

# **Pestalozzi and The Oswego Movement**

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December 10, 2000**

## **Background**

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi was born in Zurich, Switzerland on January 12, 1746. He was a descendent of Italian-speaking Swiss Protestants who had fled the region around Locarno nearly two-hundred years earlier during the Counter-Reformation. His father was a surgeon who died when young Heinrich was only five. He and two surviving children were raised by their mother and a servant who remained faithful to the family during the financial descent which followed the father's death.

A average student, young Pestalozzi was son of a "citizen" and therefore was guaranteed at least a respectable existence after schooling. In the Swiss federation only the elite were designated citizen status, reducing what appeared to be democracy into a defacto aristocracy. At first, Pestalozzi considered a career at law and political activism. It was during his activist period that he was jailed for a few days because of his dissent.

Throughout his life Pestalozzi seemed to be concerned with the plight of the poor. Biographers suggest the reasons for this were twofold. First, the declining status of the family after his father's death. This once wealthy family, whose wealth had survived for generations, was forced to deal with poverty. A second factor seems to be the impact of the family servant, Babeli. She was a member of the lowest of Swiss classes and to whom the family owed much of their survival. Here creative strategies of coping with little, a product of her own life of poverty, enabled the family to stay together. Pestalozzi acknowledge her worth as a person, and the value of her class, based on the critical role she played the survival of the family.

Following Pestalozzi's brief imprisonment he decided to abandon the pursuit of law and

focus on ameliorating the plight of the poor by some other means. He initially believed that the answer to their problems rested with agriculture. Pestalozzi served an apprenticeship with a renowned farmer, J.R. Tschiffeli. After numerous agricultural failures, Pestalozzi found himself teaching. It was there that he decided he would take up the pursuit of justice for the poor.

During Pestalozzi's life Switzerland was evolving politically. With the arrival of the French under Napoleon the Swiss aristocracy was actually reformed and made more democratic. Though the French would have an initially positive impact, the instability created by French imperialism would hinder Swiss development and personally frustrate many of Pestalozzi's educational projects.

Never able to make ends meet, and having depleted his wife's inheritance, Pestalozzi turned to writing to supplement his income. It was as a writer of fiction that he first gained notoriety. Though he wrote fiction, the purpose of his novels was to educate the Swiss people about the plight of the poor. His first successful effort *Liehhard and Gertrud* (1781), was simply a vivid account of poverty in Switzerland. He would resort to fiction at various times more to teach than to entertain. His *How Gertrud educates her children* (1801), was his attempt to use fiction to portray the ideal model of education found in the mother-child relationship.

Pestalozzi would operate several schools. Each school eventually failed for reasons that did not appear to be caused by his principles or methodologies. Despite the failures, Pestalozzi would gradually develop a reputation throughout Europe as the preeminent educational reformer of his era. He died February 17, 1827 in Brugg, Switzerland.

## **The Initial Reforms**

Pestalozzi's concern for the plight of poor brought him to question what role education played in perpetuating their status. He believed that feudalism was the primary source of the economic injustice they encountered. He knew that Switzerland's so-called democracy, where citizenship was limited to the middle and upper classes, was a sham which prevented any popular reform. Pestalozzi had first attempted political solutions which had resulted in a brief jail term for him. His experience in jail was so traumatic that he decided that he should attack poverty in a less confrontational manner. In his *Views and Experiences* Pestalozzi expressed it as such:

...I saw the great majority of mankind educated merely to skill in certain occupations and forced by their circumstances and their education itself, without ever having their real humanity developed, to was their lives in a soulless and heartless round of manual labor, this condition of affairs could not other than call forth in me a heartfelt sympathy for the repressed and suffering masses.  
(Pestalozzi, *Views and Experiences* as cited in Anderson, p.103)

He decided to focus on one the primary causes of the injustice, a course of action which was ultimately more effective. Though far less confrontational than his political activities, educational reform was not without some conflict. "In recommending a general system of education for the poor, Pestalozzi was involving himself in one of the most controversial issues of the time." (Heafford, p. 82) His concern for the poor became an effort to remove the obstacles placed before them in attaining an amelioration of their condition. "From Pestalozzi's point of view, the most deplorable aspects of the prevailing system were the practical exclusion of the poorest children from education....." (Downs, p.127) He saw how the schools, and the whole educational process, contributed to the crisis.

The idea which throughout his life served as the mainspring of his activities was that, for the oppressed poor, the road to the fullness of life, and hence to

happiness, lay through the promotion, through true education, of the natural development of the mental and physical powers of individuals, hitherto, neglected or misdirected. (Anderson, p. 3)

It was from this process that Pestalozzi began to focus on education as the key to breaking the cycle of poverty. Pestalozzi saw as the root of the problem was how the schools were driven by the curriculum and not the needs of the students. Schools in Switzerland were created for the needs of the society and not those of the individual. He believed that it was the development of the individual which was the goal of education, not society's needs.

One way in which Pestalozzi felt that the educational system contributed to the perpetuation of poverty was in the oppressive classroom atmosphere and archaic teaching techniques employed in Europe at that time. He saw the educational system as decaying.

Pestalozzi's criticism was far more basic and universal than the maltreatment of pupils in certain schools, for he accused the whole system— both the methods and the content— of having become fettered by routine and tradition, to the point where teaching had degenerated into cramming and where school subjects had become no more than a particular selection of facts to be learnt by heart. (Heafford, p. 40)

So, with his gift for analysis, Pestalozzi set about the task of reforming the schools by changing the essence of teaching, that is, the relationship of the pupil with the school and ultimately the relationship between the pupil and the teacher.

It was Pestalozzi's experience that the most natural learning relationship was that of mother and child. As he stated in his *Address to the House* (1818), "It is indisputable that in the living-room of every household are united the fundamental means for the true education of mankind." (Pestalozzi, *Pestalozzi's Address to the House* as cited in Anderson, p.143) This observation was based on his relationship with his mother and Babeli, a loyal servant who remained after the death of his father. Yet Pestalozzi believed that the learning relationship of

mother and child held the key to the reform of education, he was not locked into any specific course of remedy. Pestalozzi was constantly engaged in a process of trial and error. He constantly experimented with technique, he kept what worked, he discarded what failed.

Not only did Pestalozzi believe what model education should be based upon and who was being harmed by the process, he knew how the focus of education in his time was seriously flawed. "Education involved not the imposing of knowledge but the development of potential." (Heafford, p. 77) He recoiled at the practices of the day where unintelligible passages of the Bible were read and vast tracts of literature were memorized. He believed that in resolving the injustices brought upon the poor by the structure of education, he would be making broader reforms to all education. "It was the principle of social progress through education of the poor that Pestalozzi was striving always to make universal in application." (Downs, p. 94)

### **What Were His Philosophies?**

When Pestalozzi wrote in his early years he did so through medium of the novel. Unsuccessful in virtually every pursuit he had initiated, he found that his writings in fiction were accepted by the public. Still haunted by his failure to ameliorate the injustices of Swiss society he sought to find a means to accomplish his original goals in the forum where he had gained not only acceptance but a means of supporting himself and his family. The novel would be Pestalozzi's salvation. He would have a means of support which also provided him a pulpit for his advocacy.

He had already failed in a practical attempt to relieve the unfortunate, but he had obtained a deeper insight into the causes which perpetuated the evils of society... He was also able to trace part of the sufferings of the poor to the selfishness and hardness of the rich, many of whom derived a shameful profit from the improvidence of their unfortunate brethren. (Krüsi, p. 119)

Though the solution to Pestalozzi's career dilemma was creative it was not without problems. Despite the popularity of his fictional works among Swiss readers it was clear to the author that his deeper meaning of messages were being missed. His readership did not understand him.

Pestalozzi's novels were actually long parables. There is little doubt, in light of his profound commitment to his religious faith, that this medium was inspired by the biblical precursor. For this reason, what reforms he advocated were sometimes obscured and subsequently often missed completely by the reader. One notable example was that one of his fictional writings, *How Gertrude Teaches* (1801), Pestalozzi's first parable about education reform which portrayed the ideal model of learning, was a bestseller yet the lesson was lost to most. "The central point stressed by Pestalozzi in *How Gertrude Teaches* is that all truly human activity must be self-generated; therefore, the old educational methods of purely mechanical drill are psychologically unsound." (Downs, p. 35) In fact, this was a failed second attempt. *How Gertrude Teaches* was written as a sequel to *Leonard and Gertrude* (1781), an immensely popular novel which launched Pestalozzi's career as a writer of fiction. That too had been a disappointment in that its message was lost in this vivid portrayal of poverty in Switzerland.

Notwithstanding the fame which the publication of *Leonard and Gertrude* brought to Pestalozzi, the results were a keen disappointment to him. Written primarily with the purpose of arousing public interest in a definite plan for enhancing the value of life for the masses, it achieved popularity mainly as a realistic and interesting work of fiction descriptive of life in a peasant village. (Anderson, p. 28)

So desperate was he to have the morals of his novels understood Pestalozzi even wrote a novel entitled *Christopher and Alice* (1782), which merely had a husband and wife discussing the true meaning of *Leonard and Gertrude*. Pestalozzi was trapped. A successful novelist, who until that

time failed at virtually every attempt to create a school based on his educational principles, wished to advocate education as a the primary means of addressing society's injustices. The novels initially did little more than to buy him time. His writings enabled him to survive long enough to finally create a school which would become a showpiece of his principles. Only in retrospect, with his reputation established as an educational reformer and innovator, would the fictional work of his earlier years be acknowledged for their true motive and worth.

Only later, when he was more reflective near the end of his life, did he express any philosophy outright, and then more an autobiographical context. Those expressions were incomplete for they lacked an overall cohesion. "One will search in vain in the writings of Pestalozzi for any presentation of a complete and unified system of educational theory."

(Anderson, p. 1) This might have occurred because Pestalozzi was applying his principles, not a philosopher more removed from practical application. This trial and error process so permeates his thinking that one must view him at any stage as a work in process. "He presents himself to the reader not as a prophet, not as an educational authority, but as a seeker after truth, as a student and investigator of the great problem of the education of man." (Anderson, p.1) The most common misinterpretations of Pestalozzi's philosophy, principles and methodologies are because the errant disciple overlooks this overarching characteristic of his life and work. So when attempting to establish what were the philosophies which guided his principles and inspired his methodologies one must attempt to discover what did not change over the duration of Pestalozzi's career regarding his beliefs. What were the constants of the truths he discovered, tested and retained?

In *Views and Experiences* (circa 1804), written at a midpoint in his life, he affirmed that

his primary goal for educational reform was, and remained, his concern for the poor. “I believed that I could neutralize the most oppressive consequences of the evils of the feudal system and of the factory system through renewed effort for the education of the people to increased productivity in home in farm and to a greater degree of self-respect.” (Pestalozzi, *Views and Experiences* as cited in Anderson, p. 101) Throughout his life this unwavering tenet remained the cornerstone of his reforms.

Pestalozzi believed that the fundamental way to reform education was to change the emphasis of schooling. If the child were to become the focus of the educational process the reforms would follow if not naturally, certainly more easily. “The aim of his method was to provide the stimulation necessary to enable the elementary potential of the child to be developed in the full.” (Heafford, p. 44) The acceptance of the child, with each child’s individual needs and differences, as the primary concern, the needs of the poor would be addressed. In *Swan Song* (1826), he left little doubt what his perspective was:

However clearly its principles may be stated, however much it means may be simplified, however clear the inner harmony of its execution may be made, no external harmony of the means of carrying it out is thinkable; every individual man, according to the peculiarities of his individuality will carry it out differently from every other. (Pestalozzi, *Swan Song*, as cited in Anderson, p. 234)

Long before individualization would become the hallmark of special education, Pestalozzi saw it as the solution to the exclusion of the poor from education.

Pestalozzi believed that the poor were excluded from education because they did not play a role in the broader concerns of Swiss society. In *Swan Song* Pestalozzi reflects on this characteristic of the system he sought to reform.

The education of our time, both in its influence and in the means it employs is

much more a result of the collective demands of our race... than a result of regard for the general needs of human nature itself as these find expression in every single individual... It is more concerned with what is foreign to us, than it is educative for what we ourselves are and for what as independent beings need. (Pestalozzi, *Swan Song*, as cited in Anderson, p. 278)

Intuitively, Pestalozzi saw how the focus on the aggregate obscures the individual. He saw that those children pushed to the margins in poverty remained there because the elite of Swiss society saw no need to alter that condition. In their, the elite's, view their needs were those of society.

Another constant was that Pestalozzi believed that the reforms applied to the poor were applicable to education in general. He sought not just for the inclusion of the poor but to devise a whole new system of education. "To replace old methods Pestalozzi wanted to introduce a new system of education which would take fully into account the child himself, what he was capable of achieving mentally and physically, and what he was experiencing spiritually." (Heafford, p. 41) He believed that the educational institutions which he created would be both the models and the laboratories for his philosophies, principles and methodologies. From these schools he would persist in his ongoing trial and error process, plus convince others to accept his teaching principles. "My institution was to be based upon a foundation of facts through the demonstration of which I could train myself for work and convince those about me of the truth of my views as to my undertaking and thus interest in my work." (Pestalozzi, *Views and Experiences*, as cited in Anderson, p. 101)

### **What Were His Methodologies?**

Once there is an acknowledgment of what were the constants in Pestalozzi's philosophies and beliefs, any attempt to fixate his methodologies is hindered by the constant state of flux

produced by his scientific approach to education. His faithful disciple Hermann Krüsi describes his master's practices as follows: "in applying his principles of education to specific branches, Pestalozzi often wandered from the true path; but running through all are philosophic ideas worthy of the great fame of their author." (Downs, p. 65-66) In other words, he delved in experiments in education, and it was not until the theory was proven in his classroom did it enter the realm of practice, and even once accepted as a practice, it remained such only as long as it proved itself to be functional. "Pestalozzi rejected the theoretical. For an idea to be valid it must have empirical merits." (Heafford, p. 41) Subsequently, in light of this overarching characteristic, the task of establishing what were in fact Pestalozzi's methodologies is not a process of merely quoting the master or citing what was done at what school he operated. It is rather a process of ranking by durability what principles survived the scrutiny of his scientific and clinical approach to the testing of his own principles. In other words, any Pestalozzian principle must be judged by its longevity with regards to his utilization and defense of it.

Pestalozzi's superb analytical skills enabled him to develop an evaluative process where those educational practices in need of reform would be identified. First, he sought to focus on the role education played in reproducing poverty. He was to assess exactly what it was about education which contributed to the marginalization of the poorest masses. Primarily, it was their exclusion from education. To that end, he simply used the tuition paid by the wealthy families to subsidize the expense of including poor children in his schools. Pestalozzi then took it even further. He believed he knew what was wrong with the teacher-student relationship. To rectify this problem he sought to have the classroom most resemble the first learning environment a human experiences, the family, particularly the model provided in the teaching of a child by a

mother. With those steps in place he then sought to address the broader issues and to attempt to identify if any constant factors about learning which excluded the poor, left the middle-classes unprepared and unhappy and produced an “educated” class incapable of independent thinking.

With regards to the final step to Pestalozzi’s analytical process, what Pestalozzi found as one probable culprit, of many, was education’s emphasis on the practice of memorization. He believed that memorizing passages where the pupil had little context is an empty pursuit, and to the degree that it inhibits independent thinking, a detrimental one. In *The Letters to Greaves* (1818-1819), Pestalozzi wrote:

If such a system, enforcing partial exercise of the memory, is so absurd in its application and so detrimental in its consequences, at a period when the intellect may be supposed to be able to make some progress at least without being so constantly and anxiously attended to, an exclusive cultivation of the memory must be still more misapplied at the tender age when the intellect is only just dawning, when the faculty of discerning is yet informed and unable to consign to the memory the notions of separate objects in their distinction from each other. (Pestalozzi, *The Letters to Greaves*, as cited in Anderson, p. 195)

Almost prophetically Pestalozzi is in agreement with both Howard Gardner’s *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (1993), and Robert Sternberg’s *Beyond IQ: a triarchic theory of human intelligence* (1985), in suggesting that the emphasis of one mental process to the exclusion of others is misguided. In essence, Pestalozzi believed that the essential form of education was not memorization, but rather teaching students how to think. “Instruction did not consist of ‘teaching pupils about thought, but forming their capacity to think.’” (Heafford, p.51)

Pestalozzi proposes what would essentially become educational psychology. In doing so, Pestalozzi challenges teachers to become more scientific. “Teachers, therefore, had to reject the conventional teaching methods and begin to analyze the mental process of the child in order to

discover how the concepts a child could comprehend depended on his age and his stage of development.” (Heafford, p. 51) He thought that by establishing structure to the learning process he would further the science of teaching. “By ordering knowledge and experiences, he hoped to find an ideal way in which to teach children, and methods which would prove universally applicable.” (ibid, p. 49) In doing so, Pestalozzi was promoting both educational psychology and establishing teaching as a learned profession.

Subsequent attempts in England and America to fixate his practices through the establishment of a rigid Pestalozzian teaching style was merely to attempt to bracket one phase of an ongoing process to the exclusion of what preceded and what followed it. For Pestalozzi developing teaching technique was an evolving process; though driven by basic philosophies and principles, his methodologies could not be frozen in orthodoxy, only molded by trial and error. Not only did Pestalozzi use this process of empirical assessment in developing methodologies, he used it as a teaching methodology. “The only object of his attention was to find out at each moment what instruction his children stood particularly in need of, and what was the best manner of connecting it with the knowledge they already possessed....” (Downs, p.78)

### **English Adopt Pestalozzian Methods**

America’s adoption of Pestalozzianism would follow at least two distinct routes. One branch would essentially come to a dead end in New Harmony, Indiana, while the other would take hold and prosper for half a century through its base in Oswego, New York. Ironically, the less durable route would involve the direct guidance of the master himself. A Scottish-born American would approach Pestalozzi and ask him to come to Philadelphia to open a school.

Pestalozzi would decline but offer the services of a faithful disciple from France.

The second, more circuitous, route would pass from Switzerland to France, to England, to Canada and finally to Oswego. It would be the second route which would produce the long-term impact on educational reform in American education, ultimately known as the Oswego Movement. It was while passing through England one might say a Pestalozzian heresy evolved. That misinterpretation of Pestalozzi's philosophies and principles would result in a general devaluation of Pestalozzianism in North America over time. It might even be suggested that there was a third, indirect, branch of American Pestalozzianism when one considers that it was Horace Mann's exposure to the Pestalozzian schools of Prussia, along with his knowledge of the New Harmony experiment, which inspired his revolutionary educational reforms in Massachusetts.

One factor inhibiting the English-speaking world from partaking in the Pestalozzian reform movement was the Napoleonic wars. During the early years when Pestalozzi was directly involved in the administration of his schools, when his disciples were not feuding and his reforms were first spreading throughout Europe, England was cut off from the Continent.

Pestalozzi had friends and followers in various European countries, and schools run according to his principles were founded in many and widely separated places. But because of the Napoleonic Wars and the Continental Blockade Pestalozzi's connections with English people were not established until late in his career. (Silber, p. 278)

It was not until late in Pestalozzi's career, when the mere mention of his name suggested reform and rejuvenation of education, that the English came to learn from the master. An additional complication was that the English arrived with preconceived notions as to what Pestalozzianism was about. "...there was in England only sporadic knowledge about Pestalozzi's activities during the time of the French hegemony in Europe, and the little that became known there was conveyed

though books rather than through people.” (Silber, p. 279) They missed the era when the master was a merely a humble teacher seeking answers to complex social and educational problems, when his ideas were tested and challenged, when the concept of “Pestalozzian orthodoxy” might still be considered an oxymoron.

In the post war era following the defeat of Napoleon England’s industrialization accelerated dramatically. The accompanying social upheaval produced a counter force seeking political, social, economic, and educational reform. In this setting certain Englishmen began searching for solutions to the problems of an industrialized society.

“When after Waterloo traveling on the Continent was easier, educationists and philanthropists went to European countries to seek both pleasure and information. There was at that time in England a strong awareness of the need for improvement of the condition of the poor, activated by religious motives and promoted by such religious groups as the Evangelicals, the Methodists, and the Quakers.” (Silber, p. 280)

Motivated by the intellectual freedom spawned by the Protestant reformation and the eventual fragmentation of Protestantism in England, these reformers sought to incorporate educational reform with proselytization and spiritual revival.

It was one such religiously motivated educator who introduced Pestalozzianism to the England, and ultimately the English-speaking world. “In 1818 Dr. Charles Mayo, an English clergyman and classical scholar, in charge of a party of English youths seeking education, visited Yverdon in the Pays de Vaud and was prevailed upon to spend some hours in the school of Pestalozzi.” (Dearborn, p. 42 )

This first English-speaking disciple of Pestalozzi spoke no German. Dr. Mayo merely watched the master teach his students and marveled at how he held their attention. Dr. Mayo

knew nothing of what he said, nor the subtleties of the process because he did not understand what was being said.

The first class he observed, even though conducted in a language Dr. Mayo did not understand, so impressed him with the intelligence and vivacious earnestness of purpose manifested in the pupils, that he looked elsewhere in the school for further evidence.” ( Dearborn, p. 42)

Dr. Mayo observed Pestalozzi work with the children unable to understand what he is saying to them. Without the means to interact or question Pestalozzi, Dr. Mayo placed his observations into the context of his experience, his preconceived notion of Pestalozzianism and English educational principles. Dr. Mayo saw the enthusiasm on the part of students, something that Pestalozzi’s reputation would have reinforced, and attributes that positive interaction solely to technique. What Dr. Mayo patently rejected was the linkage between the freedom of the students and the intimacy of the relationship Pestalozzi fostered.

While not wholly in sympathy with the form of work done by Pestalozzi, Dr. Mayo was thoroughly enthusiastic about the underlying principles advocated by his great humanitarian, as he understood them. Upon these fundamental factors gleaned from the writings of Pestalozzi and stated by him or his associates to the English students of education, the philosophy emerged which determined the work of the English Schools putting into practice the so-called object teaching. (Dearborn, p. 51-52)

Dr. Mayo, in his linguistic isolation, had decided that Pestalozzi’s success as a teacher was not based on his inclusive practices, nor in how he sought to replicate the learning environment of mother and child, but rather on a subordinate technique which Dr. Mayo called “object teaching.” True, Pestalozzi had advocated this learning process which resembles techniques used today with dyslexic students, that is, involve multiple parts of the brain in the learning process. However, it might be suggested for Dr. Mayo to place such a misplaced emphasis on the technique, might

suggest he missed the broader philosophy altogether. “The apparently accepted principles signify the shift in emphasis, in theory at least, from the acquisition of knowledge to the stimulation and development of powers of observation, and the spirit of inquiry as primary considerations in the educative process.” (Dearborn, p. 11)

Though Dr. Mayo will miss the broader point of Pestalozzi’s philosophies there will be reforms embedded in Pestalozzi’s teachings. The principle of treating teaching as a profession, that is, a learned skill, requiring training, and employing observation as a form of rudimentary educational psychology all will have their positive impact on education in England, “...and although almost all that he (Pestalozzi) did was misunderstood or dragged downwards, he has been a chief instrument in the regeneration of British schools.” (Monroe, p. 31-32)

Regrettably, the alteration of Pestalozzianism in England will not be limited to the failings of the initial communication between mentor and disciple. What remained of Pestalozzianism was to endure a frontal assault from an educational style born in and of the industrial revolution. “Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker, and Andrew Bell, a Church of England clergyman, had introduced the monitorial system simultaneously and independently.” (Silber, p. 281) This teaching methodology, which will be known as the Lancastrian Method, will be the antithesis of what was the true essence of Pestalozzi’s philosophies and reforms. Spawned by financial considerations, “The system was a practical expedient at a time of acute shortage of teachers.” (Ibid)

Whereas the Pestalozzian system sought to produce an intimate relationship that resembled a mother and child relationship, the Lancastrian system more closely resembled a military or industrial hierarchy. The Pestalozzian system employed a low student-teacher ratio, but the Lancastrian system was based on one teacher working with vast numbers of pupils.

Its chief object was to give the rudiments of education to the masses of poor children as cheaply as possible, employing one qualified teacher to several hundred or even one or two thousand pupils and making the more advanced of these pass on their knowledge to the less developed fellows. (Silber, p. 281)

Furthermore, the Lancastrian method was exactly what Pestalozzi had found so offensive in Switzerland, and though like the Pestalozzian method it was devised to include the poor in the educational process, it promoted memorization above all else and just enough education not to upset the English class system. “In the Lancastrian schools the three Rs were taught, while Dr. Bell, at least in the beginning, taught writing only so as not to raise the poor above their station. Learning was purely by rote.” (Silber, p. 281)

In the cultural environment where education reform played such a subordinate role, it is reasonable to assume that competing reforms would come into conflict. “The English people, as a class, have never concerned themselves very seriously with the study of education as a science; hence the innovations of Pestalozzi, or of any other great reformer.... would not be calculated to arouse much interest.” (Monroe, p. 30) However logical it might seem that competing reforms might come into conflict where the whole concept of reform is alien, what evolved in England was reflective of the class and religious conflict which had plagued that culture for centuries. The dissenters to the Church of England had advocated Pestalozzian reforms whereas the Church of England’s clergy supported Lancastrian. In an effort to maintain a unified front in the reform of education the advocates of this greatly altered form of Pestalozzianism offered to modify it further as a compromise to the increasingly hegemonic Lancastrian method. Ultimately the gesture was rebuffed though it appears that the compromises remained part of English Pestalozzianism.

The Royal Lancastrian Society, later called the British and Foreign School Society, was based on religious principles common to all Christian denominations; it was

patronized mainly by Nonconformists and Whigs; while the National Society for the Education of the Poor according to the principles of the Church of England, was, as the name suggest, under the direction of the Established Church and consequently superior to the other in influence and in numbers. It was the supporter of the former who tried to combine its methods with Pestalozzian, those of the latter who saw to it that Pestalozzianism did not take firm hold in England. (Silber, p. 281)

What proved to be a death knell to English Pestalozzianism was not an assault on its value as an educational tool, but rather a questioning of its religious premises. Irish clergyman John Synge, grandfather of Irish dramatist John M. Synge, questioned Pestalozzi's belief that the child possessed natural attributes which should be encouraged as part of the educational process. Synge, who had been an early advocate of Pestalozzianism, questioned this premise from a theological perspective involving the inherent sinfulness of the human race. Synge wrote Pestalozzi a letter seeking clarification of these theological questions.

He therefore implored Pestalozzi to state clearly that he considered man as corrupt from birth and that, if he speaks in his works of the goodness of man, he only refers to those traces of the image of God which are left in him after his fall and which can be detected in the various faculties with which he is endowed. (Silber, pp. 291-292)

Pestalozzi, though the grandson of a Calvinist minister himself, remained faithful to his educational premise which owed much more to Rousseau than to Calvin. Needless to say, Pestalozzi's response did not allay Synge's misgivings or most of his fellow dissenter views.

This was indeed a serious point on which Pestalozzianism stood or fell in Britain. Pestalozzi's reply to Synge of January 1819 is intended to allay his [Synge's] anxiety. Yet although Pestalozzi's personal friends, all devote Christians, were convinced of the genuineness of his [Pestalozzi's] Christianity, doubts persisted among the wider public and were largely responsible for the slow progress his method made in this country. (Silber, p. 292)

This loss of support undercut Pestalozzianism within the largely Calvinistic community of

dissenters. The Lancastrian method, co-devised by a minister of the Church of England, with its traditional practices and deference to English class consciousness, was the accepted method for the ministers of that hegemonic branch of Protestantism. Cut off from the base which would be its natural constituency and excluded from the schools of the Church of England, Pestalozzian began a gradual decline. By mid-century all that remained were a handful of institutions practicing this watered down version of Pestalozzi's principles, but that was sufficient for it to be reintroduced into America via Canada.

### **Pestalozzian Methods Come to America**

As discussed above, Pestalozzi's philosophy took two distinct paths to America. The first was through William Maclure (1763-1840), a Scot turned American patriot who met with Pestalozzi and attempted to persuade the master to emigrate to found a school in America based on his methods. This path would eventually culminate with the failure of the social and educational experiment at New Harmony, Indiana. The second, more indirect route, would be ultimately known as the Oswego Method, came to America first through England and then Canada. Only when the Oswego's Superintendent of Schools visited a museum display in Toronto showing the methods of an English Pestalozzian infant's school, was this branch of the movement to take roots in America.

William Maclure had first traveled to America on business, enamored by the culture and the spirit of independence, he resolved to emigrate from his native Scotland. He became a successful geologist and entrepreneur in America and was asked to represent the new independent American government at low-level negotiations in Paris. While in Paris, Maclure was exposed to

Pestalozzi and his reforms. Maclure was aware that American schools had suffered during the break with England.

Education in the United States had suffered severely through the War of Independence and was, towards the end of the eighteenth century, almost non-existent. In colonial times it mainly been in the hand of the Church; but the new national consciousness and the demand for political equality and religious freedom made necessary a more 'rational' and 'useful' education for all. (Silber, p. 307)

Additionally, Maclure saw the democratic basis to Pestalozzian reforms and decided that it would be a perfect marriage of this idealistic political experiment with a new democratic educational process. Maclure shared the Jeffersonian (and Pestalozzian) premise that an informed electorate is critical to success of the democratic experiment.

Not only did the new democracy require an informed electorate, like Pestalozzi's democratic Switzerland, American schools employed classical, if not antiquated, educational methodologies.

For boys whose talents (or parents) pointed them toward collegiate education and the professions, the grammar school was a necessity. Although these schools usually offered intensive study in Greek as well as Latin (and often Hebrew as well), they were commonly referred to as "Latin" grammar schools. (Urban & Wagoner, p. 47)

Memorization of dead languages was anathema to Pestalozzi's reforms, at least when it came to broadening the popular base and including those in the margins in the educational process.

"Maclure introduced Pestalozzianism into the United States because he was convinced of the 'sanity and efficiency of Pestalozzi's doctrines.'" (Silber, p. 312) Though the new democracy clearly benefitted from the classical education of its founders, it was generally recognized it was not the means by which to educate the masses.

Concurrent with Maclure's personal quest to improve the quality of American education

there was emerging in the new republic a general sense that education needed to be restructured.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, a new purpose for education emerged. As the young country developed politically, the goal of the schools shifted from religious training to preparing for or perpetuating democracy. Many liberal Americans considered free, public schools essential for a democratic government. (Griffin, p.18)

It was in this context that Maclure approached Pestalozzi. As with any recent convert Maclure thought the allure of coming to America would be irresistible. He asked Pestalozzi to come to Philadelphia where Maclure would use his fortune to support a model school for reform.

Pestalozzi declined, but suggested the services of a trusted and knowledgeable disciple, Joseph Neef.

...In 1805 Maclure visited Pestalozzi's school at Yverdon. Enthusiastic over what he heard and observed, Maclure attempted to persuade Pestalozzi to emigrate to Philadelphia for the purpose of establishing a new school which Maclure offered to finance. The effort was unsuccessful, but on Pestalozzi's recommendation his former assistant, Joseph Neef, then conducting a Pestalozzian school in Paris, was appointed. Neef emigrated to the new world in 1806 to set up the first Pestalozzian school in America, at Philadelphia. (Downs, p.119)

Joseph Neef, an Alsatian who had once both studied for the priesthood and served in Napoleon's army, came to Philadelphia to open a model school based on Pestalozzian principles. Neef arrived in 1806 but spoke little or no English. He would take three years to learn English and he did so through the exercise of writing the first book on education written in English North America. "Although Christopher Dock's Schul-Ordnung is the oldest American book on the art of teaching, Neef's book may be said to be the first strictly pedagogical book written and published in the new world in the English language." (Monroe, p. 77-78) In 1809, Neef opened the Philadelphia school. The urban setting was not totally consistent with Pestalozzian values, plus the bulk of the pupils came from the upper classes of the city. He operated in the city for

three years when he was convinced by others move it out of town to the more bucolic surroundings of Delaware County. Though many students followed him to the rural setting, he did not increase his enrollment sufficiently to offset what he had lost in moving from the city. Additionally, as was the case in England, part of the demise of Pestalozzian reform was produced by conflict resulting from religious interpretation. "Neef himself held rather broad views on religious matters and he was accused by his rural neighbors of inculcating atheistic ideas in the minds of his boys. This charge absolutely groundless, but the school suffered nevertheless from the criticisms." (Monroe, pp.107-108)

With the closing of the Delaware County school Neef was persuaded to move to Louisville where again he made a short-lived attempt at opening a school. "The school did not prosper as Dr. Galt [Neef's benefactor] had hoped it would; and after a couple years of effort, Neef grew discouraged, abandoned teaching, and purchased a farm in the country, about twenty-five miles from Louisville. Here he continued to reside until his call to New Harmony in 1825." (Monroe, p. 108) Neef's brief retirement to farming ended when he was contacted by Robert Owen who had designs to create a utopian village on the plains of Indiana at New Harmony. Once again it had been William Maclure who had brokered Neef's involvement at resurrecting Pestalozzianism in America. "While the community was in the main an expression of the social ideals of Robert Owen, the educational interests were entrusted to William Maclure. Maclure called Joseph Neef and other Americanized Pestalozzians to his assistance in working out his educational experiment." (Monroe, p. 109-110)

The managerial arrangement of the educational component at New Harmony reflected the fact of Neef's recent failures in Pennsylvania and Kentucky, "...Neef, the co-adjutor of Pestalozzi,

seems to have served as head master, and Mr. Maclure as superintendent of education.”

(Monroe, p. 112) But bolstering Neef’s apparent managerial limitations with Maclure’s skills as a successful entrepreneur was not sufficient to save this Pestalozzian experiment. Neef and Maclure could not insulate themselves from the fate of New Harmony itself. “The community experiment at New Harmony collapsed after only two years, because of dissension between Maclure and Owen...” (Downs, p.120) Owen attributed his experiment’s failure on the Pestalozzian school: “In his autobiography Mr. Owen was inclined to blame the schools in part for the failure of the New Harmony experiment; but this blame was clearly misplaced.” (Monroe, p.122)

Much of the conflict between Maclure and Owen was caused by Owen’s advocacy of the Lancastrian method of teaching. “Maclure and Owen differed rather widely in their opinions of educational practice.” (Monroe, p.122). Maclure, unlike Dr. Mayo in England, refused to compromise. “Mr. Maclure was... too familiar with the Pestalozzian system at its fountain head not to recognize the mixture of British Pestalozzianism with a deal of mechanism and routine from the practices of Lancaster and Wilderspin, and this he lamented.” (Monroe, p.169) Though Owen was to blame the educational component, New Harmony met the fate of most American utopian communities.

With the closing of New Harmony this branch of the Pestalozzian experiment in America came to an end. “Neither the Philadelphia school nor the New Harmony experiment exerted wide influence on American education.” (Downs, p.121) Though the failures tainted the worth of the movement itself those familiar with the facts were able to critique its demise. “Neef’s failures have been attributed to his imperfect knowledge of English, his lack of understanding of the American

character, his inability to adapt Pestalozzian methods to new world conditions, and his too frequent migrations.” (Downs, p.120) The epitaph of this branch of Pestalozzian should not be that it was a total failure. For it was the many articles written in educational journals about the Philadelphia and New Harmony experiments which led Horace Mann to inquire during his travels in Europe about the Pestalozzian schools of Prussia. Once more, Pestalozzianism in America was not dead. “ In fact, there was little general adoption of Pestalozzian methods in American schools prior to 1860. ” (Ibid) Though the first graft seemingly withered on the vine, the second, a hybrid would take hold and flourish for a time, just long enough to impact on the educational environment.

### **Sheldon Brings the British Interpretation of Pestalozzian Principles to Oswego**

The branch of the Pestalozzian movement which will ultimately be called the Oswego Movement is largely the product of one man’s effort, Edward A. Sheldon. Sheldon was born October 4, 1823 in southwestern New York state. In many elemental ways Sheldon’s life mirrored that of Pestalozzi. Like Pestalozzi, Sheldon was motivated by the plight of the poor. “Shortly after leaving college he [Sheldon] was brought face to face with the ignorance and misery of the poor living at Oswego where he had located for the purpose of engaging in business.” (Monroe, p.171) Caught up in that mixture of evangelicalism and educational reform which permeated the first half of the nineteenth century Sheldon set about the task of establishing a school for the poor children he encountered. “As he [Sheldon] visited these poor people he became more and more convinced that some means should be taken to furnish the children with free education and attempt to improve their living conditions.” (Dearborn, p. 2) And so Sheldon

abandoned his entrepreneurial plans and set about the task of helping these children. “The ‘Ragged School,’ for such it was called, was composed in the main of one hundred and twenty rude and untrained Irish boys and girls between the ages of five and twenty-one years.” (Monroe, p.173) The school was a success and a source of pride in the eyes of the community. “The school was an innovation and the sight of the youthful schoolmaster walking through the streets surrounded by these ‘wild Irish and French’ boys aroused a great deal of local interest and enthusiasm for the undertaking.” (Dearborn, p. 2)

Sheldon’s work at the “Ragged School” would gain him a reputation such that he eventually is offered the position of superintendent of the Syracuse schools. In Syracuse only three years, Sheldon is asked to return to create a school system for the city of Oswego. The Oswego Board of Education’s idea of creating a city-wide school system was inspired by Sheldon’s work at the “Ragged School.”

Out of this philanthropic movement grew the free and graded schools of Oswego. Mr. Sheldon was superintendent of the schools of Syracuse from 1851 to 1853 when he returned again to Oswego— this time to organize a free public school system in which poor and rich alike were received on equal footing. (Monroe, p. 174)

No longer managing just one school, or as in Syracuse overseeing a system which already existed, Sheldon was confronted with forty-one separate schools in multiple school districts, none of which was coordinated with the other. Sheldon set about the task of organizing the schools along lines which would become eventual models for the nation. He established neighborhood elementary schools, which fed into middle schools, which fed into high schools. But it was not merely the organization of Oswego’s schools which presented a challenge.

As superintendent of Oswego’s schools Sheldon found, as Pestalozzi had a generation

earlier in Switzerland, that having a trained teaching staff was not only essential to an individual school's effectiveness but critical for a school system's success. To this end Sheldon conducted Saturday training sessions to allow experienced teachers to prepare new teachers for their jobs. Oswego's Saturday training sessions gained such a national reputation that Sheldon found many of his teachers leaving for positions elsewhere. With so many teachers leaving on a regular basis, Sheldon found the once-a-week sessions no longer sufficient. This process evolved into a formal training staff and eventually developed into a formal training facility for the Oswego School District.

With the trained teachers frequently leaving for other positions and with the problem of constantly preparing new teachers to replace those who went elsewhere, Mr. Sheldon was confronted by the impossibility of accomplishing his purpose, viz., the adequate introduction of new methods of teaching into the Oswego schools system. Consequently, he proposed to the board of education that a city training school be established for the training of primary teachers. (Dearborn, p.13)

Thus this training facility was born of the needs of one school district to have trained teachers, a rather functional beginning, unlike many similar institutions.

In his position as superintendent of Oswego's schools, Sheldon reached the conclusion that there was a tremendous variety of teaching styles employed by his staff. These differing styles produced varied results. He wondered if there weren't some element which would more standardize both the practice and the product of education.

After discussing the educational needs of the schools of Oswego with the superintendent of the city schools of Elmira, Mr. Sheldon made a tour of inspection of the Toronto school system and was astonished to find just what he felt was needed in the Oswego schools in the way of collections of pictures, charts of colors, form, reading charts, and books for teachers. These were found, not in the schools of Toronto, but in a museum where they had been placed by the Minister of Education for Ontario who had been abroad collecting educational

materials from various parts of the world. (Dearborn, p. 11)

It was in that Toronto museum that Sheldon discovered a display advocating the teaching practices of the Home and Colonial Training School in London. This institution was one of the few English schools still practicing the hybrid form of Pestalozzianism first introduced in England by Dr. Charles Mayo almost a generation earlier.

It appears that Sheldon had a cursory knowledge of Pestalozzi from the many articles written about his reforms in educational journals during the first half of the nineteenth century. At this time, the name Pestalozzi still suggested radical educational reform. However, what Sheldon was probably not aware was how far England's version had strayed so far from the original premises. Instead of the wide ranging principles advocating democratic and humanistic reforms to the process of education, the English heresy had focused on the technique of "object teaching" and designated that as the essence of Pestalozzianism.

A detailed account of object teaching as it was conducted in the English Home and Colonial Infant Society's Schools and in the Oswego Schools, is included to clarify references made in the preceding chapters to object teaching, and to show how completely Oswego adopted the English interpretation of Pestalozzi's educational principles. (Dearborn p. 42)

When Sheldon sees all the materials in Toronto he is clearly impacted not by the breadth of Pestalozzian philosophy, for the English would not have advocated it, but by the wealth of teaching aids the English Pestalozzian teachers have developed in concert with their version's methodology. Once again, it was a corollary of Pestalozzian principles which impacted on the educational process even though the fundamentals of Pestalozzian philosophy may have been eclipsed or by this time outright excluded. Pestalozzi had taught that teaching was an art and something which could be trained for as well as a profession which required preparation and

structure. By the time Pestalozzian techniques reach Canada they had been already modified twice. First, during Dr. Mayo's introduction into England, and then in the years that followed when the reforms had been rejected by educators of the Church of England what remained of Pestalozzi's principles had been altered and melded with other methodologies, particularly those of the antithetical Lancastrian method.

After a few months of toying with the concepts displayed at the National Museum in Toronto Sheldon dispatched an aide to England to find a Pestalozzian teacher. "After the system had been on trial for a year, it was decided to send to London and engage a Pestalozzian teacher to come to Oswego and organize a training class." (Monroe, p.177) Admitting his limited knowledge of the principles and the techniques Sheldon agrees on an English candidate.

Sheldon was impressed with this educational technique; however, he felt that he had only a limited understanding of the ideas. Thus, he decided to bring Margaret Jones, who had eighteen years experience teaching with these methods, from England to demonstrate these procedures to Oswego's faculty. (Griffin, p. 46)

Thus, the marriage between English Pestalozzianism and the teacher training facility at Oswego was complete. "In May 1861, Miss Jones assumed her duties as head of the Oswego Primary Teachers' Training School." (Dearborn, p.14)

The benefits reaped by the institution which grew out of the one-time informal Saturday training sessions were immediate. The state superintendent's interest in Pestalozzian reforms is what brings the Oswego teacher training facility into the fold of state operated teaching institutions.

In 1863, Victor Moreau Rice (1818-1869), then state superintendent of public instruction in New York, became interested in the Pestalozzian movement at Oswego, and he secured an annual grant from the state of three thousand dollars toward the support of the school for a period of two years; and in 1866 Oswego

became one the regular state normal schools of New York. (Monroe, p.180)

From his “Ragged School” to his teacher training facility being incorporated into the state system of teacher colleges, Sheldon’s rise from obscurity to prominence had been spectacular.

Sheldon’s rapid success did not insulate him or his program from setback. Shortly after receiving the state sanctioned support, just one year after her appointment, Miss Jones, the cornerstone of the Pestalozzian program in Oswego, decided to return to England.

At the end of the year Miss Jones returned to England and Mr. Sheldon, against his wishes, was made principal of the new Training School. Miss Jones, upon leaving, recommended a friend, a former associate in the English Home and Colonial School, to carry forward the work she had begun. This friend was Herman Krüsi, Jr., son of Herman Krüsi who had personally associated with Pestalozzi. (Dearborn, p.15)

Just as associating the venerated name of Pestalozzi with a remote training facility had catapulted it into national prominence, though it is seems that the outcomes were not calculated, Sheldon knew the value of name recognition. When Margaret Jones recommended as her replacement the son of one of Pestalozzi’s most trusted disciples, Sheldon jumped at the opportunity. Though Krüsi the junior was an able teacher steeped in the Pestalozzian tradition, there is little doubt that with his name brought a pedigree and with it recognition. But with the name recognition was a product of an association with Pestalozzi himself, and with that association came a familiarity with Pestalozzian principles. This son of a one of most trusted and knowledgeable aides of Pestalozzi did not like what he saw in England, and therefore would not be happy with Oswego adoption of the English heresy.

In 1846 he [Krüsi the junior] received an appointment in the Pestalozzian school at Cheam, England, conducted by Charles Mayo. The school was patronized chiefly by the wealthy classes and the nobility, and the method of teaching employed there, notes Krüsi, was the old routine system which was very distasteful to him.

(Monroe, p.186)

It is clear that the English practice of blending of the Lancastrian methodology with that of Pestalozzi reminded Krüsi too much of the style of learning which the master himself had sought to reform. Though tempered in his response upon his arrival at Oswego Krüsi stated the dilemma as diplomatically as possible.

Her [Margaret Jones] teaching... was essentially based on the principles of which owe their chief advocacy and practical application to the work of the Swiss school reformer, Pestalozzi. The more exclusive attention to object lessons, as a separate branch of study, was of English origin, and has since been greatly modified.  
(Monroe, p.178)

Realizing that he had been appointed by Sheldon to a lucrative position in America, Krüsi was pragmatic enough not to challenge the interpretation of Pestalozzianism which had resulted in Oswego's rise to prominence. Sheldon, in response to Krüsi's muted protests, rationalized the status of his institution's educational theories. Sheldon is quoted as saying:

The system which we have adopted is justly termed Pestalozzian, for to Pestalozzi, that greatest of all modern reformers in education, may be credited the development and in many points the origin of those ideas which lie at the basis of this system. It is true that these ideas, and the modes of applying them in the development of human faculties, have been somewhat modified and improved during the experience of half a century, but they are none the less the real thoughts and discoveries of this great philosopher. (Monroe, p.176)

As any modern spin doctor, Sheldon has artfully responded to critics who, like Krüsi, knew that object teaching was not the essence of true Pestalozzianism. Sheldon describes the Oswego method as "somewhat modified" from Pestalozzi's principles, whereas it was at best merely subordinate component, only a recommended technique. It was sufficiently subordinate to broader principles that it might possibly have been only an experiment in teaching technique. One critic of Sheldon described the problem being part of his constitution. "Mr. Sheldon's failure at

times to sense the full meaning of a generalized statement and his inability in many cases to make theory and practice consistent with each other...” (Dearborn, p.78)

The Oswego Movement would ultimately gain national prominence. “From the Oswego normal school the phase of Pestalozzianism, with which this institution was directly interested, spread throughout the country through the students trained under Mr. Sheldon, Mr. Krüsi and a long list of worthy associates.” (Monroe, p.184) This notoriety was the product of three primary factors. First, the national reputation of the Oswego Primary Teachers’ Training School which sent teachers throughout the nation before its association with English Pestalozzianism. Second, it was the beneficiary of its association with the renown reformer. And third, the National Teacher’s Association, without endorsing object teaching, noted in its national meeting of August, 1865, that Oswego trained teachers were “...skillful thorough teachers” (Monroe, p.183). The style of teaching would be called the Oswego Method, and would receive international renown. Even Japanese institutions would adopt these teaching principles for many of their schools.

It would not be the lack of faithfulness to Pestalozzi’s principles which would initiate the demise in popularity of the Oswego Movement. Both true Pestalozzianism and the Oswego Method derivation were less efficient, although for different reasons, than the cost effective Lancastrian model. As more and more Americans clamored for education for the masses, while failing to establish a efficient methods of funding, a cheap educational model was essential. “Local support of object teaching was in the main generously given until 1872, when a public clamor against school costs and for a return to the old three R’s caused the system to be ejected from the public schools.” (Dearborn, p. 81) Gradually, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, object teaching, Oswego Movement, and Pestalozzianism would fall into disrepute. The

Oswego Method had become so identified with that of Pestalozzi that the flaws of the former were attributed to that of the later. It was generally not known, except through the muted actions of disciples such as the younger Krüsi, that the surviving American interpretation of the master's philosophy and principles was a pale replication of the original.

### **What Caused Errors in Interpretations of Pestalozzi's Reforms?**

It might be easy to attribute the alteration of Pestalozzian principles by the English as a product of cultural differences produced by both industrialization and England's entrenched class system. Though those factors did play a role there was an intrinsic element to Pestalozzi which facilitated misinterpretation. Pestalozzi's writing style was and is difficult to read. First and foremost, his initial writings were fiction. The reader had to glean what was philosophical from what was mere character development. It was probably not a coincidence that reading Pestalozzi was as taxing an exercise as reading the Bible. He wrote his novels as long parables and like those biblical models Pestalozzi's works would be subject to multiple interpretations. When he did write non-fiction, his flowery tone was not easy to follow. "Pestalozzi's written expressions of his educational theories are not infrequently obscure and occasionally are inconsistent." (Downs, p. 50) Pestalozzi's non-fiction was not written in a scholarly style, it was more of a memoir.

The English-speaking reader had more complex issues to compound the task of understanding Pestalozzi. "Since reading Pestalozzi in the original is a laborious task even for someone acquainted with German, and for the English reader is restricted to the one or two works available in translation..." (Silber, p. XI) Though that is no longer the case, it was during the time of Mayo and Sheldon, and was the case even well into this century. Only recent efforts

at English translations have improved the accessibility of his work.

Additionally, since Pestalozzi spoke no English and his initial supporters in England spoke no German much, was left to observation. The English observers found, what many of Pestalozzi's contemporaries found, though the students responded favorably and enthusiastically, the master's classrooms bordered on chaos.

Pestalozzi was severely criticized by many of contemporaries because of his apparent inability to put his theories into actual practice. To many observers his teaching was anything but well ordered and to the superficial student the cause was the failure was attributable to the unsoundness of the principles upon the new methods were based. (Dearborn, p.58)

It seems as though the English observers were appalled by the apparent disorganization of Pestalozzi's classroom which was in fact the byproduct of physical freedom he allowed his students. It was in response to these criticisms that Dr. Mayo imposed an un-Pestalozzian order to the classroom environment and focused his efforts on what he perceived to be the source of Pestalozzi's success, the specific methodologies of instruction, that is, object teaching.

However, it was not just the English, and others facing linguistic barriers, who misunderstood Pestalozzi. He was constantly fearful that his philosophy would be misinterpreted. One reason why Pestalozzi's philosophy was misinterpreted was due to the inexperience of his youthful disciples. "Because of their sketchy education and experience, in most instances, the young teachers were incapable of applying Pestalozzian principles in uniform ways or with true understanding." (Downs, p.71) One of his former pupils, Louis Vulliemin, blamed the confusion on the master himself. "Vulliemin concluded: 'What was so emphatically called Pestalozzi's method was an enigma to us [the students] {author's brackets}. So it was to our teachers. Like the disciples of Socrates, every one of them interpreted the master's doctrines in his own

fashion...” (Downs, p.71)

Another factor adding to the confusion was that Pestalozzi was constantly engaged in a process of trial and error. “Throughout Pestalozzian literature there are frequent references to Pestalozzi’s ‘method,’ as though it were a fully defined and developed set of principles, capable of universal application. In fact, the methods are highly amorphous, varying in time and place.” (Downs, p. 78) Where there were fundamental principles about who should be educated and the value of education these principles were unchanging. On the other hand, his methodologies were in a constant state of flux. He believe that the only test of a proposed method was whether it accomplished its goal or not.

It was just one of these experimental methodologies which were snatched by the English disciples from Pestalozzi’s developmental process and frozen in time. “Pestalozzi’s notion of ‘Anschauung’ is here called object teaching, a term which has too narrowly been identified with the essence of Pestalozzianism in the English-speaking world.” (Silber, p.308) With that narrow focus Pestalozzian philosophy, principle, and methodologies were redefined for a large segment of the industrialized world’s population. One biographer of Pestalozzi, Gerald Lee Gutek, described the misinterpretation as missing the point about the learning environment.

Unfortunately the English Pestalozzians, under the influence of Charles and Elizabeth Mayo, lost sight of the cultivation the love environment and of the general method.... In losing sight of the general method the Mayos’ version emphasized only one phase of Pestalozzianism, the object lesson. (Downs, p.118)

What *Anschauung* was in fact was Pestalozzi trying to create a replicable process for the teacher-student relationship which embodied the natural relationship he had with his pupils. His personal and personable teaching style was described as such:

He [Pestalozzi] possessed a remarkable instinct for developing the faculties of his pupils. To set the intellectual machinery in motion, to make it work and keep it working was the prime object. In reaching that aim, Pestalozzi relied upon an essential principle in education: to arouse the thorough interest of his pupils in the lesson, mainly through their own direct participation. (Downs, p.132)

At times there appears to have been so many impediments to the development and expansion of Pestalozzi's teachings, it is a wonder why only the English variation was so different.

Not all of the blame for the misinterpretation of Pestalozzian doctrine can be placed on the Mayos, industrialism, English educational and cultural values or the assault by less costly Lancastrian method. There is also reason to believe that America after 1776, with its initial dominance by Calvinistic values, was not ready for Pestalozzi's message about educating the poor. Though the grandson of a Calvinist minister, whose family fled Italian speaking region of Switzerland when they converted from Catholicism, Pestalozzi rejected any notions of predestination or the inherent evil of humanity. Unlike England, America had access to Pestalozzianism in both its altered and unaltered forms. "This conception of wholeness seems to have been more alive in the Philadelphia and New Harmony schools, perhaps because in Neef they had a more direct and truer disciple of Pestalozzi." (Silber, p.314) America allowed one version to die on the vine just years after the arrival while the other lasted just about one generation.

That neither of these schools had a profound influence on American education has been explained by the circumstance that Neef had merely transplanted the Pestalozzian system failing to 'Americanize' it, and that it reached the United States too early, before interest in educational reform was fully awake. (Silber, p. 314-315)

How Pestalozzianism could have been "Americanized" is not clear. America was not ready then to accept an pedagogical doctrine which promoted justice in a society by means of fostering democracy in education by treating all learners equally, without regard to their personal wealth

and based exclusively on their individual needs.

### **Impact of Pestalozzian Reforms**

Though the Oswego movement so altered the complete message of Pestalozzi as to be virtually heretical, the Pestalozzian principles imbedded in the Oswego methodology would have lasting impact on the course of education in America. “Pestalozzian methods reached all parts of the country, leading eventually to improved schools and better training of teachers.” (Downs, p. 125) First, Pestalozzian methodology, in both its orthodox and heretical forms, constituted a frontal attack on the anachronistic educational practices of the day. It discredited the practice of emphasizing memorization above all other skills. It challenged the use of repressive measures in the classroom. It gave those whose temperament did not lead them to impose violence on the student a philosophical means to justify their better instincts. The loving environment of the home was the model that educators should replicate, not the factory, not the military, not a tribunal.

Pestalozzi’s major achievements, briefly stated, were these: he forced education to be democratic, he introduced psychology into education, he revolutionized teaching methods, he was a leader in research and experimentation in education, and he introduced the concept of child study, by insisting that the child must be treated as a living and growing organism. Pestalozzi must be recognized as the first person who attempted to analyze and to systematize the elements of the science of education. (Downs, p.134)

Pestalozzianism introduced, as almost a sub-text, the principle that education and educational psychology were valid areas of study and research, and, of equal importance, that educators should be trained in teaching skills in addition to developing expertise in content areas. “The idea of the professional training of teachers probably originated with Pestalozzi. His ideal teacher was expected to be an expert not only in his subject but also in his knowledge of the child.” (Downs,

p. 89) Pestalozzi's most lasting contribution to American education was the impact it had upon educational reformers like Horace Mann. "More important still, the impact of Pestalozzian thought was felt in spreading the concept of free public schools, first in New England and subsequently, after about 1840, other states." (Downs, p.126) Though Pestalozzianism was generally misunderstood and eventually abandoned in North America, the notion of redirection and reassessment which accompanied the movement would initiate a general atmosphere of reform. "The great reform of American education during the 1830-1860 period was inspired directly or indirectly by Pestalozzi." (Downs, p.135)

As stated above, Oswego was a heretical version of the Pestalozzian philosophy, and yet, it still had a favorable impact on American education. In Europe, where the basic principles of Pestalozzi were not lost in the translation or to cultural impediments, the impact of his reforms was even more profound. The reforms in Europe inspired by the Pestalozzian movement would impact on the whole continent.

The doctrines of no other great educational reformer have received such wide dissemination and such general acceptance as those of Pestalozzi... Not only Switzerland, but Germany, France, Spain, Russia, Denmark, England and the United States made immediate application of the chief reforms advocated by Pestalozzi. (Monroe, p.10)

Throughout Europe and Latin America institutions of learning are named for the Swiss philosopher. Only in America, where in recent times his name is again being misused, this time by those advocates of home schooling, is he largely ignored.

His lasting impact in America has been through those he influenced. "Perhaps Pestalozzi's greatest influence was exerted through his disciples, particularly by way of such individuals as Fichte, Fröbel, and Herbart. Though these men, in various ways, Pestalozzi's ideas eventually

helped to shape modern education.” (Downs, p.134) It was Pestalozzi who had inspired Fröbel who in turn promoted the kindergarten as an essential part of education. Pestalozzi’s greatest influence on American education appears to be his impact upon Horace Mann, “the father of the common school.” (Urban & Waggoner, p.194) Mann, familiar with Pestalozzian experiments in Philadelphia, New Harmony, and in Massachusetts traveled to Prussia where the system of education was directly based on Pestalozzi.

A highly influential propagandist for the Pestalozzian doctrines in the United States was another European traveler, Horace Mann. Mann’s account of the German school methods in his *Seventh Annual Report* (1843) described in glowing terms the success of the Prussian-Pestalozzian system of education and urged American reforms along similar lines. (Downs, p.121-122)

In essence, Pestalozzi could not secure in America the enormous influence he had on the European educational systems when dispatching disciples to the New World. However, when an American of the stature of Horace Mann sees the value of Pestalozzian principles as viewed at work in the Prussian schools, the fundamental principles Pestalozzi advocates will become part of the groundwork of Mann’s own reform effort.

It might even be said that even the venerable John Dewey, for all his layering of complex philosophy upon the principles and methodologies of education, stands upon Pestalozzi’s shoulders among other innovators. “But already two or three decades preceding John Dewey, Horace Mann, Henry Barnard and others had reached a new outlook of respect for childhood. Most of these better ideas were traceable directly or indirectly to Pestalozzi.” (Kirkpatrick, as cited in Schilpp & Hahn, p. 451) Dewey did not have had direct access to Pestalozzi as Mann had by virtue of Mann’s Prussian trip. One reason for the inaccessibility encountered by Dewey was that Pestalozzi was still largely untranslated into English during Dewey’s formative years.

Despite this limitation there is little doubt that Pestalozzi's impact had set the stage for Dewey's work. "John Dewey incorporated in his system of education many ideas first expressed by Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Fröbel and made them common knowledge to all Americans interested in education." (Silber, p. 315)

## **Conclusion**

At the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century Pestalozzi cried out against the social and economic injustice of poverty. He proposed that education could and should be a means to correct those wrongs. Instead he saw an educational environment where the interests of the student were being eclipsed by those of the culture and the state. He saw classrooms where students endured the mind-numbing drudgery of memorization only broken periodically by the imposition of emotional and often physical abuse. He proposed that there should be fundamental principles which guide education. Pestalozzi proposed that educators be trained professionally. He proposed that discovering how the mind learns was a critical component of teaching. For such fundamental precepts and for what should be today essentially unchallengeable principles Pestalozzi was considered a reformer, even a radical.

Despite all the indications that Pestalozzi was not merely an educational reformer and an innovator, but a visionary, the basic principles from which all his accepted practices and innovations sprang have been largely ignored, at least in America. One reason for the failure of Pestalozzi's ideals to find long-term acceptance in America was historical. The wrong people had become his American advocates. People who either misunderstood Pestalozzi's educational principles or did not understand America were unable to devise the match, that is, to make his

reforms and ideals fit education as it exists in this culture. But the failure of Pestalozzi's principles to find acceptance in America was not solely the product of the limitations of the messengers. There are fundamental assumptions embedded in his educational philosophies which eighteenth and nineteenth America would not accept. The question is whether twenty-first century America is any more willing to deal with what some might consider essentially alien or even un-American premises. Does education somehow reproduce poverty? What does it say about our economic priorities if it does? Conversely, can the shackles of poverty be broken by the efforts of educators?

There is only one way to find out if twenty-first America is ready for Pestalozzi, his principles should be reintroduced to America. His principles should not be promulgated as a replay of the ill-fated Oswego Movement with all its misinterpretations. Pestalozzi only experimented with "object teaching," he never saw it as anything more than a tool, surely not the cornerstone Sheldon and his disciples made it at Oswego. Though Pestalozzi is used throughout Europe and South America, any advocate of it here must know American educational values. They must know how America has evolved politically and culturally, and how both relate to education. This is not to say that any reintroduction of Pestalozzian principles should be held hostage to those mythic American values which might be contributing to our educational morass, only that any advocate must know the landscape without being held prisoner to it.

American educators should be exposed to this renown educational philosopher. In this era when those who control educational policy consider it a reform to subordinate the interests of the individual learner for higher aggregate educational standards, something is terribly lacking. The political scientist and the politician have Locke, Burke, Jefferson and literally countless other

political philosophers to help shape the political environment and give structure to the debates therein. Granted, the American educator has the esoteric Dewey, his contemporaries as well as the radical reformers who came to the forefront during Civil Rights and Vietnam eras. But these philosophers sought to build upon Dewey, not dismantle those methodologies and institutions based on principles of modern educational reform. Today's so-called educational reforms are retrogressive. Philosophers seeking to improve and build upon present standards, or reform inconsistencies in present-day practices, are ill-equipped to address the "reforms" which abandon those former improvements in order to revive what previously existed. In essence, reformers and revolutionaries are not prepared to deal with counter-revolutionaries.

Additionally, many of these Marxist, socialist and postmodern radical reformers and philosophers of today are restricted by the same barriers which proved so impenetrable to Pestalozzi and his followers, their reforms ignore American values. Philosophers and reformers like Postman, Jencks, Ogbu and Kozol, to just name a few, cannot surmount those formidable obstacles and subsequently will not impact on an educational discourse which is attempting to revive the past. While Dewey, on the other hand, would seem the likely candidate as a basis to mount an effort to forestall this trend towards educational revisionism. His works are uniquely American, widely dispersed, and thoroughly analyzed. However, Dewey's educational philosophy is a complex mixture of philosophy and psychology. Mastering Dewey is a daunting exercise, one often limited to the realm of the scholar. Proof of the limits of Dewey is that in an educational environment where there is the proliferation of his philosophies their presence has done little to forestall this counterrevolution in educational values. Pestalozzi, in contrast, as Dewey's precursor, is less complex in both his remedies and philosophy and thereby more

accessible.

What is proposed herein is that educators and educational policy makers revisit a philosopher who first sought to secure the reforms which are now in the process of being discarded. A philosopher who cried out for reform more than two hundred years ago. American educational philosophy is inhibited by the absence of such a voice from this era of such profound reform in democratic philosophy. A voice from the past that spoke of education with the passion and vision that Jefferson spoke about democracy. Granted, Pestalozzi is and was just one voice among many. Pestalozzi was neither the first nor the last to advocate humanism in education.

Pestalozzi is an educational thinker who will always merit study because he emphasized those aspects of education which must always be emphasized. He acknowledged the essential, but neglected, place of education in society; he recognized the humanity of the child; and stressed that every aspect of a child's life contributed to the formation of his personality. (Heafford, p.84)

However, he was a voice of educational reform lost in the dissonance of a field where the practitioners are often relegated to the margins, if not completely ignored. The so-called school reform of today is precisely the kind of educational policy which would have appalled Pestalozzi. Only in what is deemed special education has kept alive his spirit in the American classroom.

What is ironic is that Pestalozzi's principles with their advocacy of democratic values are more in concert with American ideals than those of Europe. Still plagued by remnants of a history of international, class and ethnic conflicts, Europe has employed Pestalozzian educational values in cultures which struggle to overcome those residual problems rooted in history. Imagine if America, with all the traditions regarding democracy, opportunity and freedom, were to embrace Pestalozzian educational principles with the same vigor. The marriage of American idealism with Pestalozzian reform would be symbiotic. It would be the culmination of Pestalozzi's own dream.

“Yet at the end of his life he hoped that it would be from England and America that his method would spread.” (Silber, p. 278)

Pestalozzi was a humble man, a teacher, financially supported by his wife and friends, constantly enduring failure, who thought of nothing more than the betterment of the poor, especially the poor child. A fitting epitaph was offered by Michael Heafford in *Pestalozzi: His though and its relevance today*.

If Pestalozzi could have known that the principles of education which he had expounded would be universally acknowledged, he would gladly have accepted all the failures and misfortunes of the final years of his life. His own assessment of his life would rest, as ours must too, on whether these principles are as universal and as valid as he himself believed. (Heafford, p.35)

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