met an agonising death, having to close for lack of pupils and for the ill-fated disagreements between the head and his teachers.

Nevertheless, despite the failure of the enterprise, the concept, the method and the institute itself, Pestalozzi and his followers did not give up. The “Master and his disciples” or the “small community of the faithful in Yverdon”, as they liked to style themselves, justified their perseverance with various reasons. First, the method was not aimed at *state* schools in the everyday sense of the term but rather at educational institutes with a *paternal* stamp²⁰ (thus, they distanced themselves clearly from the state-school reform under way at the time); second, the method was not yet fully formed: when asked to define it, Pestalozzi replied that he could not yet give an unequivocal answer, for the clear reason that the method remained to be refined;²¹ and third, the key to the method was not so much the procedural side of implementing it but rather the *spirit* – the teachers’ way of thinking and feeling would be much more important than their headful of knowledge and notions. Those who had abandoned the method after trying and failing had not understood that spirit at all.

The mentality and inner life of the educators and pupils – two central pillars of any educational activity in Pestalozzi’s conception – clearly fit into that 19th-century school of thought known as Positive Christianity or Neo-pietism. In any case, with his method and his failures and his ceaseless quest, Pestalozzi considered himself a champion for redemption and a defender of Christianity in the world and in schools. Hence the concept of the educator as successor to Christ. “I do not intend to stop, and I shall not”, he wrote, “until I have prevented buffoons and tricksters from considering themselves entitled to teach and to run schools. I do not yet have the method, but I am not far away; Jesus Christ, the one true teacher!”²²

The teacher and educator, the educationist who knew what makes children tick and who understood the absolute order of the world, pledged himself *enthusiastically*

to the method, setting himself above the state-school establishment and the imparting of limited knowledge, learning and skills.

Pestalozzi: the pedagogical redeemer takes on the world and returns to prominence in Switzerland

This very way of considering his mission and the question of morality underpin Pestalozzi's success in the court of 19th- and 20th-century public opinion, a success untainted by the failure of his institutes and his method. Just as in Switzerland, the reformers' and administrators' initial enthusiasm for the Yverdon institute and its method swiftly evaporated in Prussia, too. But in the first few decades of the 19th century, the Prussian administrative and school reform came up against a knotty problem that made recourse to the Swiss "messianic educationalist redeemer" a delicate business.

On one hand, Prussia aimed to emulate Switzerland in transferring the reformed school system from ecclesiastical to state control; on the other, it was firmly against raising teachers' status, as the Swiss republican- and democratic-influenced reform would have implied. Thus far, indeed, teachers had occupied the lowest rung of Prussia's social and ecclesiastical ladder, along with the sacristans. The government's prerogative was therefore to keep them in a humble, subservient condition. Hence, the new Prussian school administration and the heads of the new teacher-training colleges decided to inculcate their aspiring new teachers with the Christian principles underlying Pestalozzi's pedagogy, such as humility and redemption. A great many reform-minded school administrators were invited to Yverdon during the "great enthusiasm for his method". Ultimately, though, all that these chosen ones – largely candidates for the pastoral ministry – brought back to Prussia was an enthusiasm for the spiritual and inner pedagogical reflections directly linked to religion and theology. Wilhelm Henning, a faithful ex-follower and authoritative school administrator and teacher-training college head, portrayed Pestalozzi to the future Prussian teachers as an exemplary

figure who had sacrificed his wealth and his energies to the work that the Almighty had given him. A humble servant of God who through His divine grace could find a way into the child's soul. "Pestalozzi is my spiritual father; pity the child who discovers his father's weaknesses",²³ said Henning, exhorting future teachers to unconditional submission.

Thus, the interesting point is not so much Pestalozzi's work, his projects or even his tangible efforts in the educational arena but rather the sacralised figure of the great educator and his moral ambitions.

Perhaps, through a twist of fate, the "Pestalozzi idol" became established precisely because it slipped its creator's hand and was elevated by the school administration's opponents to a symbol of their claims for independence.

Friedrich Adolph Wilhelm Diesterweg, the founder of the great Prussian teacher associations and head of the first modern teacher-training college based on science not theology, established in Berlin in 1832, knew exactly what he thought about Pestalozzism. "Poor children, you are still tortured and killed with Pestalozzian theory. [...] He who expects to heal humanity through a method is mistaken",²⁴ he wrote in 1818 in his diary, after resigning from the "Musterschule" in Frankfurt, one of the institutes that pioneered Pestalozzism in Germany, at which he had qualified as a teacher. When he was called to Berlin in 1832, Diesterweg had already made his position clear on a political level, especially about professional policy. Formulated on the back of the modernising thrust of the "Deutscher Vormärz" bourgeois reform movement, his ideas focused on emancipating state-school teachers. He envisaged them with the status of "public officials" in the bureaucratic Prussia of the day, acting as an independent, progressive force.

With this vision, supported by a well-developed literature that was widely read especially in the German-speaking area, Diesterweg appropriated as his symbol that very figure that his adversaries had always presented to teachers as a model of the necessary Christian humility. Thus, he appropriated the "Pestalozzi idol" to show that the teaching body needed instruction

Monument to Pestalozzi, in the park dedicated to him on Bahnhofstrasse in Zurich.

from no one, neither the clergy nor the government.

Diesterweg then took whatever pedagogical theory, progressive idea about schooling, and professional objective of the teacher associations that he could lay hands on and systematically linked them to Pestalozzi, “he who has reawakened German teachers’ desire for knowledge, who has brought light into the dark night of the schools”.²⁵ The Pestalozzi idol invoked not Christian humility but scientific and civil independence, the recognition of his education theories.

Pestalozzi the prophet was thus taken so far out of his historical context that his “official sponsor”, Diesterweg the education politician, could attribute to him any opinion of his own. This abuse culminated in 1845, the year when the centenary of Pestalozzi’s birth was mistakenly commemorated (it should have been in 1846). To mark the occasion, Diesterweg, now ditched by the reform movement, organised a great celebration in Berlin for

teachers. As part of this, and in the nationalist spirit of the time, he claimed Pestalozzi as a German citizen, to include national unity among the teaching programme’s objectives. According to one of his comments at the festivities, Pestalozzi was German at heart and was a German educationalist.²⁶ The 1846 celebrations in Berlin had remarkable resonance. So much so that a Pestalozzi foundation sprang up, and various other associations were named after him; he was even the subject of published poetry and novels. But these developments did not prevent Diesterweg from claiming, in hindsight, that the Pestalozzian well-spring was not yet dry.²⁷ And the facts would bear him out.

In Switzerland, the lavish German commemorations were initially viewed with consternation. A small group of followers had remained loyal after the Master’s death in 1827 (having re-formed to assemble and manage his legacy). In the political and educational circles that mattered – among those building the modern school system – they were considered outsiders, a sect, to be labelled as a conservative religious faction for their absolutist claims about schooling and teachers.

In the cantons where democratic liberalism held sway and could therefore exert a guiding political influence, the teaching community opposed any possible identification with Pestalozzism and its founding father. The modern teachers looked to modern science and the people’s democracy, certainly not to the individual’s inner world and the “narrow domestic sphere”. They aspired to be respectable, respected preceptors and had no intention of becoming tainted by Pestalozzi’s humiliating failures. Railing against the myth-making around the Swiss educationalist, Thomas Ignaz Scherr – the great liberal reformer from Zurich and the first head of a teacher-training college – wrote, “Pestalozzi cannot be an exemplary figure as a teacher, let alone as a headmaster or director of studies; never could he be a leader in the world of education, where this role demands real ‘educators’, men who possess a wealth of theoretical knowledge and professional experience and are capable masters of the practical art of teaching,



making worthy use of their body of knowledge and skills.”²⁸ Pestalozzi’s education concepts that look to the child’s purity and inner life, Scherr maintained, were of no importance for modern schools, which as a public institution had a limited mandate and required solid foundations in science. Despite this, the 1846 celebrations in Berlin were not without repercussions for Switzerland. The *political* references to Pestalozzi – which sought to underline the continuity in the transition from the Ancien Régime reform movement to the 1830s popular democracy – were not entirely unfamiliar to Swiss liberals. However, his political ideas seemed as inadequate in the context of the liberal democracy of the time as his pedagogical ideas appeared anachronistic for modern schools. But in the great debate on the education system between liberals and conservatives, Pestalozzi became a symbolic figure only after the fervent efforts of his

Berlin prophet, Diesterweg. The “premature party” of 1845 effectively woke the Swiss up in time.

One of the last acts of the conservative government in Canton Zurich was to organise the official celebrations in Pestalozzi’s honour. Prominent conservative figures participated again. After lecturing the liberals, who were then back in government, they brandished the exemplum of Diesterweg in their triumphant faces, condemning their failure to commemorate Pestalozzi, which was all that could be expected of such a rabble.

The liberal Zurich teachers association did not sit idly by. It produced a small brochure, seeking to bind Pestalozzi’s fate to that of Scherr, the liberal teacher-training college head who had been dismissed by the conservatives but who in turn had unequivocally distanced himself from Pestalozzism.

Switzerland’s first commemorations of Pestalozzi, in Cantons Aargau and Solothurn,



Johann Heinrich Meyer (1755-1829), *Idea for the banner dedicated to Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi*, 1812, ink drawing, 28.7x21.6 cm.

Alfred Lanz
(1847-1907),
Monument to
Pestalozzi in Yverdon,
1890.



concluded in equally controversial fashion. So much so that pastor and author Jeremias Gotthelf felt compelled to write of his horror at the deep divisions during that stormy time, almost equating them with the mayhem that split the Babylonians as they tried to build their ill-starred tower. Gotthelf recalls how some orators had “reworked” good father Pestalozzi so well as to channel his authority and legitimacy to serve their own personal and ideological ends.²⁹

In any event, 1846 and the stimuli spreading from Prussia prompted a marked revival of interest in Pestalozzi in Switzerland, too, on both sides of the political battle to modernise society and its institutions. But attention was not confined to his work, to his concepts or ideas, which practically no one knew of any more. Rather, the focus shifted firmly to his person. One of the young federal state’s most popular history books, *Helvetia* by Georg Geilfus, published in three volumes from 1852, attributed Pestalozzi a key role in Switzerland’s progress towards modernity. Every historic era has its heroes, warriors and statesmen: Divico was succeeded by Winkelried, Tell and Nicolao della Flüe, then Pestalozzi joined the list as a prominent figure of the new, modern Switzerland.³⁰ The liberal exile Geilfus lauded him both as an iconic teacher figure – thus placing

him alongside Diesterweg – and as a political hero. With Pestalozzi, he could create a link with the authentic formative period of Swiss liberalism in the Helvetic Republic without the humiliation of explicitly admitting that it had been a result of the Napoleonic occupation, even if history recounts that Pestalozzi fell loyally into line with the French interests.

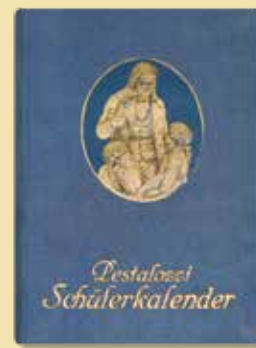
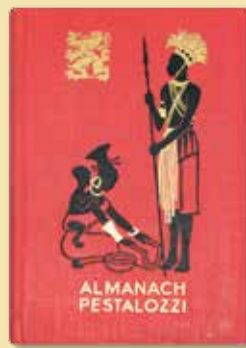
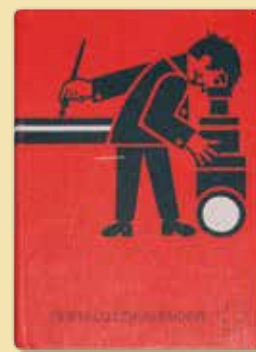
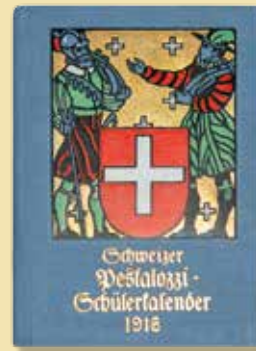
Another equally important aspect was that the Zurich educationalist made an ideal symbol at the time for one of Swiss liberalism’s defining big ideas. A modern democracy – and Switzerland, don’t forget, was then the only democracy in Europe – could not exist unless both public opinion and the citizenry were amenable to reason. That condition could therefore be achieved only through a general state education system, through teaching. Pestalozzi became an iconic figure in this arena, too, although the “real Pestalozzi” took a critical (and certainly not a benevolent) view of the modern schools’ institutional and public character, such as it was.

But the more Pestalozzi bestrode the scene as a national hero, the more the limelight flattered him, compared to the “traditional heroes”. At the time, like saints in the church, heroes served to elevate historical facts to the status of legends and thus to further popular education. In that light, Tell, Winkelried and other heroic Swiss figures were not up to that role, for whenever the queen of political sciences – history – began to probe their past, they vanished in a puff of myth.

Tell and Winkelried, moreover, were household names only in rural German-speaking Switzerland, and even if they had actually existed, they would have to be presumed to be Catholics. But liberal Switzerland wanted to be not just germanophone but also francophone, not just rural but also urban, and above all not just Catholic but also Protestant. Modern Switzerland needed a national hero who met those criteria. Step forward the historically decontextualised Pestalozzi.

When the statue in his honour was unveiled in Yverdon in 1890, local Vaud politician Ernest Correvon found an effective formula for raising Pestalozzi to an iconic figure for all Swiss people and for all of

The Pestalozzi
Kalender down
through the years.



Switzerland: “With his Ticino roots, he embodies the verve of the southern people; with his youth spent in German-speaking Switzerland, the rigour and energy of the Germanic spirit; and with his experience in Yverdon, the Gallic realism that is so essential for bringing all these characteristics to real fruition”, he declaimed in his speech at the foot of the statue with its wagging finger. He added, “l’*étroite union des trois races*”³¹ – Swiss unity – found its spiritual home and its exemplary exponent in Pestalozzi.

At any rate, the image of the true popular hero did not remain a matter of abstract discussion: the revitalised Germany, having established its empire in 1871, had its “Kaiser” to celebrate; France, its 14th of July. But Switzerland? Switzerland needed an equivalent event, partly to distinguish itself from its neighbours and partly to consolidate national unity, asserted pastor Xaver Fischer in 1884 in one of his alarming speeches on the liberal platform of the Swiss society for public good.³² At popular celebrations worthy of the name, the openness and the contradictions in modern urban society had to come together in a unified whole. Analogously to the Protestant feast of the Last Supper, celebrations like those proposed by Fischer sought to express a sense of national togetherness and thus to educate the people in this sense of belonging. But Switzerland’s first national holiday, in 1891 to mark the 600th anniversary of its foundation, was celebrated not in the spirit of togetherness and broad engagement hoped for by its proponents but merely among a carefully selected little “in-crowd”. The Swiss society for public good, a liberal group, could not but get involved to play the game of the “educational national festival”. It chose the 11th and 12th of January 1896, the 150th anniversary of Pestalozzi’s birth, to bring together the entire people – young and old, rich and poor, adults and children – for a real day of national commemoration for everyone to revel in the Pestalozzian spirit.³³

Pestalozzi’s suitability to this end had already been proven not once but twice before. The first was when the Swiss society for public good had two portraits printed, one of Tell, the other of Pestalozzi, for

the state institutions and schools to buy and hang on the walls as a “patriotic decoration”: Pestalozzi outsold Tell hands down. On the second occasion, in 1891, the authorities insisted that Pestalozzi be included in the official ceremony for the Confederation’s 600th anniversary celebrations in Schwyz. The speeches and presentation had to be adapted by official order, and Pestalozzi was placed among the “rural” heroes of the Swiss hinterland, to convey the vision of the new liberal country.

Thus, with the support and at the behest of both the Federal Council and many of the canton governments, Pestalozzi was commemorated virtually throughout the nation on the 11th and 12th of January 1896. The Saturday was dedicated to schoolchildren; the Sunday, to the adults. And everyone, in the churches and halls, could learn about the importance of “father Pestalozzi”.

This celebration struck a chord across almost the entire country, whether for its historical flavour or for what the heroic Pestalozzi had actually done in his ventures, which were presented faithfully and in detail. Once again, though, the aim was to delineate not his work or his educational concepts but simply his benevolent, fatherly feeling, his generous educator’s spirit.³⁴

In turn, almost every social, political or religious movement could then create itself a made-to-measure Pestalozzi tailored to their particular requirements but who could still speak to the people under the banner of the *single, unique* national spirit that he embodied. In this sense, Federal Councillor Ruffy’s words back in 1890 in Yverdon, at the inauguration of the first statue in Pestalozzi’s memory, proved prophetic: “By honouring Pestalozzi, Switzerland honours herself”.³⁵

Thus, the hero of Diesterweg’s Prussian teachers, virtually forgotten by the Swiss, became a Swiss educational hero who is still “in service” today. In this role, historically speaking, Pestalozzi’s educational impact has been enduring. And, as the opening quote by educationalist, journalist and politician Josef Jäger confirms, the pomp and splendour of kings and emperors pales into insignificance by comparison.

Swiss postage
stamps, c.1940,
copperplate engraving.

Pestalozzi in the modern world – education made sacred

The celebrated Pestalozzian trilogy of head, heart and hand (or thinking, feeling and acting) remains the key to schools policy,³⁶ declared Canton Bern education minister Bernhard Pulver in 2008. And when Matthias Finger, the Graubünden school's special-education expert, pondered how to explain to young people what "head, heart, hand" means, he concluded that "a judicious blend of ingredients – tackling challenges, giving (compulsory) presentations, movement and humour, too" is extremely important for all young people.³⁷ The list of possible quotes is endless, not to mention the examples of educational problems that practically every country in the world has to face and resolve. Pestalozzi, the great educator, is now without doubt the best-known and most quoted Swiss person both around the world and here at home: every urban centre has as many schools and streets named after Pestalozzi as it has shopping centres. And Pestalozzi or the biblical trilogy borrowed from him, of "head, heart and hand", are authoritative reference points wherever education is discussed. In politicians' debates on education, in practitioners' discussions, in school reformers' plans and calls for change, in publications for parents, and even in the

scientific disciplines centred on education and schools, Pestalozzi is still a guiding light.

The interest, though, is not so much in Pestalozzi the school reformer, with his concept of "education at the heart of the family" combining work, family and schooling or education under one institutional umbrella, nor in his mechanistic method, with its interminable repetitive drills. That Pestalozzi has long been forgotten and is condemned to remain so. Many who cite him, in fact, are not even aware of those concepts; they create themselves a "made-to-measure Pestalozzi" when it suits them, based on their own educational vision, ideas and viewpoints.

From this angle, any reference to Pestalozzi might seem purely rhetorical. I have another interpretation. In these texts and commentaries, the focus of interest is the educator, his way of thinking and feeling, his prerogative of opening the way to the child's inner life and its indivisible whole to protect it from the external world. In the historical perspective, that is what traditional Christian education proposes – through Christ's mercy, to save the child from the sins and decadence of the world and to guide it to the redemption promised with the baptism. And this is also the model with which Pestalozzi presented himself after his method failed, as an educator "made in the image of Christ", a failure in the corrupt world but ready to sacrifice himself on the altar of the absolute good, the inner purity, and the sacred inviolability of the child.

The schools and other modern educational institutions – the family included – have no power over the child's purity: human rights (and the rights of the child) impose a legal limit in the educational sphere; moreover, not even a rational effort in this arena can be so ambitious as to address a person's entire inner being. Against this backdrop, education is inevitably limited and fragmentary, making the achievement of even modest, conservative objectives sometimes decidedly hit and miss. Yet every educational initiative and institution must be subject to a *moral* choice. No science can say whether it is better to start by teaching a child French or German,



history or astronomy, or whether respect for others should be favoured over the pursuit of individual interests: the answer depends entirely on the public morality and the educator's morality. The evocation of the great educator, Pestalozzi "the saviour", his earthly sacrifice, and his battle to defend the child's indivisible whole shows that education is still a sacred, hallowed niche, even in a society as self-proclaimedly secular as today's. Whether from a professional, political or parental perspective, those working in the education arena under the banner of Pestalozzi and his "head, heart and hand" must respect this sacredness and must keep the moral promise.

*** Fritz Osterwalder**

Professor Emeritus of the History and Philosophy of Education at Bern University.

Notes

¹ "An seinen Alpenbrüsten säugt unser Land hoffnungsvolle Stromeskinder, die in der engen Heimat eine Jugendzeit voll hohen Reizes erleben, in Sturm und Drang sich zwischen Felsenriffen und grüner Alpenflur den Weg ins Weite bahnen und mit dem kecken Schritt der Alpensöhne die Grenzen deutsch' und welscher Länder überschreiten. Segen folget ihren Spuren. [...] Auf mannigfach verschlungenen Pfaden aber kehrt ins fernste Alpental ein Teil der Kultur zurück, die die Schweizerströme in der Ferne haben schaffen helfen. [...] ,Vater' Pestalozzi! Nicht wir, deren Stammes und Sprache er gewesen, in deren Sorgen und Kümernissen er gelebt und gelitten, deren Wohlfahrt zuerst sein Streben gegoten; nicht wir Aargauer und Schweizer [...] nannten zuerst ihn Vater. [...] Und helleuchtend bleibt Pestalozzis Haupt umstrahlt von der unvergänglichen Aureole der Vaterschaft des Welterbarmens. Der Aureole aber ging voraus die Dornenkrone." JOSEF JÄGER, Commemorative speech for the Pestalozzian celebrations in Birr, 6 January 1896, in "Schweizerische Lehrerzeitung" 1896, pp. 20–22.

² The following reasoning is from FRITZ OSTERWALDER, *Pestalozzi – ein pädagogischer Kult. Pestalozzis Wirkungsgeschichte in der Herausbildung der modernen Pädagogik*, Beltz, Weinheim/Basel 1996.

³ HEINRICH MORF, *Zur Biographie Pestalozzis*, 4 vols., Winterthur 1868–1889.

⁴ "Ja, er hat das Kreuz getragen wie einst Christus." ALEXANDER ISLER, *Heinrich Pestalozzi: illustrierte Festschrift für die Jugend*, J.R. Müller, Zurich 1896, p. 63.

⁵ OTTO SUTERMEISTER, *Heinrich Pestalozzi. Gedicht*, in "Schweizerische Pädagogische Zeitschrift", 1896, p. 1.

⁶ Citations of Pestalozzi's writings follow the Critical Edition (CE with volume number), published since 1927 in Zurich. Here: CE 2 & 3

⁷ CE 3, pp. 244ff.

⁸ PETER STADLER, *Pestalozzi. Geschichtliche Biographie*, vol. 2, NZZ, Zurich 1993, p. 76.

⁹ "Wenn ein Mensch eine Maschine erfinden würde, um wohlfeiler Holz hauen zu können, so würde alle Billigkeit ihm die Vortheile dieser besseren Holzhaue zusichern; und da ich jetzt ohne allen Zweifel eine bessere Vernunftmaschine erfunden habe, so spreche ich im Ernste die Vortheile dieser Maschine eine Weile ausschliesslich an." CE 15, p. 525.

¹⁰ CE 13, p. 198.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 351.

¹² Ibid., p. 342.

¹³ Ibid., p. 324.

¹⁴ From St Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, 5:23.

¹⁵ CE 13, p. 272.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 309.

¹⁷ "Es ist nur eine gut." Ibid., p. 320.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 179.

¹⁹ CE 17A, p. 76.

²⁰ CE 18, p. 30.

²¹ "Was ist eigentlich meine Methode? Ich fand es nicht und habe es noch nicht. Der Grund ist heiter. Die Methode ist nicht vollendet." CE 16, p. 321.

²² "Ich will und ruhe nicht, bis ich es Narren und Schurken unmöglich gemacht habe, à leur aise mit der Jugend lenger als Lehrer im Verheltnis zu bleiben und in Schulen Schulmeister zu bleiben. Nicht dass ich's schon ergriffen habe, ich jage ihm aber nach, ob ich's auch ergreifen möge. Jesus Christus, der einzige Lehrer!" CE 15, p. 7.

²³ "Pestalozzi ist mein Vater im Geist; wehe dem Kinde das des Vaters Blösse aufdeckt." WILHEM HENNING, *Aus Pestalozzis Leben in Iferten*, 1816, in Wilhem Harnisch (Ed.), *Der Schulrath an der Oder*, reprinted by Julius Plath, Leipzig 1900, pp. 18–19.

²⁴ "Ihr armen Kinder, die ihr noch mit dem pestalozzischen Buchstaben gequält und getötet werdet. [...] Wer das Heil der Menschheit von einer Methode erwartet, der geht in die Irre." HUGO GOTTHARD BLUTH (Ed.), *Aus Adolph Diesterwegs Tagebuch 1818–22*, Moritz Diesterweg, Frankfurt 1956, p. 4.

²⁵ "Er hat bei den deutschen Lehrern den Trieb nach Erkenntnis geweckt, er brachte Licht in die finstere Nacht der Schule." FRIEDRICH ADOLPH WILHELM DIESTERWEG, *Werke*, section I, vol. 6, Volk und Wissen, Berlin 1956, p. 258.

²⁶ "Pestalozzi besass ein deutsches Gemüth, er war ein deutscher Pädagoge." FRIEDRICH ADOLPH WILHELM DIESTERWEG, *Die Feier des 100sten Geburtstages Pestalozzi's in Berlin am 12. Januar 1845*, Berlin Voss, Berlin 1845, p. 46.

²⁷ FRIEDRICH ADOLPH WILHELM DIESTERWEG, *Werke*, op. cit., p. 23.

²⁸ "Als Lehrer selbst, oder auch als Scholorganisator oder als Schuldirektor konnte er (Pestalozzi, F. O.) nicht musterhaft wirken, [...] unser Führer in unserm Berufsgeschäft kann er nimmermehr sein. Wir bedürfen zu Führern wirklicher Schulmänner; solcher, die einerseits

theoretisches Wissen und Berufserfahrung besitzen, andererseits in der Lehrkunst, d.h. im Schulhalten erprobte praktische Meister sind, und dann Wissen und Können in würdevollem Charakter veredeln." CHRISTIAN FRYMANN, (d. i. Scherr, I. Th.) *Pädagogisches Bilderbuch; aber nicht für Kinder sondern für andere Leute*, vol. III, Orell Füssli, Zurich 1859, p. 100.

²⁹ "Die Gemüther gehen zu dieser Zeit gar weit auseinander, fast so weit, als die Sprachen der Babylonier zu jener Zeit, als sie ihren berühmten Thurm zu bauen versuchten. Sehr merkwürdig war es zu hören, wie gewisse Redner sich den guten Vater Pestalozzi so rechtschnitzelten, dass er ihrer eigenen Person und Geistesrichtung als Autorität und Rechtfertigung dienen musste." JEREMIAS GOTTHELF, *Ein Wort zur Pestalozzifeier*, in "Pädagogische Revue", 1847, p. 49.

³⁰ GEORG GEILFUS, *Helvetia. Vaterländische Sage und Geschichte. Ein Festgeschenk für die Jugend*, vol. 2., Steiner Winterthur, Winterthur 1853, pp. 417–434.

³¹ ERNEST CORREVON, Commemorative speech for the inauguration of the monument to Pestalozzi in Yverdon, in "L'Éducateur de la Suisse Romande", 1890, p. 296.

³² XAVER FISCHER, *Ursprung, Wesen, Wert und spätere Entwicklung der alten Schweizerischen Volksfeste*, Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Gemeinnützigkeit 1884, pp. 421–507.

³³ "[...] an dem Jung und Alt, Gross und Klein, Reich und Arm teilnehmen muss, um von Pestalozzis Geiste zu geniessen." Organising committee minutes, Bern, 21 September 1895, p. xl.

³⁴ Fritz Osterwalder, *Pestalozzi...*, op. cit., pp. 429–438.

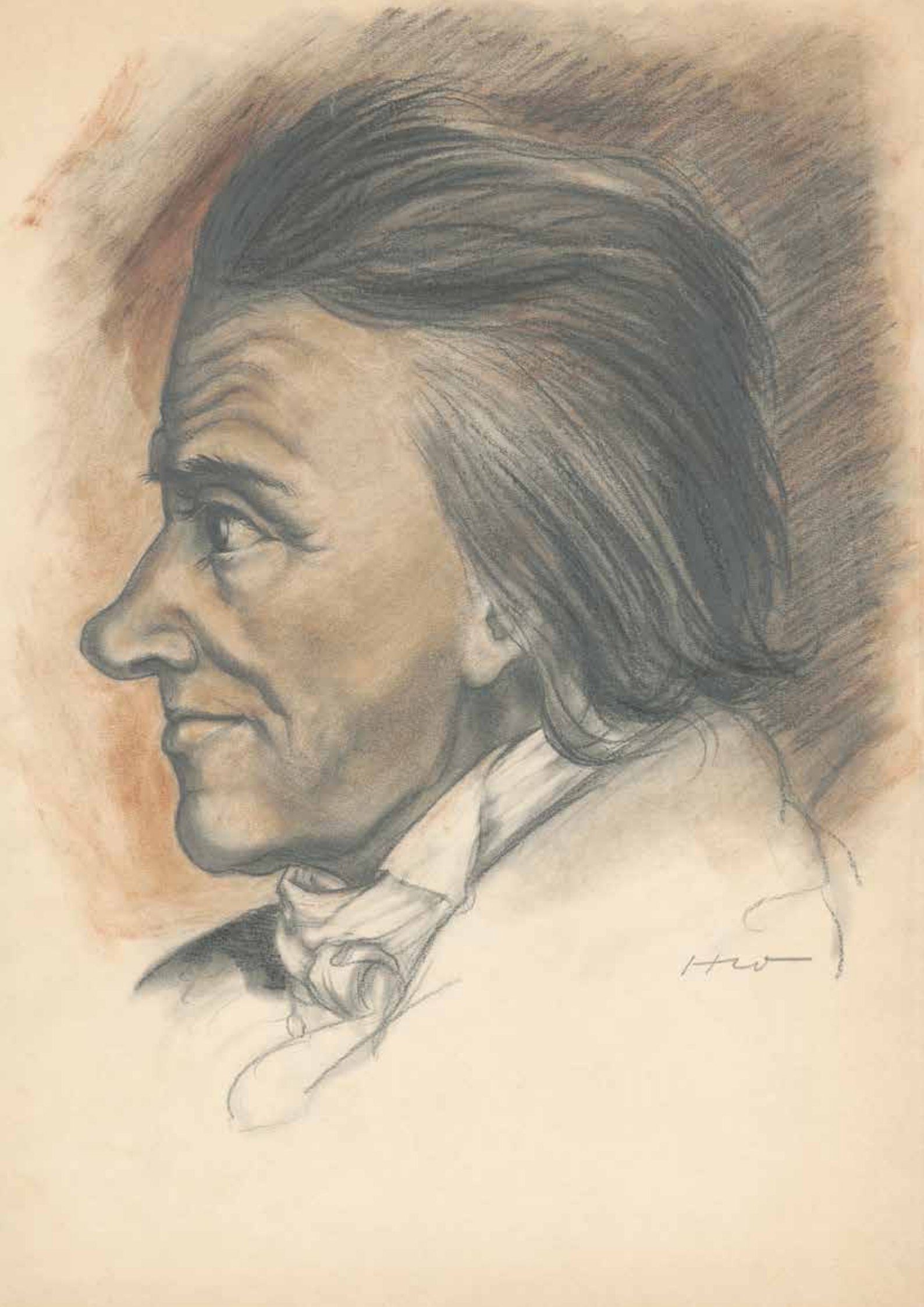
³⁵ "Mit der Ehrung Pestalozzis ehrt die Schweiz sich selbst." EUGÈNE RUFFY, Discours, in "L'Éducateur de la Suisse Romande", 1890, pp. 217–345.

³⁶ "Pestalozzis berühmte drei Worte, 'Kopf – Herz – Hand' (oder denken, fühlen, handeln) sind nach wie vor Leitfaden in der Bildungspolitik." BERNHARD PULVER, Grusswort, in Stadt Langenthal (Ed.), *Pestalozzis Langenthaler Rede*, Ammann Schweiz, Langenthal 2008, p. 5.

³⁷ "Wie könnte man die Bedeutung von 'Kopf, Herz, Hand' für Jugendliche deuten. Die richtige Mischung aus gefordert werden, Leistung zeigen (müssen), Bewegung und auch Humor ist für alle Jugendlichen eminent wichtig." MATTHIAS FINGER, *Grips Power Feeling. 'Kopf, Herz, Hand' – fünf Gedanken für die Oberstufe*, in "Bündner Schulblatt", no. 2, 1 April 2012, p. 7.

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Pestalozzi and Italian education

A complex dialogue

by Franco Cambi*



Left:
Hans Witzig (1889-1973),
Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, 1924,
pencil and sanguine, 31.6x22.6 cm.

This page:
Hans Bendel (1814-1853),
Pestalozzi, 1845,
lithograph, 21.6x29.4 cm.

Christian von Mechel
(1737-1817),
German emperor
Leopold II (1747-1792),
Grand Duke of
Tuscany until 1790,
engraving.

**Great educator, great educationalist:
an international model**

Ever since the 18th century, Pestalozzi the intellectual has been closely studied with great interpretive finesse in Italy, as well. He is a complex and problematic figure – socio-political and humanitarian, enlightened yet romantic, a fine educator and founder of educational communities (exemplary albeit failed) and an effective, self-critical writer. And his is also a great voice in modern Western education and pedagogy, after Rousseau, after Kant, with and after the Enlightenment reform movement. His focus was fourfold: on the people (seen with a Jacobinical yet romantic spirit), on childhood (including its human potential and social “tragedy”, as with infanticide), on the family (the nuclear foundation of every society, to be reshaped, however, around the role of the affective and educational maternal bonds), and on education itself (reconceived as an effort to promote the development of each individual and the child’s basic personality).

Pestalozzi, then, was a real master of European education – an eminent master – and much more besides. Few other authors have combined education practice and pedagogical thought in an organic, original way. As Socrates, St Augustine and Comenius had. And as Montessori, Makarenko and Gandhi have after him. A master to follow, to study and re-examine. To become familiar with, in all his richness and complexity. That is what has happened here in Italy, too, in a dialogue that has spanned two centuries and more. And in this variegated historical period, this dialogue has been marked by a constant exploration of the Pestalozzian *lection*, a revisiting and a refinement of that exemplary educational and pedagogical message.

**From 18th-century reformism
to the Restoration, the Risorgimento
and a united Italy**

From as early as the 18th century, Pestalozzi was at the heart of educational thinking in Italy, in both political and academic circles. He had direct contact with Pietro Leopoldo, Grand Duke of Tuscany, who, struck by the novel *Leonard and Gertrude*, embarked on an education reform with innovative measures



to educate citizens’ “hearts” and “minds”. Pestalozzi hoped that his ideas would be successful in Tuscany, but the Grand Duke soon acceded to the Vienna throne, and that was the end of that.

His educational ideal was revived in the Napoleonic era, in Naples, after the Parthenopean Republic of 1799, through the ideas of Vincenzo Cuoco (1770–1823), whom he had met in Paris. Cuoco saw education as the one and only way to emancipate the people, and he produced a *Report* on national education through schooling, based directly on the “Pestalozzi method” of teaching. In Naples, Caroline Bonaparte Murat was also Pestalozzi’s patron, opening a “Pestalozzi Institute” in 1811 that grew quickly but was short-lived: within five years, it was in difficulties. The other centre in Italy where Pestalozzi’s educational method took root was Milan. Cuoco worked there, too, and his Pestalozzi-inspired ideas found favour with Manzoni and Cantù, among others. In 1812, an interpretation of Pestalozzi’s pedagogy was published in Milan by Jullien (*Esprit de la Méthode*), while in 1819 Cagnazzi brought out his *Saggio sopra i principali metodi di istruire i fanciulli* (Essay on the main methods of teaching children), with a foreword by Pestalozzi himself. In 1844, Rossi presented his *Manuale di studio preparatorio* (Manual of preparatory study), with clear Pestalozzian echoes. Meanwhile, “visitors” from the

Swiss institutes discussed this educational approach on various occasions. They ran from Benci's *Antologia* (Anthology) essay of 1824 about primary education (which did not exploit its innovative value to the full, however) to Enrico Mayer's *Frammenti di un viaggio pedagogico* (Fragments of a pedagogical journey), written in 1830 and published in 1837, which saw Pestalozzi as a great educator and even "the initiator of a new educational consciousness".¹ Finally, there were the educationalists. Romagnosi defended the benefits that the Swiss educationalist's method brought to the political economy; Rosmini returned to themes of intellectual and moral education in his main pedagogical study, *Del supremo principio della metodica* (On the supreme principle of method); and Pestalozzi was mentioned (albeit critically) in the spiritualistic educational writings of Lambruschini and Capponi in reference to specific topics (such as how the mathematics teaching was new to Lambruschini) rather than to the general educational principles. And in Aporti, the Swiss author featured prominently for his development of nursery schools, especially as regards morality (as noted by Banfi again in the cited essay), if not for his "method" and mass-education aims. More singular is the lack of specific references to Pestalozzi in the educational ideas of Cattaneo, a thinker who was very open and particularly close to Swiss culture and also felt strongly about democracy.

Pestalozzi thus had a high profile in early 19th-century Italy, including through various translations of his works. Indeed, *How Gertrude teaches her children* was translated in 1830; *On the elementary education of the people* came out in 1850 (with a commentary by Mayer); although only in 1887 would *Leonard and Gertrude* be translated, and then, only in part. Nevertheless, Pestalozzi's ideas spread, were discussed and were considered in scholarly writings on education and teaching.

How did things change after Italian unification? Or with the advent of positivism? And that of socialism, anarchic and otherwise? There, too, the picture is far from clear. Pestalozzi's ideas certainly influenced positivists such as Gabelli, who studied German pedagogy in Vienna and spread those ideas in his theoretical and practical pedagogy, through his own vision of school as a "school for life" with a new "method" echoing Pestalozzi's unity of mind, heart and hand. But Pestalozzi's thinking was nowhere to be seen among the most illustrious theorists of educational positivism, from Ardigò to Siciliani, because they favoured philosophical positions from empiricism to the positive sciences. His influence can be discerned to some extent in De Dominicis, however, albeit often implicitly, in that De Dominicis was an evolutionist, a world away from Pestalozzian pedagogy's romantic spirit, despite being receptive to Pestalozzi the "schoolmaster". Studies on Pestalozzi's ideas did nevertheless emerge, by authors of varying eminence: in 1884, Allievo produced a meticulous study dedicated to his "pedagogical doctrines"; in 1885, Savorini mapped "his works and his times". Later studies, by Lazzarini in 1905, Tauro in 1907, and Lenzi in 1909, would place the Swiss thinker in the spotlight again, from various educational perspectives. (The first compared him with Herbart; the second was a complex and highly significant study; the third surveyed his "ideas" and his "work" again.) What about the libertarian socialist tradition, which was rich and significant in Italy too in those years (on which Borghi and Tomasi in particular have dwelt)? We can look to Bakunin, to Proudhon, and to Fourier reliving the Pestalozzian

François Gérard
(1770-1837).
*Caroline Bonaparte,
Queen of Naples,
with her children.*
1808, oil on canvas,
217.5x170.5 cm.



commitment to “educating the people” and to education as emancipation for one and all while giving a central platform to other voices (such as Spanish socialist-libertarian Francesco Ferrer). Even Labriola – despite being a Socrates scholar, a follower of Herbart in moral philosophy, and a dedicated researcher of scholastic and educational problems – had no dialogue at all with Pestalozzi, even before his conversion to Marxism.

The 19th century, then, viewed Pestalozzi and his educational ideal from philosophical and ideological standpoints that were often quite different from his own. It saw him as an exponent of human educational needs (in the family, at school, and in society) but took other approaches to formulating the educational theories and practices needed for contemporary humanity. Those approaches were associated variously with spiritualism, positivism and socialism but less with Pestalozzi’s popular-anthropological reformist model.

Activism, idealism and critical rationalism

With its more complex, refined philosophical culture, with its radically innovative approaches to education and its commitment to renewing the educational relationship through science (psychology, sociology, psychoanalysis and communication sciences, which could deconstruct and reconstruct educational practice), it was the 20th century that engaged most directly with Pestalozzi’s ideas. Those approaches sought new, organic foundations for education and were strong at interpreting and critically examining educational processes. This spirit was typified by the 1968 educational revolution in Europe and its desire for regeneration in education.² With their anti-institutional tendencies and radical intellectual models, these critical approaches to education placed Pestalozzi at the centre of educational thinking and practice again for the richness of his body of thought. Here in Italy, in particular. His ideas were continually in the spotlight in the 20th century: many translations were produced; he was studied from several educational standpoints; and he was recognised as a great educational reformer for his theories, his social and political efforts, and his vision of the school and the act of teaching.

Pestalozzi’s rediscovery as a great educationalist and educator, as a true master of modern education, was very much a 20th-century affair, one that took place on various fronts through wide-ranging scientific studies. The efforts of Giuseppe Lombardo Radice (1879–1938) make a good starting point. Lombardo Radice went beyond his idealistic model of education à la Giovanni Gentile, seeing himself increasingly at the heart of the school “alongside the teachers” and developing his model of a “serene school”. He dedicated a full five volumes of essays to Pestalozzi, the *Quaderni pestalozziani* (Pestalozzian notebooks, 1927), which probe the many facets of the Swiss educationalist’s ideas, developing a complex, up-to-date image of them through contributions by many scholarly authorities from Banfi and De Ruggero to Vidari and Ferretti. An extremely detailed picture of Pestalozzi’s theory emerges that still paints him as a true master. The work is a genuine classic and well worth rereading.

La Nuova Italia published Banfi’s masterly little monograph in 1929. It offered a reading of Pestalozzi’s educational philosophy in light of the transcendental foundations of education, a rich phenomenology of education, and the perennial problems at the heart of educational thinking and practice. Banfi considered his work “as complete and objective an exposition and interpretation of Pestalozzi’s doctrines as possible”³. It had five sections: 1) the idea of human nature; 2) the social aspects of current ethical thinking; 3) the spiritual personality; 4) the principles of a theory of education (combining culture, family and school); 5) the particular method of (moral, intellectual, technical and practical) education. Banfi’s critical rationalism pinpoints Pestalozzi’s constant tension between theory and action and his ability to construct an open, interpretive theory aimed at maintaining the reflective dimension in education at every practical level.

In terms of actual idealism – and looking beyond the silence of Gentile, who based his “Educational system” on Hegelian philosophy alone, invoking its dialectic of the Absolute Spirit (of art, religion and philosophy) – besides Lombardo Radice, it would be Ernesto Codignola (1885–1965) who

undertook the broadest and most significant revival of Pestalozzi's ideas. Indeed, he promoted a genuine all-Italian Pestalozzi *renaissance* of high cultural and political calibre (yes, political, too, for the project coincided with fascism's transformation into a "regime", which is important to stress).



Codignola and Pestalozzi in Florence

Codignola was from Genoa but worked in Florence, dividing his time between the university Faculty of Education and his publishing company, La Nuova Italia (with its series and magazines). He was also active in the city's social and political life, especially at the height of World War II (between 8 September 1943 and 25 April 1945) and after Florence had finally been liberated from the Nazi occupation (in August 1944). Codignola gradually reappraised his actualistic origins and moved towards a progressive lay pedagogy underpinned by Dewey's ideas; in 1944, he took up the latter's active commitment to social and democratic education.

Applying his critical idealism to education, Codignola reignited the ethical and (now laicised) religious tension in education practice. He allied that effort to "liberating" ends, aimed at fostering individual and collective autonomy and spiritual (human) growth. Pestalozzi's educational principles were clearly an integral part of Codignola's ideas.

The central importance afforded to Pestalozzi is especially evident in La Nuova Italia's commitment to what would become the most coherent effort to publish his works in Italy. Beginning with *Madre e figlio* (Mother and son), Pestalozzi's letters to Graeves first published in 1924. It continued with the four volumes of *Leonard and Gertrude*, followed immediately by *Swansong* and *How Gertrude teaches her*

children (all published between 1928 and 1929). In 1938 came the *L'educazione* anthology edited by Codignola. Meanwhile, there were the monographs by Banfi and Delekat. After the war, the *Lettera ad un amico sul proprio soggiorno a Stans* (Letter to a friend about his stay in Stans, 1951) and *The evening hours of a hermit* (1953) came out. In the meantime, Pestalozzi was revisited by both Codignola, with *Il problema dell'educazione. Sommario di storia della filosofia e della pedagogia* (The problem of education. Summary of the history of philosophy and pedagogy) and his colleague Margherita Fasolo with *Linee di storia della pedagogia moderna* (Themes in the history of modern pedagogy). Meylan's *L'attualità di Pestalozzi* (The topicality of Pestalozzi) was published in 1962, followed in 1965 by volume four of Leser's *Il problema pedagogico* (The pedagogical problem).

Besides his publishing venture, Codignola would also turn to Pestalozzi in one of his own popular-education projects, in Florence's Santa Croce district. He set up a pilot school named after him there in 1944, the "Scuola-Città Pestalozzi", which he ran according to Dewey's model with a complex new educational, pedagogical and social stamp. The "school" was organised like a city, and the pupils were given roles in running it, to educate them about democracy. It is still open today.

Pestalozzi is also present in Florence through scholars such as Giovanni Calò. Having followed a spiritualistic philosophy



Above:
Ernesto Codignola
(1885-1965)
presents certificates
for the elemen-
tary adult-education
course in academic
year 1955-56.

Below:
Farming the vegeta-
ble garden, c.1950.

model when training under Francesco De Sarlo, lecturer in education in the Faculty of Letters since the turn of the century, Calò dedicated a study to Pestalozzi that was published several times (by Viola in Milan and in 1955 in *Momenti di storia dell'educazione*). As National Teaching Centre coordinator, he organised a great exhibition on schools in 1925, at the fascists' behest, featuring Pestalozzi as the pioneer of popular schooling.

The reappraisal of Pestalozzi continued not only in Florence but also in Rome, through the publisher Armando, which translated the two essays about him by Spranger and Litt in 1961. In 1960, Blättern also discussed him in *Storia della pedagogia moderna e contemporanea* (History of modern and contemporary education), translated from the German.

Pestalozzi figured prominently on the three educational fronts of the time: among the lay progressives, with studies by the Deweyan Visalberghi (1962), by the educational psychologist Filograsso (1965), and by Valeri, the Florentine children's literature and education scholar;⁴ among the Catholics, with essays by Catalfamo, Scurati and Anna Genco inspired by Christian personalism; and among the Marxists, for example with Dina Bertoni Jovine and her references to Pestalozzi in a social-education and educational-history perspective in light of the profound school reforms of the 1960s, informed by a precise form of critical Marxism.

Interest in Pestalozzi spread from Florence nationwide, in a complex development that reconfirmed the Swiss educationalist as a true master, a model of education theory and practice for the present day – a model to understand, revisit and keep alive in education practice.

The second half of the 20th century and beyond

Cultural and educational research changed radically in the 1960s. New philosophies asserted themselves, from structuralism to logical empiricism and from the “critical theory of society” and critical Marxism to phenomenology and hermeneutics. The humanities grew and became established, redefining epistemology and becoming

active in every cultural arena. Including in Italy. And in pedagogy, too, which was adopting an increasingly radical critical position on both the educational relationship with the pupils and the educational institutions, from the family to schools and the media, etc. Pedagogy was presenting itself as a science of sciences and as a critical discipline that could renew social practices at every level. In this reappraisal of statutes and social perspectives in education, attitudes to Pestalozzi changed, too, partly in epistemological terms, through Carmela Metelli di Lallo, and partly along socio-political lines, with Egle Becchi. Two new interpretations appeared in classic books: an anthology of Pestalozzian texts published by UTET and *Analisi del discorso pedagogico* (Analysis of pedagogical discourse), from the Marsilio corner.

In the latter, Metelli di Lallo identified a “molar” model for pedagogical discourse, based on an intimate blend of theory and empirical data in a subtle interplay of references and ideas. That intricate construction gave Pestalozzi a complex but fundamental and universal role, while taking into account his limitations (his “pre-theory” status, his “improvisation”, and his generic historical/educational knowledge, “paternalism” and debatable use of Rousseau) and the need for generalisation in close step with the modern model of educational discourse.

The two anthologies that Becchi edited examine Pestalozzi's political philosophy. She contextualises it in his “social and economic world full of drama and contrasting views, where he adopts a reforming spirit”.⁵ To interpret Pestalozzi, we must look beyond any “philosophical key to culture”⁶: the central factors are the social-political dimension, the link between society and employment, and “pedagogy for industry” developed as education for the people, although still associated more closely with artisanal work than with industry proper. Thus, he outlined a pedagogy of work, ignoring some aspects of it but attributing a major economic and social role to work and asserting the need for specific dedicated “training”. Professional training thus also and in particular became “popular education”, in which home and school had to be

instrumental. And therein lie embryonic Marxist categories of great historical and educational significance.

But what happened next? Pestalozzi has been on the sidelines, even though new texts have been published (including one on infanticide edited by Giulia Di Bello in 1999) along with more general, consolidated readings, as exemplified by the various histories of education published during and after the 1990s (e.g. those by Fornaca, myself and then Cavallera).

Recently, however, Mario Gennari, an educationalist with a firm grounding in German culture and a discerning analyst of the *Bildung* tradition, has led a return to considering Pestalozzi in his noblest guise, as a theoretician of well-rounded education. He was a man of his time, of course, but had a generality of approach that is still entirely current and is destined to remain so. The texts published by Melangolo in Genoa offer precise and eloquent testament to that – *Menschenbildung* especially, which emphasises “the idea of education” that is well rounded in Pestalozzian terms, developing a vision of it that is both complex (combining philosophy, society, social practices, interpersonal relations, etc.) and, indeed, exemplary. Published in 2014, the book fully demonstrates Pestalozzi’s relevance in contemporary Italian education, with his call to a critical pedagogy and to a school system that educates both the person and the citizen. Tessari’s text on the Swiss thinker’s “social and political ideas” also fits into this picture.

At the very “heart” of education

Pestalozzi’s varied, fascinating adventure in Italy and this country’s long and intimate dialogue with his ideas have enabled scholars throughout Europe and worldwide to explore the significance and the value of his educational thinking. Looking at this process now in 2015, we can say that the Italian adventure has highlighted some key principles in these ideas, principles that ultimately represent the foundations of teaching in the West: 1) Teaching is about education, which is a historical and social yet human process to be constantly viewed and reviewed in those terms, to keep those aspects linked yet separate. 2) The heart

of this process is the “educational relationship” between an adult and a child/young person that must always follow the principle of “intelligent love” – not only in the family and at school but also at work.

3) The *telos* of educational knowledge is always a theory of *Bildung* as “well-rounded education” that must be continually recast in terms of modernity and its transformations. 4) The educational institutions must all draw inspiration from this model for education and teaching relationships through a practical and innovative effort that must be constantly nourished, renewed and revisited. 5) Teaching is therefore the core science of every society and of “modern” ones in particular, where educational processes are becoming more and more complex and having an increasing impact on both individuals and society itself.

Beyond his inevitable limitations, then, Pestalozzi speaks to us right from the “heart” of modern Western pedagogy, showing us both its noble duties and its subtle complexities. As the true master he always was.

*** Franco Cambi**

Professor of General Education at the University of Florence. Franco Cambi was awarded the lifetime achievement prize of the Italian education society (Siped) in March 2014.

Notes

- ¹ ANTONIO BANFI, *Pestalozzi*, La Nuova Italia, Florence 1961, p. 563.
- ² See ALESSANDRO MARIANI, *La pedagogia sotto analisi. Modelli di filosofia critica dell'educazione in Francia (1960-1980)*, Unicopli, Milan 2003.
- ³ ANTONIO BANFI, *Pestalozzi, op. cit.*
- ⁴ MARIO VALERI, *Enrico Pestalozzi*, Viola, Milan 1951 and Id., *Bibliografia pestalozziana*, in "Ricerche pedagogiche", October 1966.
- ⁵ JOHANN HEINRICH PESTALOZZI, *Popolo, lavoro, educazione*, La Nuova Italia, Florence 1974, p. 9.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

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Carl von Lützow
1818

von C. A. Heppner

Lithographie
1816

1746 + 1827

Ich werde dir danken die Iren dir
am besten am besten erhalten
Du dir dir dir dir dir dir
Lieber dir dir dir dir dir
Lieber dir dir dir dir dir
Lieber dir dir dir dir dir

The Pestalozzianum Foundation

Working for sound primary education

The Pestalozzianum Foundation was originally established in 1875, and it ran the “Pestalozzianum Zürich” teacher-training institute until the latter merged into the Zurich University of Teacher Education (PHZH) in 2002. The Foundation has been active since 2003 in its current form, as a joint project involving Canton Zurich and the PHZH.

The Foundation has two purposes: first, to promote dialogue between the education world and the public; second, to carry out historical research in the field of teaching. In its communication role, it works to foster strong primary education and an efficient teaching system, not only in Canton Zurich but also throughout Switzerland. Thus, it acts as a meeting place for those with an interest in the world of schools, education and education policy. It supports dialogue and the exchange of experience between teachers and researchers, between schools and the media, between education and politics. It embraces the guiding principles of a modern education system, free from prejudices yet true to its historical roots, a system that puts people first. To maintain this intellectual heritage and to enrich the body of knowledge in the education field, the Foundation also sponsors historical research and the work of the PHZH.

This research and the evidence that it provides us are increasingly valuable as our schools grapple with numerous reforms. In this context, it is essential to know where our schools system came from and on which ideas it is founded and to understand the profound changes that have helped to shape it. Our mission is to

conserve and spread this knowledge, because those who seek to build their future need to know their past. The Foundation has a wealth of priceless collections that document the history of primary education. They include original portraits and writings by its pioneer, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, tens of thousands of drawings by children and youngsters from both the “Pestalozzi drawing competition” and from visual teaching materials, such as glass slides, wall illustrations for classrooms, teaching aids documenting over 200 years of school life, bequests from Zurich’s educationalists and education leaders, and an invaluable collection of books on educational research.

In practical terms, the Foundation pursues its aims in four main areas.

Podium Pestalozzianum

Once a year, the Foundation holds a public conference on topical matters, “Podium Pestalozzianum”. These encounters encourage exchange and dialogue among educational, social, cultural, economic, scientific and media stakeholders. The knowledge acquired is documented in informative publications. This is accompanied by the “Parkett Pestalozzianum” event, which offers the opportunity for informal discussions open to all.

Pestalozzianum prizes

The Pestalozzianum Foundation rewards special merit in the field of teaching through the renowned “Bildungspreis”, awarded jointly with the PHZH. We also recognise the best work by PHZH students each year.

Left:
Gustav Adolf Hippius
(1792-1856),
Johann Heinrich
Pestalozzi, 1818,
lithograph.

Pestalozzi’s
handwritten text
under his portrait
reads, in translation:
*My friend, apply your
art to that which is
beautiful, for focusing
on the blemished and
deformed wastes the
power inherent in art.
Have a good journey.
My gratitude and love
go with you.*

Pestalozzianum publications

The Foundation furthers the exchange and dissemination of knowledge through its publications both online (www.pestalozzianum.ch) and in print (Verlag Pestalozzianum). The “Papers Pestalozzianum” contain information on topical themes in education policy, teaching and education culture. In addition, we support other publications through contributions towards printing costs.

The Pestalozzianum Collections project

The Foundation’s collections, “Sammlungen Pestalozzianum”, contain items of great value not just for Canton Zurich but also at national and international levels. Much of the content of this vast, exclusive resource has not yet been formally explored and is therefore hard to access – or even entirely off-limits – to researchers and interested readers. Other parts require thorough restoration.

With the Pestalozzianum Collections project, the Foundation is working to conserve this great asset for future generations. We make it available to the public and to researchers in a modern and conveniently accessible form, so that primary schools in Zurich and the canton can rediscover Pestalozzi and his work. The project’s main objectives are to formally catalogue the objects and their content, to digitalise unique original items, and to make the collections available to scholars and enthusiasts.

If you would like to support the Pestalozzianum Foundation in our conservation, development and promotion work, you can do so by becoming a member.

For more information, please visit our website, www.pestalozzianum.ch.

For the Pestalozzianum Foundation

Anne Bosche



Frontispieces of *Leonard and Gertrude*, Georg Jacob Decker, 1781.

Wie Gertrud ihre Kinder lehrt, vol. 5, J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, 1820.

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JOHANN HEINRICH PESTALOZZI

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* This bibliography includes the texts consulted by the authors and cited in the notes at the end of each essay.

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Sämtliche Werke

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DEVELOPMENT

Myriam Facchinetti

EDITING

Alessandra Dolci

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Petra Häfliger

Lucasdesign, Giubiasco

TRANSLATION

CB Service

Lausanne