

it. And in outgrowing it, it has outgrown those aspects of Froebel's doctrine which are derived from it. To adhere to them now is but a form of that clinging to tradition which has so constantly in the past put schools out of touch with the needs of real life and the currents of real thought. To insist that Froebel has said the last word on education is to try to stop that continuous spiritual growth on which he himself was never tired of insisting.

Froebel, with all his single-hearted devotion, yet, obsessed by his nebulous and misleading philosophy, to some extent diverted the course of educational progress from the channel Pestalozzi had marked out for it. The cry has now been raised "Return to Pestalozzi," as in philosophy we have been exhorted to return to Kant—not to find rest in a perfected system of thought or practice, but to make a fresh departure in the light of the experience the last century has given us. But an important part of that experience is the thought and work of Froebel himself. What is vital in that must be taken up vitally; absorbed into our present-day life, adapted to our present-day needs. To make it a cut-and-dried complete system is inevitably to condemn it to the sterility of mechanism.

What, then, is of this permanent value? Undoubtedly, in the first place, the conception that education must evoke worthy purposes and facilitate their fulfilment. And, in the second place, that education must work largely through bodily activities, in which the purposes of the child are mainly centred or with which they are closely connected, and that the younger the child the more emphatically is this true. Neither of these principles was hidden from mankind till Froebel enunciated it. Of the fundamental doctrines of education the

epigram holds that "what is new is not true, and what is true is not new." Like other prophets Froebel preached the truth as he saw it. That he should win general attention to it was much more important than that he should discover it.

But, as with most other prophets so with Froebel, the valuable and true in the message was not without alloy. His ideas of unity, connectedness, and development were shadows of a vague pantheism and led him to an allegorical and symbolical treatment in which clear meaning dissolves into a fog of words. The child is supposed to breathe in unconsciously the pantheistic idealism of Froebel's thought, if only the gifts and occupations are faithfully used. So the system stands complete in his mind.

That there was here a danger to progress has been made manifest in what it would not be too strong an expression to call the idolatry of Froebel. We have heard "the Gospel of Froebel" preached as if it embodied not merely one phase of the best thought on education of the early nineteenth century, but the absolutely best and wisest thought possible to man. This position cannot be permanently maintained in the light of developing thought and experience. Froebel must take his place in the long line of great teachers and preachers, who all taught a mixture of truth and error. The greatest tribute we can pay them is to test their work, and, while rejecting that which is evil, hold fast to that which is good. That is the spirit of true discipleship. This only sane attitude towards all teachings on education is well expressed by Pestalozzi in the closing words of his *Schwanengesang*: "Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good, and if anything better has ripened in you add it to that which, in truth and love, I have attempted

to give you in these pages. Add it in truth and love, and at least do not cast aside the whole of my life's endeavour as something which, as already discarded, requires no further examination. In truth it is not discarded, and surely it does deserve an earnest examination, and that not merely for my sake or to fulfil my request." Unless the teaching of Froebel, of Herbart, or of any other great thinker on education be thus regarded as suggestive but not final, it can but become a bar to progress and a cause of arrested development.