

THE PHILOSOPHY OF FRIEDRICH FROEBEL.

It is with the kindergarten that the name of Froebel is most intimately associated; and it is this institution that has spread his fame throughout the world. Froebel himself, however, regarded the kindergarten as but a fragmentary part of educational reform. His pedagogy rests upon a distinct philosophical system, the comprehension of which is requisite to an adequate appreciation of his theories.

The philosophy of Froebel is characteristic of the time in which he lived. At the dawn of the nineteenth century the Germans were a race of poets and thinkers, and regarded all questions of material existence as secondary to the great problem of moral culture. Politically weak, the nation was yet sufficiently strong to delve into the depths of the universe and to develop the spiritual life; and thus the grandeur and dignity of man became the predominant idea of that epoch. Upon this basis there arose a multitude of conceptions as to world and life; and Froebel, although not an adherent of any particular school, was most closely associated with the movement designated as "romanticism," which was most perfectly personified in Schelling. It was for Krause, however, that Froebel seemed to have the greatest affinity, and from him the great educational reformer borrowed much of his technical phraseology.

According to Froebel's conviction, the world is the creation and revelation of a Supreme Being, operating not from without, but from within, as the essence of all things. Briefly formulated, "The divine agency, operating in every form and object of creation, constitutes the nature of that particular form or object." Thus founded in God, the infinite complexity of the universe becomes an organic whole; the same laws everywhere become operative; and, most important of all, nature and the intellectual life become one and inseparable. Therefore, whatever at first glance may seem an evil loses this signification so soon as it is considered in relation to the universe.

Nevertheless, the unit, by becoming part of the whole, does not sacrifice its independence; for God, being life, infinite and inexhaust-

ible, is imparted to every atom of the universe; and thus every atom becomes invested with the mission of transmitting and propagating, according to its special nature and endowment, the whole sum of existence in which it is rooted. Inseparable from the totality of creation every particle is compelled to absorb this totality — to take it into account in every situation and in every act.

This applies above all to humanity; for if man, like nature, is a manifestation of the divine essence, the manifestation must here necessarily attain to higher expression and fuller consciousness. The operation of the divine agency in nature is effected by silent physical laws; in man, by the exercise of independent judgment. Thus we perceive how the philosopher endeavors to establish harmony between dependence and liberty, between the silently operative laws of nature and the manifestation of the human will.

These views derive an especial importance, not so much from their instructive content, as from the personal manner with which Froebel advances them. Of an intuitive, artistic nature, Froebel impresses us, above all, by the whole-hearted manner in which he accepts and advances doctrines which, on closer examination, occasionally reveal a certain ambiguity of ideas. Endowed with a full consciousness of life he is desirous of carrying this spirit into every form of activity. He constantly endeavors to clarify his spiritual experiences and to develop the ideas that arise within him. Although dominated by a strong desire to turn from the superficialities and distractions of daily life to the contemplation of divine nature, his love of humanity impels him to practical activity in order that his fellowmen may also be directed to that God-given nature in whom their being is centred. Froebel's life, therefore, may serve as an example of high spiritual activity; and all his thoughts and actions may be said to have been deeply rooted in what the Germans designate as "Gemüt."

The fundamental principle of Froebel's work is the elimination of the element of chance from the affairs of life. The human race with him is a product of evolution; and the birth and progress of humanity is presented as analogous to the development of the vegetable kingdom — growing and expanding from within, ever blossoming, unfolding, and enlightening.

The name "Kindergarten" arises from this conception. But it would be erroneous to assume that Froebel stops here, contenting himself with that silent contemplation so characteristic of numerous

romanticists. With Froebel life was not a bare fact, but a mission. According to his conception, creation, in its essence, is not mere existence, but activity. Knowledge, also, must be preceded by action; and here, indeed, all human progress must be centred. But activity can only then be engendered when the great contrasts of life are clearly defined, in order that a means of mediation and unification may be secured to the ultimate establishment of harmony. This goal can never be attained, however, without incessant and independent action. Consequently, it is the duty of every individual to labor in the cause of culture.

Froebel did not succeed in establishing perfect harmony between natural development and free activity; and this failure constitutes the weakest part of his pedagogical system. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the great educator was indefatigable in his efforts to establish such a unification; and, after all, it may be said of him, as of many other great thinkers, that the presence of striking contradictions is frequently conducive to the fullest development of life.

Froebel's conception of activity is centralized in the proposition that of all contrasts that between the internal and the external world must be accepted as the most important; hence, a unification of these extremes must be regarded as a primary consideration. Now, the inner life, in order to be understood, must be outwardly expressed; while external manifestations must penetrate to our inner consciousness before they can be realized. Consequently, our first task consists in externalizing the inner and internalizing the outer world — *i. e.*, in unifying the fundamental extremes of nature. This is accomplished by the forms of activity known as presentation and creation.

As our loftiest conception of the Almighty is that of the Creator, so also our highest conception of the function of man is associated with the creative principle. The primary function of education, therefore, is the presentation of our individual life; and suffice it to say that this conception greatly increases the ideal value of labor. Man does not labor solely to earn his bread, but principally in order that the divine, the spiritual, within him may find expression, so that he may become conscious of the nature of God and of his own Godlike identity. Bread, dwelling-house, and clothes, though acquired in the course of labor, are yet unimportant accessories. When elevated to this standard, labor is brought into intimate relation with religion, each being complementary of the other. "Religion, without activity or labor, is ever in danger of becoming empty speculation, vapid

enthusiasm, in short, an unsubstantial phantom; while labor, without religion, degrades man to the level of a beast of burden or a machine."

These convictions lead to the recognition of the relation between nature and culture. The latter is not in itself creative and cannot presume to dictate to the former. On the contrary, culture must observe and follow nature and seek to develop it. Only at a very advanced stage is it permissible to indicate the direction. His own doctrine Froebel preferably designates as "training by development"; and he holds that education can be fruitful only when engrafted upon the individuality of the pupil, so that the child-nature may be developed like a bud or a shoot. According to his theory, education must assume that there is an inner life in every soul by which it becomes united with the universe; otherwise all efforts at development would be futile. Education is in danger of becoming spiritless so soon as it treats man as a vacuity.

The primary object of education is to stimulate independent action. Where proper training exists, necessity must be converted into freedom, law into personal judgment, and outward pressure into free-will. The child, despite all deviations and interruptions, must be made to strive persistently toward the goal—as determined by its individuality; it must be treated as a creative being, and stimulated to the exercise of independent activity. True, independence cannot be developed without an incessant struggle against obstacles; but this very struggle, if victorious, will be conducive to peace, happiness, and liberty, and will elevate man to the likeness of God. Religion must beware of weakening personal independence by encouraging hopes of an external reward. It must, above all, guard against inculcating into the childish mind the doctrine that good deeds will meet with a material recompense; for this doctrine fosters false expectations of life, leads to an erroneous criticism of events, and tends ultimately to destroy peace of mind and strength of will. Far better is it to let our youth realize that noble, disinterested endeavor is often followed by pain and suffering; but that herein the inner, spiritual, and true life becomes more clearly manifest and shows its superiority. "Renunciation and privation to the end of our spiritual welfare"—this is the first condition to the attainment of the highest development.

In accordance with his fundamental purpose, viz., the harmonizing of contrasts, Froebel seeks to develop man, both as an individual and as a member of society. He regards the child both as an inde-

pendent unit and as a part of the general organism of life; and, consequently, all his utterances have a two-fold application. For example, man can develop his individuality only in connection with others, and is, indeed, born with the social instinct; on the other hand, life in the community is valuable only because it stimulates the development of the individual. To Froebel, however, the kernel of all activity is the representation of the individual life. Man does not attain to full consciousness until he objectifies his personal being; nor can he understand outward nature until he has assimilated, modified, and expressed it anew.

"Training by development" demands the closest conformity of the educator to nature. For this reason, he must closely follow the progress of the child-soul through all the successive stages; and these stages, though part of a general plan, are to be kept distinctly sundered. The method to be followed in this regard is clearly elucidated in Froebel's masterwork, "*Die Menschenerziehung*" ("The Education of Man"), and emphasizes that nothing shall be demanded of the individual, mature or immature, but adequately to fulfil the requirements of each period of life. Froebel himself, it is true, took an increasing interest in the period of early childhood; and this attitude was entirely in accord with his general conception of training.

The period of childhood affords the most fruitful soil to the educator. The pupil here presents himself as an organic entity, not yet bound by complex relations to the outer world. The springs of life are strong within, and would seem to direct the educator as to the general trend of the youthful faculties; while all the conditions favor the establishment of an intimate relationship between teacher and pupil. Froebel vigorously asserts his conviction that the internal and vitalizing element diminishes in the course of years, while the force of outward expansion increases. Consequently, the whole educational fabric rests upon a proper appreciation of the budding nature of the child. This must be directed into the proper channels, and never diverted from its bent, in order that the inner or spiritual life may ever predominate, and that diversity may be subservient to unity.

Our primary aim, therefore, should be to awaken and to stimulate the innate principle of life slumbering within, so that this principle may be developed according to eternal laws. Primarily, it is the mother upon whom this duty devolves; the family circle thus becoming invested with a high significance as the first seat of culture. The agency of the divine spirit in human affairs first manifests itself in the

bosom of the family, whence all regeneration and rejuvenation must proceed. "At present, it is to the quiet and secluded sanctuary of the family that we must look for a revival of the divine spirit among mankind."

While engaged in the elaboration of these principles, Froebel evolved the conception of the kindergarten, an institution designed to fill a hitherto neglected gap in the development of the child — the interval between the nursery and the schoolroom. Froebel perceived that this stage of life was not sufficiently appreciated, and that the vital and active impulses of childhood were neglected; and thus there arose within him the idea of the general establishment of kindergartens, in which child-nature was to be cultivated like a plant, under the skilful supervision of experienced gardeners, and in accordance with eternal laws. Here the teaching of Froebel regarding the importance of creative work and the expression of the inner life obtains especial recognition. The kindergartens, indeed, are particularly designed to stimulate the creative impulse, and this, primarily, by means of pleasant games, here appearing in the form of independent exercises, and serving as an introduction to a wider acquaintance with nature.

Play is the highest stage in the development of the child; being the free, untrammelled expression of the inner nature — the presentation of child life according to inward necessity. The elaboration of this idea constitutes the salient feature of Froebel's achievement. He analyzed the plays of childhood, demonstrated their important bearing upon the development of the soul, and arranged, in strict systematic sequence, a series of occupations for the furtherance of the creative impulse, ever dominated by the idea that everything we behold is the outward presentation of an inner life, and that all diversity must centre in unity.

Although Froebel was occasionally defective in execution, freely introducing symbolism where misapplied, and expressing mere theories in a spirit of dogmatism, these defects in nowise detract from his splendid achievement as an analyst and promoter of child-play. He has opened a great domain, revealed an inexhaustible fund of life, and invested it with a universal interest.

Froebel believed that the kindergartens would exercise an extraordinary influence on life in general; and he confidently expected that the extension of these institutions would tend to raise the standard of true culture, both in an intellectual and an ethical sense,

bring man into closer relationship with nature, and promote maternal affection and feminine influence. He contended that we were overburdened with external attainments, and were unwisely disposed to augment these, while neglecting the cultivation of our innate faculties. In his opinion a liberation from our unnatural system of education will be secured as soon as insight and independent judgment shall be stimulated by a spontaneous and rational development of the individual.

This is the mission of the new education: the influence of our children, owing to the establishment of a closer relationship with them, will affect our own life and make us purer and better. Krause, in his philosophy, tells us that we must return to a state of childhood, if we would have an impressionable heart and a mind receptive of truth. Froebel believes that veracity and simplicity will be promoted as soon as we learn to institute and cultivate a beneficent intercourse with our children.

Froebel undoubtedly expected too much of his work; but for this he surely does not incur our censure. No man is capable of lifelong and single-hearted effort unless inspired by the conviction that the especial thing which he advocates may prove a pivotal center of affairs. Nor will the simplicity of the reformatory methods advocated by Froebel detract from the greatness of his achievement — more particularly when we consider that all fundamental reforms were, like his, originally simplifications. This applies not only to education, but to religion, art, philosophy, and many other departments as well. The kernel of reform usually consists in the establishment of an essential, original, and natural basis, and in the coincident abrogation of a network of artificialities, superfluities, and complications.

Furthermore, it is indisputable that, notwithstanding all the great changes wrought during the nineteenth century, the philosophy of Froebel has remained a fruitful source of inspiration. True, Herbart is superior to Froebel as regards clearness of conception, and he is undoubtedly the more scientific. But in many important particulars the influence of Froebel is paramount. This especially applies to his lofty conception of the dignity of man, whom he ever represents as an organic entity. He strenuously defends the conviction that culture centres in the "Gemüt," and must, therefore, be developed from within; and this doctrine becomes a safeguard against hyper-intellectual training. He places independent activity in the foreground, and succeeds in tracing it to its elementary stages; and,

while ever according the full exercise of individuality, he brings man into relation with society at large.

As the follower of Comenius and Pestalozzi, Froebel gave a powerful stimulus to childlife and inaugurated a closer investigation into the nature of the child; and thus, by reason of his indefatigable labors as an organizer, he eventually converted a movement, previously confined to a few scientists, into a matter of universal interest and importance.

Despite its numerous advantages, however, the philosophy of Froebel does not furnish a sound basis for an educational system; and this because, as already stated, it is fundamentally established upon conflicting principles. Froebel's pedagogy regards spiritual development as a natural growth — as a slow and sure development from within, analogous to that visible in the plant world. On the other hand, the principal tenet of his philosophy is the establishment of independent activity, which would necessarily elevate man *above* nature, and, indeed, places him in contrast with it.

In his theory of natural development, Froebel resembles Rousseau; in that of independent activity, he approaches Fichte. In the former instance education must be entirely subordinate to nature and content itself with the removal of obstructions; in the latter it must proceed independently, ever presenting new ideals of life. Undoubtedly, both methods are essential: natural development and independent activity together are requisite. But we must arrive at a satisfactory conclusion as to which of these is to be accepted as the leading principle; and the pedagogy of Froebel presents no solution of this question.

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IMPERIAL AND COLONIAL PREFERENTIAL TRADE.

THE relations of the British Colonies to the Empire, while continuing the same as in former years in form and in character of mutual obligations and control, are undoubtedly undergoing modifications of an important character. This, however, does not relate to laws defining, on the one hand, the extent of paramount authority, and, on the other hand, the degree of subordination, but rather as to the development of a marked spirit of imperialistic unity, and of a harmony of action based upon sympathy and sentiment.

The revolt of the American colonies, and the erection of a new nation upon what seemed for the time to be the ruins of the British Colonial Empire, marked a turning point in Britain's Colonial policy. This great blow shattered the policy of governing the Colonies from London; of interfering with their domestic affairs; and of making them preserves for British merchants, shippers, and manufacturers through arbitrary restrictions upon Colonial manufactures and trade. A more liberal and rational Colonial policy was entered upon. In Canada the French Canadian inhabitants were treated with justice and liberality; and by degrees the policy of Great Britain grew more forbearing, and the absence of interference in Colonial affairs grew more marked. Canada won for herself responsible government, in 1837, more through the removal of internal disorders and abuses than through the change of any Imperial policy at variance with the spirit of justice and liberty in the course pursued by Great Britain. Since confederation, in 1867, Canada has been truly a self-governing Colony. She makes her own laws, fixes her own tariff, controls her own military system, and contributes not a single dollar to the revenue of Great Britain. The only burden upon her in consequence of her connection with the Imperial system is the payment of the Governor-General's salary of \$50,000 per annum.

While under the provisions of the Canadian constitution the home government may veto any Canadian legislation within two years of the passage of the law, the power has never been exercised except at