The Kindergarten of Friedrich Froebel

“Play is the first means of development of the human mind, its first effort to make acquaintance with the outward world, to collect original experiences from things and facts, and to exercise the powers of body and mind.”

“The Kindergarten is the free republic of childhood…”

- Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852)
My own interest began . . .
“...That early kindergarten experience with the straight line; the flat plane; the square; the triangle; the circle! ... These primary forms and figures were the secret of all effects... which were ever got into the architecture of the world...

"For several years I sat at the little Kindergarten table-top . . . and played . . . with the cube, the sphere and the triangle—these smooth wooden maple blocks, the feeling of which all are in my fingers to this day . . ."

- Frank Lloyd Wright, from An Autobiography
Famous Froebel Alumni include . . .

- Architect Frank Lloyd Wright,
- Architect/Engineer Buckminster Fuller,
- Architect Le Corbusier
- Painter Paul Klee,
- Painter Wassily Kandinsky,
- Painter Piet Mondrian
- Children's author Enid Blyton
- Philosopher (and Montessori advocate) Bertrand Russell
Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852)

- Lived in Prussia all his life.
- Studied:
  - Botany
  - Mineralogy & formation of crystals
  - Architecture
- Prussian culture of the time:
  - Rousseau - “natural development through freedom” - “unschooling”
  - Goethe & Romanticism - “Unity in all things” - “from within outwards”
  - German Idealism - “the truth is out there” - “truth is in the whole”
- Introduced to:
  - Pestalozzi - “things instead of words” - “the object lesson”
    - Children determined and traced an object's form, counted objects, and named them.
    - Students progressed from these lessons to exercises in drawing, writing, adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing, and reading.
    - And then to examining the wider context of the object.
- Froebel's first Kindergarten in 1837, age 55
- Work carried on after his death by patron Baroness von Marenholtz-Bülow & widow Luise Levin
Did you know that Froebel first wanted to call his schools *Kleinkinderbeschäftigungsanstalt*?

Until one day in 1840 walking through the woods he cried, “Eureka! I have found it! *KINDERGARTEN* it shall be called.”

Phew!
Duel of the Philosophers, 1

Plato:
“...the world of Forms is separate from our own world (the world of substances) and also is the true basis of reality...”

Then we must have acquired the knowledge of [the Forms] at some previous time?”
“Yes.”
“That is to say, before we were born, I suppose?”
“True.”

Avicenna (after Aristotle):
“...human intellect at birth is rather like an unscribed tablet [a tabula rasa], a pure potentiality that is actualized through education and comes to know.”
Duel of the Philosophers, 2

Novalis:
“It is different with those serene, little-known people whose world is their soul, whose activity is contemplation, whose life is a gradual development of their inner powers.”

Pestallozi:
"I rather tried to develop the inner powers of the child... He is not a man whose inner powers are Undeveloped."

John Locke:
"No proposition [or idea] can be said to be in the mind which it never yet knew, which it was never yet conscious of. … [I]t is plain that the ideas [produced] in the mind enter by the senses simple and unmixed. "
Peter Jimack on Rousseau:
“[Rousseau attempts to] find a way of resolving the contradictions between the natural man who is ‘all for himself’ and the implications of life in society.”

Frederic Bastiat:
“All men's impulses, when motivated by legitimate self-interest, fall into a harmonious social pattern...

“[It] will depend greatly upon whether men's interests are, in fact, harmonious or antagonistic to one another.

Rousseau: “[Every society] must choose between making a man or a citizen.”

“If they are harmonious, the answer to our problem is to be found in liberty; if they are antagonistic, in coercion.”
“Friedrich Froebel used Pestallozi's education findings as part of an elaborate metaphysics (based on German Idealism) and applied the education to develop ... the kindergarten. “The aim of education, according to Froebel, is to acquire knowledge of the eternal law of the unity of all things and to find one's place within this unity.”

- Jerry Kirkpatrick, *Montessori, Dewey & Capitalism*
For the purpose of instruction is . . .

“For the purpose of instruction is to bring ever more out of man rather than to put more and more into him; … human nature, like the spirit of God, is ever unfolding its inner essence.”

- Friedrich Froebel, *Education of Man*
Elements of Froebel's Pedagogy

- Teaching “the Unity of creation”
- Respect for the individual child
- Four stages of development: infancy, childhood, boyhood, and youth.
- Infancy “is the highest phase of child-development ... for it is self-active representation of the inner ... ”
- Guided play is the methodology used to draw out the child’s creative self-activity
Elements of Froebel's Kindergarten

1. The Gifts
2. The Occupations
3. The “Play-Songs”
4. The “Play-Circle”
5. The woman teacher
Gifts & Occupations

A gift was an object given to a child to play with—such as a ball—which helped the child “to understand the concepts of shape, dimension, size, and their relationships.”

The occupations were items such as paints and clay which the children could use to make what they wished—which helped the child “to externalise the concepts existing within their minds.”

“The occupations are one-sided; the gifts, many-sided, universal. The occupations touch only certain phases of being; the gifts enlist the whole being of the child.”
The Gifts

"A correct comprehension of external, material things is a preliminary to a just comprehension of intellectual Relations."

"The A, B, C of things must precede the A, B, C of words, and give to the words (abstractions) their true foundations. It is because these foundations fail so often in the present time that there are so few men who think independently and express skillfully their inborn divine ideas."

- FRIEDRICH FROEBEL.
There were six kindergarten “gifts” in total produced by Froebel, designed to serve as “an alphabet of form ... by whose use the child may learn to read all material objects.”

They form an organically connected sequence, moving in logical order from an object which contains all qualities, but directly emphasizes none, to objects more specialized in nature, and therefore more definitely suggestive as to use.

"Each successive gift in the series must not only be implicit in, but demanded by, its predecessor, so the child is led to discover the 'Unity in all things'."  
- Friedrich Froebel
Each gift can be used to demonstrate . . .

**Forms of Life**
The child can use the gifts to create something they find in their life – such as a building, house, table, sofa or tree.

**Forms of Knowledge**
The child can use the gifts to explore maths, science and logical ideas. This enables them to develop their sense of proportion, equivalence and order.

**Forms of Beauty**
The child can use the gifts to create beauty.
Froebel's gifts were intended, above all, to unlock a child's inner powers by linking his inner being with the fundamental forms around him...
...encouraging his creative inner being to blossom forth.
"I wish to find the right forms for awakening the higher senses of the child: what symbol does my ball offer to him? That of unity.

"The ball connects the child with nature as much as the universe connects man with God."

-FRIEDRICH FROEBEL.

"Line in nature is not found, Unit and Universe are round."

"Nature centres into balls."

-RALPH WALDO EMERSON.
Froebel's First Gift

**Gift 1: Yarn Balls**

This Gift consists of 6 soft yarn balls of approximately two inches in diameter, one each in red, orange, yellow, green, blue and purple—the six colours of the spectrum.

Each ball has a string, (approx. 6 inches long) with a loop on one end so that they can be dangled. It is introduced while the child is still an infant and is used for children ages 6+ mos. (with adult participation) to 4 years.

This first gift introduces three aspects which are central to all five gifts:

1. engaging the interest and imagination of children
2. interaction between mother and child
3. perception of geometric shapes
The ball:
- is lightweight, and easy to grasp.
- gives first impressions of Unity, Form, Color, Material, Mobility, Motion, Direction, and Position. “Ball songs” and plays offer first exercises in language, singing, and rhythm.
- encourages child to observe, compare, and explore colour—three primary & three secondary colours—and form, material, motion, direction and position.
- helps child form first impressions of the physical world by holding, rolling or watching the ball.
- introduces the idea of movement and motion to the child through rolling, swinging, and tossing games.
- helps a child begin to distinguish form, color and movement - the qualities of matter in the physical universe.
- helps improve eye-hand coordination and gross motor control.
- begins as an interactive plaything, with the mother playing with the child “in a cheerful but deliberate way” using songs, games, rhymes and animated facial expressions. Ball songs and plays are used as the first exercises in language, singing, and rhythm

For Froebel, the ball “symbolized unity” because it is a complete whole, a pure form. Following Hegel, Froebel maintained that “The whole is the beginning of understanding and everything else is derived from the whole.”

While later Gift play is divided by Froebel into Forms of Life, Forms of Beauty and Forms of Knowledge, First Gift play is simply grouped into Form, Color and Movement . . .
FORM:
- Round, with no sharp points or corners.
- No flat planes or lines.
- Easy to hold.
- Has weight and it has size.
- Soft yarn is pliable and can be compressed slightly.
- It is soft and has a faint odor.
- In the beginning the child may simply recognize it has "being" or "not being." Soon, it becomes "here" or "not here." But the underlying impression is the complete qualities of what it is: a yarn ball.
- Balls are an ancient toy and examples of balls are all around us. The child will naturally compare the ball to other objects that are either similar or "not ball."
COLOUR:

- The six colors can be divided into the primary colors (red/yellow/blue) and the secondary colors (orange/green/purple).
- As each ball is the same except for color, the child will begin to differentiate the balls by their unique quality – color.
- This is a wonderful way to introduce the colors of the rainbow to a young child.
- Froebel taught that red was often the color that most often attracted infants. You may select another color, but begin with just one ball. As each color ball is introduced, continue with the same games and songs. The name of the color is associated with the ball as the repeats the word during play.
- Later, two balls may be used together. Froebel suggested that balls of complimentary color be used (red/green or orange/purple). If using three balls, start with the three primary colors (red/yellow/blue) and interchange them with the secondary colors. In this way, the child begins to associate the three colors as a group.
MOVEMENT:

- Matter can be in motion or at rest.
- It can rest on the floor or a table or on an open hand as is the hand moves.
- The ball has many possible motions (rolling, swinging, revolving, hopping, dancing, etc.). The adult can introduce new motions as the child becomes familiar with the others.
- The motions are usually introduced as part of a game or a story in which the ball is the main character.
Froebel's Second Gift

"From the ball as a symbol of unity, we pass over in a consecutive manner to the manifoldness of form in the cube."

"The child has an intimation in the cube of the unity which lies at the foundation of all manifoldness, and from which the latter proceeds."

- FRIEDRICH FROEBEL.
Froebel's Second Gift

Froebel's second gift consists of a wooden sphere, cube, and cylinder, two inches in diameter, with rods and standards for revolution.

"The wooden sphere has no string like the balls of the first gift, because the child no longer needs the outward connection; he now realizes the spiritual connection between himself and the outer world."

(E. G. Seymour.)

In the first gift the child received objects of the same shape and size but of different colors, thus learning to separate color from form. In the second gift he receives unlike objects, and learns to distinguish them from each other by their individual peculiarities.

The first gift suggests unity, and leads to the detection of resemblances; the second suggests variety or manifoldness, and emphasizes contrasts.

The sphere and cube are sharply contrasting forms, and the cylinder illustrates the connecting link between the two, possessing characteristics of both.
Froebel's Second Gift

PRESENTATION:

The box is shaken and the child asked, "What is inside?" Open the lid and reveal the pieces. Have the child touch, feel, smell, hold and examine the sphere, then the cylinder, and the cube, in turn. The key points of the presentation are the handling, observing and comparing of the pieces of the Gift. All of the three different solids have holes drilled in them so that the solid can be spun on the sticks provided and the results compared. (the extra cube is solid for comparison to gifts 3 and 4).

DEMONSTRATE TRANSITIONS:

• From sphere to cube—cylinder is “the connecting link between the two, possessing characteristics of both.”
• Demonstrate Unity by Solids of Revolution
Froebel's Second Gift

FORMS OF LIFE:

• Use the pieces to represent things from the child's life (e.g., the sphere is an orange, the cylinder is a baby bottle or a wheel, the cube is a house, etc.).
• Stack the pieces in different ways (e.g., the cylinder on the cube and the sphere on top creates a person).
• Build with the pieces and include the box parts, as well.
• Roll the sphere and cylinder.
• Encourage the children's descriptions through imaginative play.
Froebel's Second Gift

FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE:

• Differentiate the pieces by naming the geometric shapes.
• Sort them.
• Count the number of pieces or the number of surfaces, edges, corners, etc.
• Introduce the concepts of on/under, front/back, up/down, in front of/behind, etc.
• Simple physics concepts can be discovered. Some of the solids will roll (sphere, cylinder) and some will stand (cube, cylinder). The idea of resonance in sound also can be learned by tapping the solids together or onto the table. By exploring these properties, children will be naturally curious and their discoveries will create a foundation of basic science.
Froebel's Second Gift

FORMS OF BEAUTY:

• This Gift lends itself to creating patterns and designs by spinning the solids.
• Children will delight in spinning the solids on the sticks, and discovers that by spinning one solid he will see the shape of another (e.g. spinning a cylinder produces a sphere, spinning a cube produces a cylinder).
• This interconnectedness of forms and objects can be shown even to young children.
• This activity can also be performed by spinning solids suspended on a string.
• The sticks allows more direct participation and more than one person to take part in the play.
Froebel's Third Gift: The First “Building Gift”

"All children have the building instinct, and 'to make a house' is a universal form of unguided play.
"It is not a mere pastime, but a key with which to open the outer world, and a means of awakening the inner world.
"This gift includes in itself more outward manifoldness, and, at the same time, makes the inward manifoldness yet more perceptible and manifest.
"The plaything shows also the ultimate type of structures put together by human hand which stand in their substantiality around the child."
- FRIEDRICH FROEBEL.

"The definitely productive exercises begin with the third gift."
- SUSAN E. BLOW.
Froebel's Third Gift

Froebel's Gift 3 divides the two-inch cube from the previous Gift into eight 1" cubes.

PRESENTATION:
• The presentation of the blocks is done in an orderly fashion to maintain the initial "wholeness" of the cube.
• The box is turned upside down, lid on the bottom.
• The box is carefully lifted off, revealing the two-inch cube from Gift 2 now made from eight one-inch cubes.
• This is the process for opening all the “Building Gifts.”
• Gently insist on this ritual -- no dumping of the blocks.
• It is also important to use all of the pieces when working with the Gift since the wholeness is a key point.
Froebel's Third Gift

FORMS OF LIFE:
• Have the child use the blocks to represent things from his/her life.
• The child may begin with simple forms (trains, towers, etc.) and make associations and create stories.
• Encourage these associations and stories by asking questions.
• Children tend to do this naturally during block play.
• Far from simple use of imagination, these associations between their inner and outer worlds are the foundation of real learning.
Froebel's Third Gift

FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE:
• Used for sorting, differentiation, counting, arithmetic (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division), fractions (parts of whole), and concepts/vocabulary (line, cube, square, plus, equal, half, etc.).
• Let each child build his/her own construction, then talk about the number of cubes that have been used in different ways.
• The child will begin to make associations with concrete three-dimensional work, as opposed to purely abstract mathematical thinking. Return to counting the number of cubes, sides, edges and corners.
• Begin by counting the cubes and placing them next to each other in a line and stating "one and one is two," "two and one is three," etc.
• The child will discover proportions and see operations of addition/subtraction through "half of eight is four" or "two from three is one," etc.
• The blocks can be stacked or combined into layers to illustrate multiplication, division and fractions ("four times two equals eight").
Froebel's Third Gift

FORMS OF BEAUTY:
• Forms of Beauty can be created on a gridded board or free form on a table.
• Forms of Beauty start with the cube and progress one cube at a time -- changing and evolving a design, then returning to the cube once again.
• Encourage the child to continually modify a construction of the cubes (i.e., organically) rather than tearing down and rebuilding.
• One thing should lead to the next. Froebel believed that this would leave ideas in a child's mind. This process promotes the logical and orderly development of ideas.
• Be sure to follow the child's invention and not "tell" him/her what to do with the cubes. Listen to the stories.
• Use the blocks to awaken a sense of beauty by forming designs embodying the principles of symmetry, proportion, balance, strength of center, rhythm and simplicity.
A question?

Froebel introduces the ball “as a symbol of unity,” and this third gift as an expression of “manifoldness.”

But some critics say:

“The ball will never be thought of [by the child] in connection with unity, nor the cube with multiplicity.”


Q: What do you think? Will he? Won't he?

Consider …
Consider, *The Ring Cycle*, 1848-1874

“The fundamental symbol in *The Ring* is the world of nature, from which everything arises, and to which everything returns. And Wagner’s basic motive for this ultimate source of existence is ... the mysterious nature motif that opens the whole work.”
- Deryck Cooke, *Introduction to 'Der Ring des Nibelungen'*

- Leitmotifs: Nature → The Gold → The Storm God → Rainbow Bridge → The Sword
- More Leitmotifs: Nature → Nature's Family of Voices (pentatonic) → etc.

“It has worked up to a perfect unity: there is scarcely a bar in the orchestral part which is not developed out of preceding motives.”
- Richard Wagner

“Leitmotifs are the melodic work material, symbols for metaphysical events.”
- Wieland Wagner
Froebel's Fourth Gift: The Second “Building Gift”

"A new gift is demanded—a gift wherein the length, breadth, and thickness of a solid body shall be distinguished from each other by difference of size. Such a gift will open the child's eyes to the three dimensions of space, and will serve also as a means of recognizing and interpreting the manifold forms and structures with which he is constantly brought in contact. "The inner difference, intimated in the three perpendicular axes of the cube (and the sphere), now becomes externally visible and abiding in each of its building blocks as a difference of size."

- FRIEDRICH. FROEBEL.

"The fourth gift incites the child to consider things in their relations to space, and to the forces of nature, and in his play with the bricks he is constantly engaged in efforts to adapt himself to the laws of their nature, while rendering them subservient to his ends."

- W. N. HAILMANN.
"The material for making forms increases by degrees, progressing according to law, as Nature prescribes. The simple wild rose existed before the double one was formed by careful culture. Children are too often overwhelmed with quantity and variety of material that makes formation impossible to them."

"The demand of the new gift, therefore, is that the oblique line, hitherto only transiently indicated, shall become an abiding feature of its material."

"In the forms made with the fifth gift there rules a living spirit of unity. Even members and directions which are apparently isolated are discovered to be related by significant connecting members and links, and the whole shows itself in all its parts as one and living,—therefore, also, as a life-rousing, life-nurturing, and life-developing totality."

- FRIEDRICH. FROEBEL.
Froebel's Gift 5 consists of a three-inch cube divided into 21 one-inch cubes, 6 half-cubes, and 12 quarter-cubes.

- The fifth gift seems to be an extension of the third.
- Gift 5 now represents a larger, three inch cube and incorporates more pieces and variety.
- The Gift is intended for use with children 5 years old and older.
Froebel's Fifth Gift

The most important characteristics of the gift are:

• introduction of diagonal line and triangular form;
• Division into thirds, ninths, and twenty-sevenths; illustration of the inclined plane and cube-root.
• As a result of these combined characteristics, it is specially adapted to the production of symmetrical forms.
• It includes not only multiplicity, but, for the first time, diversity of material.

The fifth gift realizes a higher unity through a greater variety than before.
• It corresponds with the child's increasing power of analysis;
• it offers increased complexity to satisfy his growing powers of creation, and less definitely suggestive material in order to keep pace with his developing individuality.
• “Remember to modify a construction rather than destroy and rebuild another.”
Froebel's Sixth Gift: The Fourth “Building Gift”

"The artistically cultivated senses of the new generation will again restore pure, holy art."
- FRIEDRICH FROEBEL.

"Life brings to each his task, and whatever art you select, algebra, planting, architecture, poems, commerce, politics,—all are attainable, even to the miraculous triumphs, on the same terms, of selecting that for which you are apt; begin at the beginning, proceed in order, step by step."
- R. W. EMERSON.

"The sixth gift reveals the value of axial contrasts." W. N. HAILMANN.
Froebel's Sixth Gift

The sixth is an extension of the fourth..

This is the last of the Building Gifts; “the child having received sufficient knowledge to be introduced step by step into the domain of the abstract.”
More Gifts . . .
Froebel's Gifts

“True education must help children to understand their true nature as creative beings.”
The Occupations

The Gifts were materials that could return to their original form while Occupations were crafts that could not be undone.

"The Gift gives the child a new cosmos, the occupation fixes the impressions made by the gift. The gift invites only arranging activities; the occupation invites also controlling, modifying, transforming, creating activities. The gift leads to discovery; the occupation, to invention. The gift gives insight; the occupation, power."

- Norman Brosterman, Inventing Kindergarten
Occupation Two: Perforating and Sewing

Occupation Two, Perforating and Sewing, trains the hand to follow the eye. The images sewn teach neatness and ingenuity and become fixed in the child’s mind. Form, beauty, and mathematical sequences, simple shapes, lines to count, alphabet letters, geometric designs and pictures can be sewn by the child.
Occupation Five: Interlacing

• A linear occupation made of interlacing pieces of wood.
• According to Froebel this is a "game with lines" which are attached to each other to form two dimension pictures.
• Initially played by child and adult working together.
Occupation Seven: Paper Weaving

- For children 4½ or 5 years old
- Trains the hands to move long paper strips in an up and down fashion through precut slits on a paper mat.
- Both manual dexterity and intellect are developed--and appreciation of beauty, creativity, gentleness and patience.
- Introduces the child to pattern-forming, and the world of primary and secondary colors and color combinations.
The 'Mother Songs'

“It is a little universe, a Unity in itself. Froebel wanted to sum up his thoughts on education in this book. Froebel describes family situations from the daily life in a family … The book has a motto for each picture and then a verse for mother and child. Froebel also wrote commentaries to the pictures.

The pictures, verses, rhymes and music should give the child an idea (Ahnung - a hunch or presentiment) of an inner world, that is from the outer to the inner.

One of the purposes of the book was to develop a child’s ‘body, limbs and senses’ in various finger plays and games with its mother.”

- The Froebel Web
XXIII

The Child and the Moon.

COME, Baby, see the Moon,
Up yonder in the Sky!
Come quickly down, sweet Moon,
To little Baby nigh.
"Yes, I should like to come,
But far off is my home;
From this house, dark and blue,
I cannot come to you.
Because I cannot come to-night,
I send my clear and silvery light;
To make you glad, my little Child,
I send my rays, so soft and mild.
Though I am not close by,
Near you in Love am I.
If you are good at home,
From time to time 'I'll come,
And such kind looks 'I'll send
To you, my little friend;
And we will both say, 'How do you do?'
And I shall be as pleased as you."
Good-bye, dear Moon, good-bye; you know
That in return I love you so.
XII.

The Horsemen and the Good Child

5

A SILENT Thought lies dim and hid in Baby's Mind;
The word's not alone in Life: he's one amid Mankind.
Dear Mother, use your best and your most watchful care,
When first he listens to some stranger, who is there.
Life's truest voice has struck upon his ear,
A new Life-stage begins, but do not fear.
Keep guard lest Baby's heart, so young and pure,
Sadness of false Fair-seeming may endure.
Lest he be satisfied by outer sense,
And leave unsought some inner excellence.

FIVE Horsemen came riding with all their speed
At our Courtyard, each stops his steed.
"And what do you wish, you Horsemen hold?"
"To see your Child. He's good, we're told.
He's gentle as a Dove, they say,
And frisky as a Lamb at play.
So bring him down to us, dear Mother,
That we may learn to love each other."
"Here he is; you've heard what's true,
He deserves much love from you."
"Child, we're glad to see you here;
Mother's made you sweet and dear.
Peace and happiness preserve
You, who love from us deserve!
Homewards ride we, glad news bringing—
'Baby's good,' you'll hear us singing."
XLII.

The Horsemen and the Cross Child.

That Men are drawn by what is good
And fly from evil, as they should,
Let your Baby early see,
And he will live happily.

FIVE Horsemen come riding with all their speed;
At our Courtyard each stops his steed.
"And what's your wish, you Horsemen bold?"
"To see your Child; he's good, we are told."
"He cries so much, I am sorry to say,
I cannot bring him down to-day.
He's sulky, and so cross, I fear
The house will soon not hold us here."
"Oh, how sad! that grieves us so.
We came to sing the pretty songs we know.
We'll ride away and seek elsewhere
Some Children much worthier of our care."
WHILE your Child is resting in your lap, and your left arm is gently round him, the fingers of your right hand keep moving, beginning from the Little Finger and going towards the Thumb, representing the trampling of Horses and Riders riding as though towards the Child, and alternately coming nearer or going further off, so long as the Song lasts.

In this and the following Song we now enter chiefly upon the stage of the formation of the Child's disposition, character and will. Whatever has hitherto affected all this happened rather as a thing of chance or aside; what is now done, however, is done with clear intention and deliberate aim.

Knights and Horsemen, with an expression of free control of Self and Will, and of ruling strength that is foreign, hard to bend, independent, even if rough, and also the power of Nature,—it is Knights and Horsemen who, on all these accounts, early charm the attention of Boys and Girls, and soon stand out to them as a pattern, full of magical, we might say ideal Beauty. Their judgment and opinion is therefore by no means a matter of indifference, but is a Something, and something with a meaning to Children. It is therefore with these Knights and Horsemen that Game and Song connect words, and the path to that goal which Game and Song would like to attain in the Child.

But the Motto warns us, Mother, to be careful, and we ought to be. Separation has set up in the Child's mind between himself and a second person a standard, a comparison, a weighing. At this stage a Child is only too apt to substitute what he has still to become for what he actually is, and so believes, or at least is glad to make himself believe, that he already is what he has still to become.
Play-songs today . . .

“When a visitor to a kindergarten [today] sees a dozen toddlers standing in a circle, singing a song about flowers, while going through a pantomime of planting, watering, weeding, picking the flowers, and smelling them, he is observing the modern version of a play-song.”

- Luella Cole, A History of Education: Socrates to Montessori
The Play-Circle

“Froebel was struck by the fact that children spontaneously play games in which they join hands to make a circle, and he adapted this procedure to his work.

“The chairs in a kindergarten are almost always arranged in a circle. Froebel had a complicated symbolic interpretation about the circle, most of which by now is forgotten, but the arrangement has remained...”

- Luella Cole, A History of Education: Socrates to Montessori
So what's missing?
“Teaching children to read . . . Froebel believed would produce habits of mind positively injurious . . . destroying the mind's elasticity and originality.”

- Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, 1868

“Instead of the reading, writing and arithmetic (three Rs), the three Hs are substituted, heads, hands and hearts.”

- *NZ Weekly News* report, 1910, claiming to be quoting Froebel, quoted in Helen May's *The Discovery of Early Childhood*
Duelling Pedagogies

“The broad contrast between a Montessori school and a kindergarten appears on actual observation to be this: whereas the Montessori children spend almost all their time handling *things*, largely according to their individual inclination and under individual guidance, kindergarten children are generally engaged in group work and games with an imaginative background and appeal.”

- From the 1912 U.S. Introduction to *The Montessori Method*, by Henry W. Holmes
Charitable kindergartens, Volkskindergarten, were established across Germany under “the influential Baroness von Marenholtz-Bülow, [who] saw in them the education of the 'rough masses' to learn 'self-restraint and voluntary subjection to law.'

“Furthermore, she wondered about the extent of education for the poor, declaring 'there might be no more unhappy beings than learned men on the joiner's bench and the artist as a chimney sweep.'”

- quoted in The Discovery of Early Childhood, Helen May
Did you know?

- Why are nursery schools here and the USA so commonly called “kindergartens”?
- What's the connection between Napoleon & the Kindergarten movement?
- Between the Prussian military state (called by Frederick the Great “an army with a country”) and American early childhood education?
Coming to the US

- Human driving force was Baroness von Marenholtz-Bülow (former patron) and Luise Levin (widow, 1815-1900).
- Ideological driving force in US was “assimilation.”
- First “kindergarten” in USA in 1850s, in Wisconsin, then in Boston in 1860. First “state” kindergarten in St Louis in 1873.
- Retained form of songs, games, occupations & materials; dropped the specific content.
- Dropped the “Prussian discipline” and the metaphysics; stressed Dewey's “open play” to emphasise the “social context of learning” – he argued that “educational theory was about adjustment and adaption to the social environment.”

“A child is not born with faculties to be unfolded, but with special impulses of action to be developed through their use in preserving and perfecting life in the social and physical conditions under which it goes.”

Coming to NZ

- NZ Kindergarten Union formed in 1926
- Retained form of songs, games, occupations & materials; dropped the specific content

“Notions of original sin seemed more apparent in the kindergarten rhetoric when dealing with children of the poor. Rousseau's view of child goodness and Froebel's view of a child being like an unfolding plant were much less evident.”
- Helen May, The Discovery of Early Childhood

“To guard the children of Dunedin from thriftlessness, disease, pauperism and crime was the desire of those who first spoke of planning a kindergarten in this city. They wanted to lay hold of the little ones, who came into the world burdened with evil tendencies. . .”
- Dunedin Free Kindergarten Association Annual Report, 1891
(Sadly, for Montessori's First Arrival . . . )

“Montessori fever [first] arrived [in New Zealand in the early 1910s] at a time when kindergarteners were reformulating their earlier Froebelian doctrines, and they were reluctant to replace Froebel with something which in their view was even more rigid.”
- Helen May, The Discovery of Early Childhood

“'Montessori brought back formal apparatus when the kindergarten was succeeding in emancipating itself from the formalism of Froebelian gifts and occupations. Montessori brought back sense training when the kindergarten was fighting the battle to discard the sensory material of Froebel in favour of Deweyan projects and social play.”
- Sol Cohen, History of Education
NZ Kindergartens

“Programmes structured by age and time”
- Joyce Barns describes “a typical kindergarten in the 1930s” (quoted in Helen May, 1997, 180)
  - Froebel materials now?
Summary: Froebel's Basic Tenets

1. Basic Point of View:
   - Permanent influence confined chiefly to early childhood level
   - Encouraged and trained young, unmarried mothers as teachers for children
   - Exalted the interests & spontaneous activities of the child
   - Encouraged imaginative and fantasy play
   - Education is “the constant progressive adjustment of the child to the world around him by which he discovers his true self.”
   - Promoted “self-activity” within the “little world” of the kindergarten
   - Insisted on the necessity of developing “a unified inner life” through play

2. Materials & Procedures
   - Gifts & Occupations - “The Gift gives the child a new cosmos, the occupation fixes the impressions made by the gift.” (Norman Brosterman)
   - Singing Play-Songs
   - Playing educational games in the Play-Circle

From Luella Cole, *History of Education: Socrates to Montessori*