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# JOHANN FRIEDRICH HERBART

(1776-1841)  
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In German-speaking countries, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi had two famous successors: Johann Friedrich Herbart and Friedrich Fröbel. To begin with, both of them followed the attractive example of the Swiss humanist with youthful enthusiasm. In their own different ways, they both later succeeded in moving beyond Pestalozzi's work and opened up new paths of prudent pedagogical action.

Pestalozzi has gone down in educational history as the father of the Orphans of Stans (Switzerland) and as the founder of the New Elementary School. Fröbel not only gave the world his romantic philosophy of education, but also the word 'kindergarten'. Our profile of the educator and pedagogical thinker, J.F. Herbart, can also set out from a particular focal point, i.e. the concept of educational teaching. Herbart not only made a major contribution to the reform of educational and teaching practice, but also revolutionized pedagogical thinking. He has rightly been described as the founder of scientific pedagogics in the history of educational theory.

Herbart's personal experience as a teacher and educator led him on to this central idea of his pedagogical theory. At the same time, the concept of educational teaching represents the transition from Herbart's philosophical system to his 'pedagogics'.

## Herbart as a philosopher

Johann Friedrich Herbart was born on 4 May 1776 in the North German town of Oldenburg and died on 11 August 1841 in the university city of Göttingen. Between 1794 and 1797, he was a pupil of the philosopher, Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814) at Jena University. However, the young Herbart soon distanced himself from the 'scientific theory' and practical philosophy of his mentor. He used the contradictions inherent in idealistic philosophy as a fruitful point of departure for the development of his own realistic philosophy. Nevertheless, Herbart remained true throughout his life to the rigorous style of thinking of his teacher Fichte. He too attempted to present the main elements of his philosophical writings as 'deductions'.

Herbart's principal philosophical works are *Hauptpunkte der Metaphysik* (Main Points of Metaphysics) written in 1806; *Allgemeine Praktische Philosophie* (General Practical Philosophy) dating from 1808; *Psychologie als Wissenschaft: neugegründet auf Erfahrung, Metaphysik und Mathematik* (Psychology as a Science: on the New Foundations of Experience, Metaphysics and Mathematics) from the years 1824-25; and his *Allgemeine Metaphysik nebst den Anfängen der Philosophischen Naturlehre* (General Metaphysics, together with the First Principles of a Philosophical Theory of Nature), written in 1828-29.

In his metaphysic, Herbart draws heavily on the theory of monads of Leibniz. Taking account of the problems raised by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Herbart attempts to grasp reality

through concepts in his metaphysical deductions. Herbart's metaphysic comprises, in particular, a carefully thought-out psychology that is a milestone in the history of this branch of knowledge. Herbart was the first to use, with rigorous logic, the methods of modern infinitesimal calculus to solve problems of psychological research. In his view, psychology is rooted in experience, metaphysics and mathematics. His intention was to rival, in the new discipline of psychology, the discoveries made by Isaac Newton in physics. Admittedly, nineteenth century empirical psychological research did not follow in his footsteps. Herbart's psychology did have an unmistakable influence, however, on the empirical psychology of Wilhelm Wundt and on the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud.

Herbart's practical philosophy is characterized by the fact that moral judgements are interpreted as a special form of aesthetic judgement. Moral judgements adopt an approving or reproving position on states of volition. Ethical ideas are nothing other than aesthetic judgements on elementary states of volition. The moral judgements of daily life can be corrected in the light of the ethical ideas of perfection, inner freedom, goodwill, justice and equity.

Herbart's working career began in the canton of Bern, Switzerland, between 1797 and 1800, and continued at Bremen from 1800 to 1802, at Göttingen from 1802 to 1809, at Königsberg from 1809 to 1833, and finally at Göttingen again from 1833 to 1841. In Switzerland he worked as a private tutor, in Bremen as an independent scholar and unofficial tutor, and in Göttingen and Königsberg as a professor of philosophy and pedagogics. In early 1809, he was appointed to take over the Chair of Philosophy at Königsberg University from Immanuel Kant's immediate successor. The authorities in Königsberg were looking for a philosopher with a high scientific ranking who also had an understanding of education. In that spirit, the King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm III, approved Herbart's nomination to Königsberg in the following terms:

I [...] approve the appointment of Professor Herbart from Göttingen to teach philosophy at our university here, and I do so all the more readily as Herbart can play a particularly useful role in the improvement of our education system following the principles of Pestalozzi (Kehrbach, 1897-1912 (K 14), p. 13).

## The concept of educational teaching

In the years between 1802 and 1809, Herbart already succeeded in making a name for himself not only as a philosopher, but also as a pedagogical specialist through his many publications. His work entitled *Pestalozzi's Idee eines ABC der Anschauung* (Pestalozzi's Idea of an ABC of Perception) was published in 1802. This was followed by *Über die ästhetische Darstellung der Welt als das Hauptgeschäft der Erziehung* (On the Aesthetic Representation of the World as the Principal Function of Education, 1804), and *Allgemeine Pädagogik aus dem Zweck der Erziehung abgeleitet* (General Pedagogics Derived from the Purpose of Education, 1806). The idea of educational teaching is central to Herbart's theory of education which is founded on experience and on philosophical reflection. Like practical and theoretical educationalists before him, Herbart also makes a distinction between education (Latin: *educatio*) and teaching (Latin: *instructio*). 'Education' means shaping the development of character with a view to the improvement of man. 'Teaching' represents the world, conveys fresh knowledge, develops existing aptitudes and imparts useful skills. Herbart's reforming pedagogics revolutionized the relationship between education and teaching. A new paradigm of pedagogical thinking and pedagogical action was thus created.

Before Herbart, it was unusual to combine the concepts of 'education' and 'teaching'. Consequently, questions pertaining to education and teaching were initially pursued independently.

Only at a second stage was an attempt made to determine how teaching could be supported by education and education could be supported by teaching. Herbart, on the contrary, took the bold step of 'subordinating' the concept of 'teaching' to that of 'education' in his educational theory. As he saw it, external influences, such as the punishment or shaming of pupils, were not the most important instruments of education. On the contrary, appropriate teaching was the only sure means of promoting education that was bound to prove successful.

In Herbart's own words, teaching is the 'central activity of education'. His own thinking, personal experience and experimentation convinced Herbart of the astonishing effects of educational teaching: the individual who acquires a 'versatile range of interests' through teaching will 'be capable' of doing with inner ease everything that he 'wishes' to do after 'mature reflection'. He will always keep his ethical ideal clearly in mind and, in his progress towards the attainment of that ideal, he will be able to rely on his own pleasure in further learning and on the dependable 'strength of his own character'.

Herbart's activity as a private tutor in Bern, an educational adviser in Bremen, professor of philosophy and pedagogics at the Universities of Göttingen and Königsberg, and as the head of an experimental pedagogical institute attached to the University of Königsberg, was guided at all times by the concept of educational teaching.

We shall now examine the process by which Herbart gradually developed the notion of educational teaching and see how this central concept of his educational philosophy has survived to the present day. The different biographical, theoretical and practical/pedagogical aspects which we shall be following up will gradually fuse together into a 'profile' which will reveal Herbart's contribution to the progress of pedagogical thinking and to the reform of pedagogical action.

## **Herbart's concept of pedagogical science**

A Swiss student friend from Herbart's Jena study days found him a post as a private tutor in Switzerland in the year 1797. Here, Herbart joined up with a circle of like-minded friends for whom Pestalozzi's educational ideas met with an enthusiastic audience. Personal contacts with Pestalozzi were also established. In a publication dating from 1802, Herbart recalls his personal experience of Pestalozzi for the benefit of his readers:

A dozen children between the ages of 5 and 8 were summoned to school at an unusual hour in the evening. I was afraid that I might find them ill-disposed and so witness the failure of the experiment which I wanted to observe. But the children came with no trace of reluctance and lively activity continued unabated to the end (Herbart, 1982a, p. 65).

Herbart goes on to describe how Pestalozzi encouraged the children to occupy their mouths and their hands simultaneously; how he used repetition as a technique of speech training and, at the same time, gave the children materials to hold which were intended to make it easier for them to learn the skill of writing. The experience which the young private tutor brought back with him from Switzerland was not the only root of his educational theory. He was also stimulated by the pedagogical ideas of Fichte and Pestalozzi, which were soon to assume an original personal character in a thinker of Herbart's stature.

Herbart described two contrasting routes of pedagogical reflection. The first—that of analytical-pedagogical thought—begins with his own experience and experimentation. It leads initially to empirical pedagogics and then on to a philosophical theory of education. This route enables the concepts which dominate the range of experience of the person who starts out as a layman to be 'explained' in increasing depth and to be 'made clear' through an on-going process of philosophical

reflection. This route of pedagogical thinking makes philosophy dependent, if only partially, on pedagogics.

The second route, that of speculative thinking establishing a synthesis, starts out from the principles of a philosophical system which already exists and develops a theoretical and practical doctrine of education from them. In this way, pedagogics became dependent on philosophy, and, in particular, on psychology and ethics.

In his educational publications, the young Herbart preferred, with few exceptions, the analytical-pedagogical mode of thought. However, once he had developed his philosophical system in the middle years of his life and given it comprehensive expression, he allowed the speculative mode of thought that establishes syntheses to take priority. However, Herbart was thereafter unable to present an overall and conclusive view of his educational philosophy.

In the two routes of pedagogical thinking, the 'ends' and the 'means' of education are both discussed. The investigation of the ends is co-ordinated with ethics, while the study of the means has a psychological slant. In his 'General Pedagogics', his central pedagogical work published in 1806, Herbart described this duplication of content that is encountered in both modes of thought, in the following terms:

The intention with which the educator is to approach his work, this practical reflection, provisionally detailed down to the measures which our present state of knowledge suggests we should choose, is to my mind the first half of pedagogics. But there must be a second in which the possibility of education is theoretically explained and presented with its limitations in the light of changing circumstances (Herbart, 1982b, p. 22).

Herbart's complete pedagogical system would accordingly seem to consist of two sections, linked with ethics and psychology respectively. Both sections can be investigated analytically (starting out from teaching experience) and by synthesis (based on philosophical principles). The analytical and synthetic modes are contrasting types of thinking.

## **The 'genesis' of educational teaching**

The theory of educational teaching also contains these two separate sections and can be presented in two different ways. The aims of educational teaching are discussed in the section that falls under the heading of ethics. The key text on this is the 'General Pedagogics Derived from the Purpose of Education' written in 1806.

The means of education and, in particular, the use of teaching as one such means are the subject of the psychological section. Fundamental texts in this area are the early publication 'On the Aesthetic Representation of the World as the Principal Function of Education' and the 'Letters on the Application of Psychology to Pedagogics' dating from 1832 (but published posthumously).

Ethics enables the initially confused purposes of education to be corrected in the light of moral ideas. Virtue ('the strength of moral character') is the *supreme purpose of education* in Herbart's view. Psychology points the way to a solution of the problem as to how education with its paradoxical task of generating 'autonomous' action in the pupil through the external intervention of a 'third party' can be possible. Herbart's answer to this question about the fundamental basis of education can be couched in the following terms: education is only possible as the training of the mind which is by its very nature capable of such training, i.e. through suitable teaching.

Herbart's analytical mode of thought begins with experience and experimentation. The experience acquired by the young tutor in the family of Provincial Governor Steiger in the Canton of

Bern led him to think through the purpose of education in the light of ethical ideas. He also found himself obliged to approach the question of the possibility of education not simply as a theoretical problem but also through practical attempts to prove that it really is possible to ‘educate by teaching’.

As a private tutor, Herbart was confronted with the task of ‘teaching’ three boys, aged 14, 10 and 8, in the subjects of classical languages, history, mathematics and the natural sciences, while at the same time ‘educating’ them. The ‘Reports to Mr Karl Friedrich Steiger’ (Herbart, 1982a, p. 19 ff.) show the extent to which Herbart’s dealings with his pupils contributed to the development of his concept of ‘educational teaching’.

To begin with, Herbart had tried to exert a direct influence on the development of the character of his pupils. However, he soon found that the hoped-for success was not achieved, at least in the case of Ludwig who was already 14 years old. Herbart concluded from this that hope must in future be founded on ‘Ludwig’s reason’ (Herbart, 1982a, p. 23). That was the only way of averting the risk that Ludwig’s character, which was certainly not bad, would mature into a ‘clever, deliberate and rational egoism’. A formulation then follows which may be described as the earliest definition of the concept of educational teaching. The only remaining mainspring of Ludwig’s character development was: ‘[...] his reason as the *suffering* ability to absorb ideas which were presented to him slowly and after careful preparation, and the hope that one day this small spark would ignite into *active* personal thinking and an endeavour to live according to his own *insights*’ (Herbart, 1982a, p. 23).

Educational teaching which the young private tutor directed at the reasoning ability of his pupils had two guiding threads: an aesthetic/literary aspect; and a mathematical/natural scientific side (‘poetry and mathematics’ as he also sometimes stated in simpler terms). Herbart imparted astonishing linguistic skills and an excellent knowledge of history and classical literature to his pupils. He gave them a deep mathematical training and even introduced them—a fact that must seem surprising for the year 1800—to the new natural sciences on an experimental basis. However, this teaching was not merely educational in so far as Herbart always subordinated the manifold purposes of aesthetic/literary and mathematical/natural scientific teaching to the underlying purpose of character development. In fact, he sought to educate his pupils by deploying his teaching deliberately as the most important means of moral education.

Teaching leads in the first instance to a correct ‘grasp of the world’ and of men. The ‘grasp’ of the world acquired through teaching does not, however, serve solely to impart knowledge and shape aptitudes and skills, but is intended first and foremost to develop a ‘moral insight’ and to ‘strengthen character’. Teaching must influence the process of character development. Herbart makes a distinction between four phases of moral education which lead from a grasp of the world to ethical action: ‘[...] sensations are developed out of thoughts, and principles and patterns of action are then derived from these sensations’ (Herbart, 1982b, p. 23). In a later passage in his ‘General Pedagogics’, Herbart speaks of the four stages of ‘ethical judgement’, ‘ethical warmth’, ‘ethical resolve’ and ‘ethical self-discipline’ (Herbart, 1982b, p. 108).

The assumption of this sequence of phases in moral education is founded on Herbart’s psychology which went beyond the earlier psychology centred on character attributes. Herbart no longer understands cognition, feeling and will as separate attributes or forces. On the contrary, in his scheme of things, the will and feelings are rooted in the mind. The strength of will and the regularity of action are seen as phenomena that are explained by the stability of cognitive structures. By corollary, unreliability and impulsive action originate from the fact that situations in which identical action is appropriate are interpreted differently. The stable orientation of the human will is therefore a function of the cognitively structured approach.

Against the background of this psychological theory, teaching appears to be the only means of permanently strengthening character that is likely to succeed. Educational teaching can, however, only be expected to prove successful if its 'methods' do not encroach upon the individuality of the pupil. It follows that the highest possible demands must be placed on teaching methods. A wealth of useful knowledge, abilities and skills must be imparted in such a way that virtue is generated by and through these qualifications.

Herbart solved the problem of teaching methods on the basis of his psychological theory of 'interest'. Like desire, interest is understood as a form of mental activity, even though interest is much less intense than desire. Interest enables the first links to be created between the subject and the object and so determines the 'viewpoint' of the individual about all the aspects of the world that he either grasps or fails to grasp. Unlike desire, through which interest may be heightened, interest does not yet have any particular objects on which to focus.

The ideal structure of interest is defined by Herbart through the concept of 'versatility'. Interest is formed when the individual subject deals 'in depth' with 'many different' objects and relates recollections of these many in-depth examinations to each other in an all-embracing 'communion'. An interest in which no particular aspect is developed can only be unrefined. An interest in which isolated aspects are developed will remain 'one-sided'. Through the versatility of interest, on the other hand, the different sides are linked together in a well-proportioned and unified whole. However, this unity must not differ from one individual to another. On the contrary, the interest of different individuals must be co-ordinated in such a way that each of them is receptive to each of the modes of activity which characterize man as a spiritual being.

Thus, Herbart follows up the concept of humanism that was current in his day with his own notion of the versatility of interest. Training to acquire versatile interest is training in humanism. Herbart names six orientations of the human mind (or of humanism): in the sphere of *cognition*, he makes a distinction between empirical, speculative and aesthetic interest; in the area of *inter-human relations* ('participation'), societal and religious interests contrast with the interest of the individual. Herbart used his portmanteau formula of 'versatile interest' to translate the idea of 'harmonious training of human forces' which was current in his day into the language of his own psychology.

Interest is of central importance to educational teaching from two different angles. First of all, 'versatile' interest is a vitally important intermediate objective of educational teaching. Only a versatile interest can give the necessary inner ease to the will, without which an educated person would be incapable of taking the action that his correct insight requires him to take. However, interest does not have a function solely as an end, but also as a means: it is the only permitted motive force of educational teaching. Only a continuous interest can constantly and effortlessly expand the circle of thought, give access to the world and encourage individuals to participate sincerely in the destiny of their fellow men. Therefore, the 'worst sin of teaching' is boredom.

We saw earlier that educational teaching encompasses 'poetry and mathematics'. The purpose of teaching literature is to stimulate a lively interest in the feelings of others. In particular, the teaching of young children must make them aware of simple inter-personal relations on the basis of poetry. Provided that his pupils showed a sufficient interest in the classical languages, Herbart began his aesthetic and literary training with a reading of Homer's *Odyssey*. However, his initial teaching of the classical languages was designed primarily as an introduction to inter-human relations and only secondarily to impart a knowledge of the languages concerned.

Initial teaching of mathematics also helped to shape the character, although that was by no means its sole function. In his publication entitled 'Pestalozzi's Idea of an ABC of Perception', written in 1802, Herbart not only laid out a course of initial mathematical teaching which was unusually

modern for its day, but also answered the question as to the contribution which the ‘teaching’ of mathematics must make to ‘education’. Mathematics should not be included in the teaching syllabus solely because of its practical value or technological significance, but essentially as a means of training the mind to concentrate. After all, ethical behaviour in particular required an attentive consideration of the feelings of others. This concentration could not, however, be acquired through the study of literary and aesthetic subjects. Exercises in concentration which dealt with human relations would destroy the sympathetic interest in the persons presented so that religious teaching, for example, was not a suitable framework for such exercises.

In 1804, Herbart appended a text on the ‘Aesthetic Representation of the World as the Principal Function of Education’ to the second edition of ‘Pestalozzi’s Idea of an ABC of Perception’. The title of this new publication in itself shows that it focuses once again on the problem of educational teaching: the main purpose of education is the ‘aesthetic representation of the world’, i.e. teaching in literature, art and history. This representational teaching must present its contents in such a way that thoughts, feelings, principles and modes of action are interlinked. While the teaching of mathematics creates a predisposition to a theoretical understanding of the world, the teaching of literature, art and history are intended to impart an aesthetic grasp of the world: ‘That representation of the world, of the *whole* world and of *all* known ages, in order to nullify where necessary the bad impressions of an unfavourable environment, must surely be the main task of education; severe discipline which arouses and at the same time bridles questioning cannot be a necessary preparation for this’ (Herbart, 1982a, p. 115).

The view of educational teaching which Herbart set out in his ‘General Pedagogics’ of 1806 is *complementary* to that of ‘aesthetic representation’. Herbart does not preclude the possibility that teaching which does *not* educate is possible or may even be expedient. However, in his ‘General Pedagogics’ he states: ‘I confess [...] that I have no notion of education *without teaching* just as, by corollary, at least for the purposes of this publication, I recognize no teaching which does not educate’ (Herbart, 1982b, p. 22).

In his ‘Aesthetic Representation’, Herbart demonstrates that education without teaching cannot as a rule succeed. In his ‘General Pedagogics’, he paints a more precise picture of teaching that enables the aims of character formation to be achieved with certainty. Educational teaching is based on the natural liveliness of the child, i.e. on its interest in the world and its fellow human beings. He draws on the fruits of the earlier learning that the child brings with it to the teaching stage. Teaching in effect only supplements knowledge that is already present: sometimes it sets out to complete the pre-existing material through ‘simple’ representations (‘purely representational teaching’). However, teaching also has the task of analyzing the elements which are already present (‘analytical teaching’) and then, above all, the function of constructing new thought patterns step by step (‘synthetic teaching’) on the foundation of those elements.

In a minor pedagogical text published in 1818, ‘Pedagogical Opinion on School Classes’, Herbart once again provides us with an admirable definition of the specific features of educational teaching. Educational teaching differs from traditional teaching both in the choice of its purposes and in that of its means. Traditional teaching was designed to impart as much useful knowledge and as many skills to the pupil as possible. ‘The practice and skills of the pupil’ (Herbart, 1982c, p. 91) were the main focus of this teaching. In contrast, he centres his educational teaching on an aspect that had hitherto at best been taken into account as the motivating force of learning, i.e. interest:

It is of course a familiar precept that the teacher must try to arouse the interest of his pupils in all that he teaches. However, this precept is generally meant and understood to denote the idea that learning is the end and interest the means

to attain it. I wish to reverse that relationship. Learning must *serve the purpose* of creating interest. Learning is transient, but interest must be lifelong (Herbart, 1982c, p. 97).

The interest that remains present throughout life is a means to something even higher: it is not merely a grounding for the acquisition of particular skills and abilities, but serves above all to ‘strengthen moral character’ (Herbart, 1982c, p. 99), which is the ultimate purpose of education.

The structure of interest that is the purpose of teaching is, as we have seen, described by Herbart as the ‘versatility of interest’. Training in humanism is tantamount to training a rich spiritual life accompanied by versatile interests:

Versatile training is rooted in constant interest. This versatile training does not mean that an individual must have traveled the world or experienced its every facet. He might then be weary of it; and disgust with all things and all occupations, in short spleen, is the very rot which is the opposite of education, a total loss of interest. A healthy mental life demands peace and receptiveness to stimuli, but both of these reside in interest, and the more versatile and sustained that interest is, the greater will be the sum of mental life. Anyone who understands the word *training* differently can of course retain his own linguistic usage, but his ideas must be banished from pedagogics (Herbart, 1982c, p. 99).

Although interest in educational teaching is seen as the purpose of learning, it retains its function as a means and that function is even enhanced. Teaching must itself be interesting if it is to contribute to the development of interest. Practice and the imparting of skills may be founded on discipline or self-discipline, but the creation of a versatile interest must of necessity stem from an inner motivation. The interest of the pupil is the thread along which educational teaching constantly progresses:

At every moment, the mind of the pupil progresses in a particular direction and at a particular speed in that same direction. That is the effect of the teaching given up to this juncture and that is the pointer that tells the teacher where he must now go and how quickly he should proceed (Herbart, 1982c, p. 101).

## **The Königsberg pedagogical seminar**

If Herbart’s pedagogical reflections gained such a lively following, this was due not least to the fact that he constantly sought references to pedagogical experience. The ‘General Pedagogics’, dating from the year 1806, are founded on the experience of the private tutor who went on to continue his experiments in private teaching even after his departure from Switzerland. However, the attitude of a private tutor is different from that of a school teacher. Educational teaching might perhaps succeed admirably in the home environment but still prove a failure under the more difficult conditions of formal school life. Was it not too adventurous to place the idea of educational teaching at the center of a ‘general’ system of pedagogics? There could only be one way out from this difficulty: experimentation must show whether educational ‘school’ teaching can also prove successful.

When Herbart accepted his appointment at Königsberg University in 1809, he expressed a wish not simply to give philosophical and pedagogical lectures, but also to be able to set up a small experimental school:

Among my other occupations, the teaching of educational theory is particularly dear to my heart. But this teaching is not a matter of mere scholarship; it must also be demonstrated and practised. I also wish to extend my range of experience (acquired over a period of nearly ten years) in this area. I have therefore long since had the idea of giving lessons myself to a small number of chosen boys for one hour a day in the presence of young men who are familiar with my pedagogics and will attempt, step by step, to continue under my supervision the work which I have myself begun. In that way, teachers will gradually be trained and their methods perfected by mutual observation and communication. However, since a

syllabus is as nothing without teachers, i.e. teachers who are penetrated by the spirit of the syllabus and have perfected the exercise of the method, a small experimental school, of the kind which I have in mind, might well be the best preparation for future establishments on a larger scale. As Kant put it: first experimental schools and then ordinary schools (Herbart, 1982c, p. 11).

Herbart's proposal met with a receptive audience in the Prussia of 1809: the reform of education was seen as an integral part of the reform of the whole State education system which had been put in hand. Internal reforms were perceived as a means of compensating for the losses suffered by Prussia after its defeat against Napoleon's army at the battle of Jena-Auerstedt on 14 October 1806.

The Prussian educational reform was advanced energetically by Wilhelm von Humboldt in the years 1809-10. Herbart was accordingly expected to make a significant contribution in Königsberg to the training of the teachers who were so urgently needed. Herbart himself, however, hoped to gain a much wider audience there: he understood his experimentation as a possible foundation for 'future establishments on a larger scale'. He believed that the idea of educational training must become the guiding principle of a 'true and lasting reform of public teaching' (Herbart, 1982c, p. 89).

In Königsberg Herbart was given the opportunity of setting up a teaching institute, initially on a very modest scale. The purpose of this institute was to contribute to the training of grammar school teachers through teaching exercises based on Herbart's own pedagogics. Herbart would have liked to attach a small boarding school to his institute from the outset. However, financial resources were limited and he had to be content for several years with a teaching institute that lacked a fixed body of pupils.

This infrastructure did not improve until 1818: Herbart was then able to acquire, with State support, a house which was large enough to accommodate a small number of children as boarders. Teaching took place in the experimental school attached to this house. Herbart wanted to prove that the pupils who boarded with him might not simply be taught, but at the same time 'educated' by his method.

Teaching in the experimental school essentially followed the same syllabus that had been adopted by Herbart in his days as a private tutor: educational teaching covered the two main branches of poetic and mathematical learning. As before, the poetic branch started out from Homer's *Odyssey* and involved a study first of Greek and later of Latin literature. The mathematical/natural scientific branch was based on exercises in perception. These were followed by geometry, algebra, logarithms and finally differential and integral calculus. Religion, historical narratives, the study of languages, geography and natural science were ranged around this central core.

On 19 May 1823, Herbart wrote to Berlin that he considered 'his method now to have taken its definitive shape' (Kehrbach, 1897-1912 (K1), p. 200). He had continued to develop his method 'in the hope that it might one day be generally used in grammar schools'. It was admittedly designed in the first instance for the more gifted pupils, but nevertheless promised to improve the 'wrong teaching methods practised in our grammar schools'. This teaching was wrong in Herbart's view primarily because it failed to use the interest of pupils either as a motivating force or as the purpose of progress in learning, since teaching of the classical languages concentrated excessively on formal linguistic aspects and paid too little attention to the contents which were imparted, and, last but not least, because insufficient importance was attached to mathematical and natural scientific teaching. All in all, Herbart believed he had proved that his method could be used by others under the more intricate conditions prevailing in the public education system, even after its reform.

The method that he developed was specifically designed for grammar schools. However, Herbart also turned his attention to the construction of the entire education system. He was the constant advocate of a vertically structured system of education with three pillars. The high school (or

lower secondary school) and the elementary (or primary) school must exist alongside the grammar school. These three pillars together formed a unified system because educational teaching was given in each of the three branches. Virtue, as the purpose of education, guaranteed the unity of the school system. The three branches of the school system did, however, differ significantly in respect of the demands made on pupils. While the elementary school was confined to essentials, the lower secondary school required particularly high standards of mathematical and natural scientific teaching.

The teaching of literature in Herbart's system of lower secondary schools differed from that followed in the grammar school in that the classical languages had no place here. Herbart believed that educational training that starts out from a classical language takes a roundabout route that is, however, strongly recommended for the more gifted pupils. The grammar school syllabus does not simply educate, but is also intended to impart an excellent philological training. The selective slant of Herbart's concept of the grammar school is unmistakable. However, he attached great importance to highly flexible transitions between the different school branches so that it would be wrong to view him as the theoretician of a school system founded on social caste.

Herbart's reforming ideas did not gain acceptance in the Prussia of his day. The reforming vigour of the years between 1809 and 1813 petered out with the restoration following the Napoleonic Wars. The authorities were willing to recruit the grammar school teachers to whose training Herbart had contributed. But these teachers had to conform to a syllabus that was designed with different aims in mind. There was no longer a willingness to reform the school syllabus in the spirit of educational teaching, if indeed such a willingness had ever existed. The method of grammar school teaching developed by Herbart was therefore never introduced nationwide.

## An incomplete system

After Herbart had completed the main philosophical works to which we referred earlier, he believed that he had attained a state of scientific knowledge from which the fundamental problems of pedagogics could be dealt with fully. On 1 May 1831, he reported to Berlin:

My pedagogics represent a short compendium which is in part not fully comprehensible. Had pedagogics been the central feature of my official activity, I should long since have set down my ideas on the subject in more detail. However, I have always seen pedagogics as no more than an application of philosophy. I was not able to develop them more fully in written form until my broader speculative works had been completed and published (Kehrbach, 1897-1912 (K15), p. 36).

The late *Umriss pädagogischer Vorlesungen* (Sketch of Some Lectures on Pedagogics) dating from 1835 (second edition 1841) reverts to the two views of educational teaching developed by Herbart in his 'Aesthetic Representation' and in the 'General Pedagogics', and rounds them off. In his 'Aesthetic Representation', the problem of educational teaching was dealt with in a 'theoretical' frame, while the 'General Pedagogics' discussed the 'practical' background. The 'Sketch' is not merely confined to the presentation of individual viewpoints which necessarily require completion, but also puts forward the whole concept of pedagogics which Herbart developed in the introduction to his 'General Pedagogics', but only partly set out in that important early publication. Herbart's 'Sketch' follows on from his 'General Pedagogics' by comparing the educational teaching that he advocates with a different form:

When things are learnt for professional reasons, to make progress in a career or as a dilettante, nobody is interested in whether this makes the individual better or worse. Just as he already is, he intends, for good, bad or indifferent purposes, to acquire particular pieces of knowledge; for him, the right teacher is the one who imparts to him *tuto, cito, iucunde*, the desired skills. I am not referring here to that kind of teaching but rather to educational teaching (Herbart, 1982c, p. 180).

The text goes on to identify the fundamentals of educational teaching with which we are already familiar from the 'General Pedagogics' and describes the versatility of interest and strength of moral character as integral parts of the educational purpose (Herbart, 1982c, p. 180 ff.). In addition, the 'Sketch' deals with methodological problems which are encountered in the treatment of certain types of subject matter and with the obstacles which stand in the way of educational teaching (Herbart, 1982c, p. 245 ff.).

The 'Sketch of Some Lectures on Pedagogics' covers all the content areas of the 'Science of the Educator' which Herbart defined in the introduction to his 'General Pedagogics' (Herbart, 1982b, p. 22). He even examines the problems of teaching methods applied to the individual subjects on the syllabus (the 'Science of Communication'). These were to be dealt with in more detail in the monographs on specific instruments of education (Herbart, 1982b, p. 23). However, the 'Sketch' does no more than its carefully chosen title promises: problems and possible solutions are merely sketched in without the necessary detailed discussion. Herbart would have needed to move beyond this stage and set out a detailed presentation of pedagogics by developing the plan contained in the introduction to his 'General Pedagogics'. However, he was not destined to have an opportunity to do so.

## **How Herbart's work was received**

When Herbart died, on 14 August 1841, he had not yet attained what he saw as the most important goals of his scientific life's work. Admittedly, he had succeeded in presenting his philosophical system and developing his pedagogical method in both theoretical and practical terms. But his main philosophical works had not gained as wide an audience as he would have liked. Herbart particularly regretted the fact that his mathematical psychology was almost completely disregarded by his philosophical colleagues.

In his own lifetime, Herbart seems to have failed as an educator and in gaining a wide audience for his pedagogics. He certainly had many grateful pupils. But he was unable to exercise a determining influence on the reform of the education system. He had not succeeded in gaining broad public recognition for his theory of educational teaching and no attempt had been made to reform the syllabus of a particular type of school, let alone a nationwide school system, on his principles of educational teaching.

After his death, Herbart's pedagogics conditioned the views of an educational movement that had a broad impact and came to be known as Herbartianism. Centres for Herbartian teaching grew up at the Universities of Leipzig, Jena and Vienna. Important work was done here to train a growing body of elementary school teachers. Associations and journals dedicated to Herbartian pedagogics were founded. Particular mention might be made here of the Association for Scientific Pedagogics set up in Leipzig in 1868 and the 'Yearbook of the Association for Scientific Pedagogics'. Published literature on Herbart's philosophy and pedagogics soon acquired vast proportions. Herbartianism also spread to other countries. A French translation of the 'General Pedagogics' was published in Paris in 1895, and an English edition in London and Boston in 1898.

With the reforming pedagogics of the early twentieth century, Herbartianism was gradually relegated to the background and his educational theory seemed likely to be all but forgotten. Admittedly, Herbart and the Herbartians did have a distinct influence on some of the early proponents of the reforming educational movement. But the school concept of the reforming educators stood in sharp contrast, both in Germany and elsewhere, to the concept of the Herbartians. The original writings of Herbart were no longer read and he was seen as the proponent of a 'book school' in which pupils swore by the words of their teacher and were denied access to their own experience. Herbart was

accused of trying to shape the mind through external influences and of wanting to impose the teaching material needed for this purpose (cf. e.g. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, Chapter 6). Herbart was said to have denied the existence of active functions in man.

Criticisms of this kind, which were rightly leveled against the excesses of Herbartianism, seemed likely to bring Herbart himself into disrepute. His theory of educational teaching was no longer properly understood. The critics forgot that the pupil's own experience enjoyed a central function in educational teaching and that interest, which implied independent mental activity on the part of the pupil, had not only been the end, but also the principal means, of educational teaching.

The true differences between Herbart's reforming pedagogics and the reforming pedagogics of the years between 1900 and 1950 lie much deeper than over-hasty criticism of Herbart would have us believe. The understanding of experience and personal activity had in the meantime changed completely and the relationship between the individual, the community and society had also undergone a tidal change. To that extent, the pedagogics of John Dewey, for example, are indeed poles apart from the educational theory of Herbart in some respects.

Since 1950, a renaissance of interest in Herbart has appeared in Germany and also in some of its neighbouring countries. Students of Herbart have now distanced themselves from the Herbartian's own image of him which distorted his original work. Instead, they tried to find their way back to the 'living Herbart' (Nohl, 1948). This new route involved abandoning Herbart's philosophy as the basis from which his pedagogics were deduced. Instead, his pedagogics were to be presented as a science which was relatively independent of philosophy. It was now believed that Herbart himself had been in favour of that concept.

The most recent Herbartian research rejects as untenable the distinction between Herbart as a living educationalist and a philosopher who has long since had his day. It sets out to reappraise Herbart's pedagogics as an integral part of his philosophy from the angle of the history of the moral sciences and so to learn from Herbart. In this reappraisal, the topicality of Herbart's pedagogics has become clear. For example, man today must learn to reshape his behaviour patterns in relation to himself and to nature around him on the basis of a correct insight. This problem can be described admirably using Herbart's concepts. The gulf which separates our contemporary world from the decades after the French Revolution means that there is no possibility of solving today's problems in the spirit of a renewed Herbartianism. Herbart wanted to improve man through teaching, i.e. through a representation of the world. Even under the conditions prevailing in his own day, the route of education passing from ideas to feelings and from feelings to principles and forms of action, was constantly in jeopardy.

People today can learn from Herbart by examining why the path of character development suggested by him is no longer accessible under the conditions prevailing in our modern world.

## Notes

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