

(Re)Connecting pedagogies: Examining the links between Froebelian and Common Worlds approaches to environmental learning

Sally Howe

School of Education, University of Roehampton (UK)

Abstract

The purpose of this theoretical paper is to examine the links between the philosophical underpinnings of Froebelian pedagogy (where pedagogy is understood as the basis on which early childhood practices are developed) and the pedagogy of a recent movement in environmental education for young children; the Common Worlds Research Collective. Current concerns about environmental damage highlight the importance of finding ways of engaging children with environmental concerns without placing them in untenable positions as “planet savers.” The global reach of the pedagogies under discussion make them valuable platforms for promoting ecological education in the Early Years. Using levels of pedagogical discourse put forward by Le Grange (2018) – ultimate premises, platform-principles and practice – the paper examines the relationship between Froebelian thinking and the Common Worlds approach. Through a discussion of the common philosophical underpinnings, views of children’s agency and relationship with the natural world, I will argue that the Common Worlds’ critique of pedagogy based on Froebel’s thinking and call for a new pedagogy for young children is based on an incomplete reading of Froebel’s nature pedagogy, and does not pay sufficient attention to the common grounds on which these pedagogical approaches are based- namely a view of the world as being infinitely connected and the role of education as a means of supporting children to understand their connections with the world as it is, and how they can engage with it ethically.

Keywords

Froebel, Common Worlds, interconnectedness, environmental education

Introduction

The purpose of this theoretical paper is to examine the contribution of two early childhood approaches to environmental education, one – a Froebelian approach, which draws heavily on the work of Friedrich Froebel, considered one of the pioneers of institutional early childhood education and the other- a Common Worlds approach, which is today pioneering approaches to early learning that embrace emergent philosophical and scientific perspectives regarding human and non-human or more-than-

human relationships (commonworlds.net, 2021). In attempting to redefine the parameters of environmental education in the early years, Affrica Taylor, a leading academic in the Common Worlds Research Collective (CWRC), explicitly critiques Froebel’s views of nature and nature education (Taylor, 2013). However, a more thorough examination provides several areas of congruence between Froebelian thinking and the CWRC. These congruences have not been fully explored and, given the current climate emergency and the importance of developing approaches to environmental education in the

early years, there is a need to develop an understanding of these links further. This paper addresses this need by making the deep-seated connections between Froebelian thinking and the thinking underpinning the CWRC more explicit. The global reach and cultural sensitivity evidenced by both these pedagogical approaches (Hutchins 2019, Bruce et al., 2019), make them valuable international platforms to promote discussions on environmental learning that will be of interest to researchers and practitioners alike. I am not planning to argue that either Froebel's ideas are better/worse or the same as the Common Worlds' approach, or vice versa, but simply to examine where related understandings and goals can enhance and support the uniqueness and importance of Early Childhood pedagogy in developing awareness of environmental issues and find common grounds for discussion.

Making common ground is important. Because of the increasing incorporation of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) into a mainstream schooling system dominated by neo-liberal discourses of what counts as education, recognition of ECEC as a unique phase of education, and therefore the potential contribution that it can make to environmental education is seen to be under threat (Johanson, 2018). In his context, Froebel's pedagogy provided an alternative discourse to the pragmatic view of education as a means of training youth to serve the needs of the ruling classes (Brehony, 2010), a discourse that has been adapted and updated over time (Nawrotski, 2019). Similarly, the Common Worlds pedagogical approach provides an equally powerful counter discourse to current utilitarian views of education as serving the needs of capitalism (Taylor, 2013). Building connections between these two early childhood pedagogical perspectives that focus on the

interconnectedness of the natural world matters because, as I will argue, it will provide a more powerful political counter to the current dominant neo-liberal focus on individualism in education and beyond. Moreover, given the ecological crisis that faces the world, it is imperative that our pedagogies find ways of engaging children with environmental issues- not in relation to grand narratives about "stewardship" (Taylor, 2017), but in a way that connects children to their environments. I will argue that both Froebelian and Common Worlds pedagogies aim to recognize the importance of developing approaches to ecological pedagogy with understandings of relationships and relatedness at their center (Froebel, 1897, Taylor, 2019). In doing so, I draw on an understanding of pedagogy that Beigi (2021:12) describes as "habits of mind"- ways of thinking about, being and doing in ECEC. This view of pedagogy goes beyond simply considering the links between theory and practice and is exemplified in the levels of pedagogical discourse put forward by Le Grange (2018) in his discussion of the Deep Ecology Movement and education. In his article he refers to 4 levels of pedagogical discourse: ultimate premises(I), platform-principles movement (II), policies (III) and practical actions (IV). In this paper I will argue that there is common ground for discussion in relation to all of these levels of discourse between Froebelian and Common Worlds pedagogies, but in particular with regard to ultimate premises and practical actions- notwithstanding some important points of difference that are worthy of further discussion and exploration.

Outdoor education- learning in, about and through engaging in the natural world - is one of the fundamental aspects of a Froebelian approach to learning in the early years (Liebschner, 1992, Read, 2012, Tovey, 2007,

2017, Wasmuth, 2020). Froebel's writing on outdoor learning was wide ranging- focusing on connectedness, movement, risk, challenge and responsibility for the environment (Froebel, 1885, 1897). Currently, there is an increased emphasis in literature written from a Froebelian perspective on the principle of engaging with nature in order to highlight the importance of connecting children to the natural world so that they can potentially understand the value of conservation and stewardship (Froebel Trust, 2021, Bruce, 2021). This emphasis is driven by observable phenomena, backed up by scientific data, which indicate the world is in the process of rapid ecological change that is directly attributable to human action and is causing irreversible environmental damage.

The recognition that we live in an increasingly damaged world that will provide challenges for children as they face uncertain futures (Taylor, 2017) is a main focus of the Common Worlds Research Collective (CWRC), a multidisciplinary network of researchers that have adopted a posthuman, feminist and decolonizing perspective, part of whose area of interest is to consider ways of being with young children that situates pedagogy in "common world" contexts. These contexts focus upon "the ways in which our past, present and future lives are entangled with those of other beings, non-living entities, technologies, elements, discourse, landforms" (commonworlds.net 2021). According to Taylor (2019) this has led to an emerging scholarship that explores ways of working with children, which amount to new pedagogies that align with feminist calls to reassess the scale of human activity and aim for refiguring the way in which humans understand their relationships with the world.

In her specific critique Taylor (2013) argues that Froebel's pedagogy is based on a world view of externalized nature separated

from human society. However, I would argue that this is based on an incomplete reading of Froebel's views on pedagogy and its underlying premises. Notwithstanding the difficulties involved in exploring the ways in which multiple philosophies influence, move and change over time and space, there are striking similarities between Froebel's philosophical position and those adopted by the CWRC that seem to derive in some way from engagement with ideas put forward in Western philosophy by Baruch Spinoza (1632-77) I will begin by providing a brief overview of Spinoza's philosophy, and then explore how this is connected to both Froebel and the CWRC, examining points of similarity and difference. Subsequent sections focus on how these premises inform principles and practice associated with both approaches to early environmental education.

Ultimate Premises- everything is connected

The world, according to Spinoza, is infinitely connected as it is all part of a singular substance (which could be understood as either God or Nature, or both) Nature/God here is understood as the whole of creation- from cells/protons/quarks to universes and is self-referential in that it does not need anything else to give it existence (Le Grange, 2018). Substance- Nature/God- is a singularity that, according to Spinozan philosophy, has various modes- for example, rocks, trees, planets, animals. According to Le Grange, Spinoza argued modes that exists in multiple form must of necessity be called forth by an external force which binds them together. In other words, far from being discrete objects, all things are made from the same matter, although expressed in different ways and are therefore interconnected. As I will argue in this section, this philosophy of the interconnectedness of all things can be seen the pedagogical understandings of both Froebel

(Bruce, 2021, Wasmuth, 2020, Werth, 2019, Joyce, 2012, Liebschner, 1992, Read, 2012,) and that of the CWRC (Taylor, Blaise & Guigni, 2013, Taylor, 2013, Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2019: 2), although these do diverge in important ways that need to be considered.

Froebel's pedagogy is deeply rooted in an episto-ontology that is derived both from his experiences and from engagement with contemporary philosophies such as panentheism that explored the relationship between Nature/God (Bruce 2021, Wasmuth, 2020, Joyce, 2012, Liebschner, 1992, Lilley, 1967). The first pages of his seminal work, *The Education of Man* (Froebel, 1885), are devoted to his explanation of the interconnectedness of all living things that bears a marked similarity to Spinoza's explanation, and in particular the unifying mechanism being God. Unlike Spinoza, however, he does not equate Nature and God. For Froebel, God's spirit ran through Nature in the same way that an artist's handiwork is evident in his or her creations. Nevertheless, Froebel's writings about Nature (always capitalized) demonstrates a perspective that is akin to what Latour (2004) describes as a common world or Cosmos and includes everything- rocks, stars, plants, animals, including humans, which in itself is very close to Spinoza. These are all Nature- or part of the whole of Nature as Froebel describes it (Fletcher & Welton, 1912:106). The notion of part/whole describes the way in which entities are both whole in themselves, but also part of greater wholes, which leads to his principles of Unity/Community that I will discuss in the next section. Far from placing humanity above or apart from nature, Froebel was explicit in explaining humanity as part of the natural world; as part of the Universe but then also as a whole in its own right stating that:

self and object do not exist in a separate strata of being, but form a component part of a total reality, and the pattern of this reality is derived from God for he infuses both subject and object, the world of the mind and the world of nature. Everything flows from and returns to a common ground. (Lilley, 1967: 9)

Froebel's belief in this connection between all things as the "most important law of the Universe" (Froebel 1899:203) is fundamental to his pedagogy, as the purpose of education was to bring humans to a full understanding of their connection with all other life. He did, however, place humans in a unique relationship with Nature/God that has some resonance with the posthuman critiques of human exceptionalism that I will discuss below (Braidotti, 2013, Taylor, 2013, Le Grange, 2018).

For Froebel, humans were the perfect result of a long history of evolution. However, this was not Darwinian evolution; ideas about evolution in Froebel's day predated Darwinian theories of natural selection and were, according to Lilley (1967), more of a philosophical than a scientific concept and are more congruent with a biblical understanding of creation. In *Man* consciousness was raised to a point where humans were in a unique position to fully discover and articulate their connection with the cosmos. For Froebel, this was the purpose of education:

To treat man as a thinking, understanding being, who is becoming conscious of himself, to incite him to the pure, unviolated representation of the inner law, of the God-like, with consciousness, and self-determination; and to produce ways and means for this

representation is to educate man
(Froebel 1885:20)

Froebel's focus on God as the all-encompassing Unity of creation and his use of the scientific theories of the early 19th Century can be problematic for those who engage with a Froebelian approach to young children's learning from a secular 21st Century perspective (Bruce 2021). However, as Tovey (2017) argues, a Froebelian approach is both forward and backward looking. Forward in the sense that it does not hold on to outdated theories and practices, and backward in aiming to use the knowledge and understanding from the past to deepen our understandings of the present and future. This notion of transition and transformation is explicit in Froebel's articulation of pedagogy as he was clear that the purpose of education was to situate children in their contexts and is central to the revisionist approach to Froebelian pedagogy and practice (Nawrotski, 2019). Connectedness does not just pertain to the here and now- the education of humankind is about understanding the connection between past, present and future as much as it is about understanding connections in the everyday world. For Froebel, the journey towards understanding the relationships in nature/god/humanity was a tripartate journey which involved the individual, their human context as well as the natural context (Fletcher & Welton, 1912).

It is in this vein that I consider the Common Worlds' perspective in order to examine the links between their understandings of naturecultures and the role of pedagogy and how these perspectives might connect with Froebelian thinking. Much as Froebel's pedagogy emerged from engagement with philosophy, science and religion (Bruce, 2021, Wasmuth, 2020, Taylor, 2013). Taylor and her colleagues in the Common Worlds Collective

draw on multidisciplinary readings, including Latour (philosophy), Barad (quantum physics/philosophy), Braidotti (philosophy), and Haraway (biology) to articulate ideas about the interconnectedness of things and of things that have agency (Taylor, 2013). Taylor, along with other Common Worlds researchers, takes a posthuman perspective that explicitly positions "children and their learning within inextricably entangled life worlds" (2017: 1448). In other words it is not possible to separate children from their contexts- hence naturecultures rather than Nature as a singularity (Latour, 2004). Posthumanism explicitly rejects human exceptionalism and places humans and nonhuman others as equal (as on a non-hierarchical basis) – thus the notion of "common worlding" or of living in a more-than-human world (Taylor, 2013:80). Alongside this shift in perspectives on nature, is the way in which technological and scientific advances have blurred the boundary between the natural and the cultural (Braidotti 2013). This thinking rejects dualism, especially the opposition of nature/culture and stresses coexistence instead. As Taylor puts it "humans are not the only ones making or assembling the common worlds-doing the common worlding" (2013: p80).

Posthuman positioning of people in a non-hierarchical relationship with the Cosmos could be seen as counter to Froebel's view of humans as being uniquely placed to discover or understand their connectedness. However, it is debatable whether Froebel's view equates to human exceptionalism in the way that Taylor (2013) describes. Although many of Froebel's ideas can be associated with the idealism of the early German Romantic movement, matter and matter-realism was an integral part of his understanding (Froebel, 1915). He described Nature as an organized whole- living things, things and forces co-existing in relation with each

other. However, as I have argued, he also characterized human consciousness as being uniquely able to make those connections explicit (hence the purpose of education). Froebel's view resonates with Le Grange's point that "human conatus provides for a different form of education than that of the more-than-human other" (2018: 884) For Le Grange it is this "conatus" or way of thinking and knowing that makes humans ethical agents, and is an argument that sits very easily within a Froebelian approach.

The notion of ethical agency is at the forefront of the CWRC's ideas about education. Despite the focus on posthuman perspectives, which aim for non-hierarchical intra-relationships between humans and more-than-human others, the CWRC is concerned with the education of humans; the importance of understanding and recognizing child-wildlife relations in order to "pursue the question of how we might live well with others that are so radically different from ourselves" (Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw 2019:4). It could therefore be argued that the differences between a Froebelian approach and that of the Common Worlds Collective is not necessarily as radical as Taylor has suggested.

In this section I have attempted to show that there are some key areas of relation between what Le Grange (2018) calls the ultimate premises of Froebel's and Common Worlds pedagogies- with some key differences that situate Froebel in his time and place and the Common Worlds Collective in theirs. As I have argued, however, a Froebelian approach is not one that is static, but needs to consider social, physical, cultural and political contexts, which I have identified as key to a Common Worlds' pedagogical perspective. A core difference between Froebel's world and our own, however, is the impact of human action on the earth, which is arguably moving the world into a new

geological era that has been unofficially coined Anthropocene (National Geographic 2021). Given these concerns, it would appear that there is an urgent need to ensure that environmental education is a key aspect of children's learning, without positioning children as "saviors" of the natural world. I would argue that the principles that emanate from the ultimate premise of universal connectedness that underpins the work of both Froebelians and a Common Worlds research collective is an excellent starting point for developing environmentally conscious pedagogies. In the next section, I will look more closely at the pedagogical principles that underpin work with children and discuss what this means for children's relationships within natural contexts.

Platform Principles movement- children's relationships in nature

There are three key pedagogical principles that are worth discussing in relation to Froebelian and Common Worlds approaches to environmental education: Connectedness, agency and reflection. These principles are what drive practical approaches to work with children outdoors. However, it is in this area that much of Froebel's thinking is contested in Taylor's critique of Froebelian pedagogy. In this section, I will first discuss the critique, providing evidence that runs counter to Taylor's position, and then look more closely at the ways in which the principles of both approaches align. Doing so will allow for a reasoned theoretical approach to developing environmental pedagogy in the early years that has both historical roots, and contemporary resonance.

A large part of the impetus for the Common Worlds perspective on pedagogy comes from their perceived need to refigure the way in which children and humans are understood in relation to nature. In explaining

this need, Taylor (2013) positions Froebel, alongside Rousseau, Montessori, Louv, the Forest school movement and others in a Romantic tradition that is understood as eulogizing and sanitizing child/nature relations. Taylor (2017) argues that this heritage has led to the view of children as having a natural affinity with nature and that there is a tendency for idealized notions of the “child in nature” to exaggerate the effects of the inherent relationship between children and nature; creating a perspective that free play in natural surroundings will be sufficient to support children’s affinity with nature and their support for environmental stewardship. There is no doubt that Froebel’s pedagogy has to be placed in relation to the Romantic movement of his time, and that, through his engagement with Pestalozzi’s school at Yverdon, Rousseau and Pestalozzi’s work had a marked impact on his educational ideas (Leibschner, 1992, Weston, 2002). For example, Froebel discussed the importance of allowing children to show their natures and for the adults who worked with them to take account of those natures when working with them. So far, this seems to follow the pedagogical approaches of Rousseau and Pestalozzi. However, as I have argued earlier, Froebel’s thinking engages with many different influences and to align him with one specific way of thinking is problematic (Bruce 2021, Wasmuth, 2020). Moreover, as Bruce (2021: 84) has argued “Much of the original thinking that Froebel did in [in relation to nature pedagogy] has been lost.” In these next paragraphs, I will refer directly to Froebel’s writings about nature and children’s relationship with nature to demonstrate that this notion of “Nature’s child” is somewhat simplistic.

The extent to which Froebel understood children’s sense of purpose and ownership in/with Nature (I will use the capitalization to be

consistent with Froebel’s own writing) as automatic is questionable. He certainly had a perspective on Nature that could be seen as idealized; children, being part of Nature, are naturally good (Bruce, 2021). A careful reading of Froebel’s views on children in Nature, however, provide some much-needed nuance to the notion of perfect innocent children in Nature. His analogy does not presume that children will automatically be good if they are left to their own devices- Froebel’s close observations of children and his own childhood experiences told him otherwise. His argument could be summed up more as given time and space children will reveal what is good for them, not that they are good by default of being in Nature. From Froebel’s perspective, humans were capable of making mistakes in thinking that may cause a separation and thus limit the ways in which people can come to know their connectivity (Froebel, 1897). According to Froebel, Children’s engagement with Nature is important, but Froebel did not argue that children should be let loose in Nature and all would be well. Quite the contrary- he argued:

it is true that the children run about in fields and forests, but they do not truly live in and with Nature. They neither feel its beauty nor realize (sic) its influence on the human spirit... Little boys often ill-treat insects and animals without any cruel design, in a desire to get insight into their lives and to understand their spirits. If guidance and explanation be lacking, or if this impulse be misunderstood, it may in time harden into ruthless cruelty (Froebel 1912: 101).

What was needed was thoughtful adults who could support children to come to a realization of their connectedness. It is thus problematic to suggest that Froebel believed in

the concept of Nature's Child that may be seen to derive from Rousseau and the Romantic movement as described by Taylor (2013) (and the extent to which Rousseau's *Emile* was so let loose is also highly debatable). Furthermore, contemporary Froebelian thinking does not consider a view of nature as being utopic or arcadian, but instead acknowledges children's potential fascination with the rawness as well as the beauty of natural processes (Tovey, 2017:67).

An ecological perspective- a concern about environmental damage and for cultural sensitivity - is apparent in those who write from a Froebelian point of view today (Bruce, 2021, Read, 2019). Drawing on similar theoretical perspectives, such as those put forward by Barad, for example, Tina Bruce (2021) emphasizes the need to prioritize the key principle of engagement with nature given the current scale of ecological damage. However, in order to maintain the currency of Froebelian tradition, it is important to deepen this perspective somewhat and respect the value that current environmental education initiatives such as the Common Worlds perspectives on naturecultures has for contemporary Froebelian thinking. This is particularly relevant given discussions relating to our current situation; understandings of the impact of colonial violence on indigenous peoples and places and the growing recognition of the uncertainties that can be attributed to climate change and other environmental issues (Taylor, 2017). Talking and thinking about human/more-than-human relationships is a key principle of the Common Worlds approach. Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw's, focus on child/wildlife relationships is a pertinent example. They argue that "this knowledge [of our mortal entanglement with other species] carries a considerable ethical responsibility, not only to find ways to secure the ecological futures of our

own children, but the future generations of all other species" (2019, p5). Le Grange's perspective is also useful here. He argues that "it is through understanding how nature works that we find out how we are implicated in it, which can move us from a human condition of passivity and reactivity to a better active condition" (2018:883). As I have argued, these contemporary views sit very well with a Froebelian perspective.

Both a Froebelian and a Common Worlds perspective endorse the notion of children's agency in their relations with nature. What differs is the way in which relationality is expressed, and this seems to be centered on ways in which inter- and intra-relationality are understood and on the differing emphasis on the autopoietic (self-organizing) and sympoetic (making with) subject. Donna Haraway, (2016: 50) whose work in the field of biology from a posthuman perspective is explicitly referenced in the Common Worlds pedagogical work argues that "[n]othing makes itself; nothing is really autopoietic or self-organizing (sic)." What this means for our understanding of children within the natural (and non-natural) world, is that the world acts on children as much as children act on the world. Whilst this may seem to be somewhat axiomatic, given the previous discussion, it does have implications for the emphasis that can be put on children's autonomous and individual learning and confronts ideas about child-centered learning. In other words, it is not necessarily a question of the independent learner acting on the world, or the world acting on the individual, but the way in which modes (to use the Spinozan phrase) act on each other – intra-action rather than interaction (Haraway, 2016).

Whilst a Froebelian approach is largely understood as child-centered and focuses on children's agency within prescribed parameters,

there is some evidence of similar thinking in Froebel's own writings- he talks of children living in a world of things which they wish to influence and which want to influence them (Froebel, 1885). Intended as a guide for parents to introduce babies and very young children to his philosophies about education, Froebel's mother songs (1898) in particular, focus on how children interrelate with their worlds. The subjects of the songs are situated in everyday experiences and moral/ethical concerns. In *Tick! Tack!*, for example, the clock is shown to have agency in regulating the children's lives; The "fishes in the brook" is a moral tale about the importance of respecting the different habitats and ways of children and aquatic life. Similarly in a version made for English Nursery schools, "the Birds and the children" offers a homily on why birds should not be caught and caged (Berry & Michaelis, 1883). The insight that these songs provide, makes a clear connection between Froebel's thinking and contemporary insights related to posthuman theory.

Connectedness, agency and reflection can therefore be understood as important principles for both Froebelian and Common Worlds environmental educational approaches. What is also significant, however, is what we do in practice with children and how that is articulated and analyzed. In the next section I will examine a specific aspect of practice- walking with children- that relates particularly to environmental education and explore the perspectives of researchers and practitioners.

Environmental education practice- walking with children

For the purpose of this section I will examine some examples of practice research that are taken from literature that explores Froebelian and Common worlds' perspectives on environmental education. Froebelian outdoor

learning is based on two distinct spaces: the kindergarten garden and the local spaces beyond the garden. Helen Tovey has explicated Froebelian approaches to the nursery (kindergarten) garden- exploring the symbolism and opportunities that a Froebelian approach to the garden brings (Tovey, 2007,2017), and I do not propose to go into this in detail here, as there is insufficient space to do this justice. Instead, I will focus on a few case studies that are based on walking with children in the local area that highlight both the similarities and differences between Froebelian and Common Worlds thinking, and which provide the grounds to extend the conversation between these distinct pedagogies. To reiterate, the purpose of this discussion is not to make value judgements in favor of one or another, but to explore the ways in which practice is articulated and understood from these perspectives and to consider how this discussion might further contribute towards an understanding of environmental education in the early years. Two examples are taken from the Routledge International Handbook of Froebel and Early Childhood Practice (Bruce et al., 2019), and three examples from Feminist Research for 21st century childhoods (Hodgins,2019), written by members of the Common Worlds Research Collective.

The practice of walking with children in natural environments, following and developing children's interests in natural phenomena is common to both Froebelian and Common Worlds' pedagogies. It is through walking with children that practitioners and researchers are able to pay attention to the ways in which children engage in their environment, how their connection with the more-than-human world are developed. For both of these pedagogical approaches, engagement is automatic, there is no such thing as not engaging with the

environment. What children and adults who work with them pay attention to, however, is a product of the conversations that they have with children and their own specific interests. The value of risk and challenge from a Froebelian perspective, for example, is highlighted in Lyn McNair's (2019) discussion of one child's engagement with hills and trees in a forest school setting, alongside the role of the outdoors for providing unique opportunities for adventure, challenge, mastery and embodied experiences in familiar but changing landscapes. In a previous article, McNair (2012), discusses the connections children make between berries, birds and purple poo, highlighting the potential of outdoor learning for engaging with other beings. Similarly, but subtly different, Tonya Rooney (2019) discusses the way in which connecting with sticks allows children to take risks in exploring ant behaviors from a Common Worlds perspective. On the one hand, the analysis focuses specifically on the child in nature, and the opportunities for risk taking that this affords, whereas on the other, the analysis focuses on child/more-than-human assemblages. In other words, how children and things/animals/plants combine to support risk taking. Agency, from a Common Worlds' perspective, is thus shared between human and more-than-human intra-actions rather than agency being a human prerogative based on the affordances of the environment.

Connection is a further common theme in analyses of walking with children. This is not just about making connection to the natural environment, but also to geo/historical issues such as Māori values of respect for the environment (Meade, with Fugle & McCaul, 2019), and the impact of colonization in Canada (Nelson, 2019) and Australia (Taylor, 2019). Similar to ideas about risk and adventure, analysis from the two perspectives is somewhat

different, with Froebelian approaches focusing on children's connection with (animals, plants, values), whereas the Common Worlds' perspective is more openly political and ecological. However, as I have discussed in the previous section, this approach to analysis and understanding of the world is not incompatible with a Froebelian perspective (see Bruce, 2021, for example).

The practice of walking with children; sharing ideas and paying joint attention to aspects of the world that are of interest, be they rabbits, or birds with purple poo or sticky sticks, provides a valuable platform to engage with children on environmental issues, and to consider our ethical relationships with others, both human and more-than-human. This is not about expecting children to become environmental activists, or "world saviors," but to enable children to develop an understanding of how they are connected with the world. Ultimately, this is the key to Froebelian approach to pedagogy and has strong resonance with a Common Worlds approach as well.

The congruences between Froebelian and Common Worlds Research Collective with regard to premise, principle and practice are clearly recognizable. Both engage with the world as it is, and do not shy away from "difficult" subjects such as death or destruction. Adults and children develop their ideas together in ways that encourage both to deepen their understanding of their connection with the more-than-human world. However, pedagogy is not just about what we do, but why we do it and how we think about it (Beigi 2021). In particular how we think about it. Although Werth (2019) argues that the spiritual and philosophical aspects of Froebelian pedagogy have tended to be side-lined in favor of scientific theories and evidence, there is evidence of a resurgence of interest in Froebel's philosophical roots (Bruce

,2021, Wasmuth, 2020, Best, 2016) that sit very well with a Common Worlds perspective, albeit with much room for discussion.

A Froebelian perspective emphasizes responsibility and stewardship (Bruce 2021). This is not to do with grandiose ideas of planet saving, but with understanding that our actions and inactions have consequences. Not just for us, but for others (including non-human others). The Common Worlds Research Collective, on the other hand, freely acknowledges the damage that has been caused by human action, but the role of education and environmental education is not necessarily to take sole responsibility for repairing that damage (because that would raise humans above the more-than human other), but to find ways within our own small compass to live with others and finding ways of negotiating that damage in order to for all (human and more-than-human) to flourish (Haraway, 2016), and to allow that the more-than-human world has a role in world recuperation. Froebelian practice on the other hand is unashamedly anthropocentric in the sense that it concerns itself with the education of humankind. This is not to deny more than human agency, but the focus is on how we as humans come to understand ourselves in context. To this end, discussions with posthuman perspectives, such as those of the Common Worlds Collective have much to offer a context sensitive Froebelian pedagogy. At the same time, I would argue that a more complete reading of Froebel's pedagogical perspectives align closely enough with those of the Common Worlds to maintain a conversation that will be of value to both.

References

- Beigi, R. (2021) *Early Years Pedagogy in Practice: A guide for students and practitioners*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Berry, E. & Michaelis, E. (1883) *Kindergarten Songs and Games*. London: W Shepherd.
- Best, R. (2016). Exploring the spiritual in the pedagogy of Friedrich Froebel. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 21(3-4), 272–282.
- Blow, S. E. (1898) *The Song's and Music of Friedrich Froebel's Mother Play*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Braidotti, R. (2013). *The post human*. Polity Press.
- Brehony, K. J. (2010) A critical review of alternative and oppositional elements in Froebel's thought and their impact on the early kindergarten movement Paper to be presented at the fourth conference of the International Froebel Society, Froebelian Pedagogy in a Modern context (draft) at the Friedrich Schiller University of Jena 8-10 April 2010.
- Bruce, T. (2012). The whole child- the child's relationship with self, others and the universe. In Bruce, T. (Ed.) *Early childhood practice: Froebel today*. SAGE. pp. 5-16.
- Bruce, T., Elfer, P., Powell, S., & Werth, L. (Eds.). (2019). *The Routledge international handbook of Froebel and early childhood practice: re-articulating research and policy* (Ser. Routledge international handbook series). Routledge.
- Bruce, T (2019) Introduction in Bruce, T., Elfer, P., Powell, S., & Werth, L. (Eds.).

- (2019). *The Routledge international handbook of Froebel and early childhood practice: re-articulating research and policy* (Ser. Routledge international handbook series). Routledge. pp 1-3.
- Bruce, T. (2021). *Friedrich Froebel: A Critical Introduction to Key Themes and Debates*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Common Worlds Research Collective
www.commonworlds.net last accessed 14/07/2021
- Fletcher, S.S.F., & Welton, J (1912) *Friedrich Froebel's Chief Writings on Education: Rendered into English*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Froebel F trans Jarvis J. (1885) *The Education of Man*. New York: A. Lovell and Company.
- Froebel, F. trans Jarvis, J. (1897) *Pedagogics of the Kindergarten or His Ideas Concerning the play and playthings of the child*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Froebel, F. trans Michaelis, E., and Moore, H.K. (1915). *Autobiography of Friedrich Froebel*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Froebel Trust www.froebel.org.uk last accessed 06/07/2021
- Haraway, D. (2016) *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press.
- Hutchins, B. D. (Ed) *Feminist research for 21st Century childhoods*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Johansson, J-E. (2018). *F.A.W. Fröbel 1782-1852*. In Fleer, M., & Oers, B. van (Eds.). (2018). *International handbook of early childhood education* (Ser. Springer international handbooks of education). Springer.
- Joyce, R. (2012) *Outdoor learning: past and present*. Open University Press.
- Latour, B. (2004) *Politics of nature: how to bring the sciences into democracy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Le Grange, L. (2018). Spinoza, Deep Ecology and Education informed by a (post)human sensibility. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 50(9), 878-887.
- Liebschner, J. (1992) *Freedom and Guidance in Froebel's Educational Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press.
- Lilley, I. (1967) *Friedrich Froebel: His chief writings on education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Meade, A. with Fugle, G. & McCaul, C. (2019) A story of Froebel's global reach. In Bruce, T., Elfer, P., Powell, S., & Werth, L. (Eds.). (2019). *The Routledge international handbook of Froebel and early childhood practice: re-articulating research and policy* (Ser. Routledge international handbook series). Routledge, pp. 127-131.
- McNair, L. (2012) Offering Children first hand experiences through forest school: relating to and learning about nature. In Bruce, T. (Ed) *Early Childhood Practice: Froebel Today*. London: Sage pp86-99.
- McNair, L. (2019) A case study at Cowgate Under 5's Centre. In Bruce, T., Elfer, P., Powell, S., & Werth, L. (Eds.). (2019). *The Routledge international handbook of Froebel and early childhood practice: re-articulating research and policy* (Ser. Routledge international handbooks of education). Springer.

- international handbook series).
Routledge. Pp. 132-137.
- National geographic (2021)
<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/en/cyclopedia/anthropocene/> [accessed 27/02/2021]
- Nawrotski, K. D. (2019) Froebel is dead; long live Froebel. In Bruce, T., Elfer, P., Powell, S., & Werth, L. (Eds.). (2019). *The Routledge international handbook of Froebel and early childhood practice: re-articulating research and policy* (Ser. Routledge international handbook series). Routledge. pp. 57-67.
- Nelson, N. 2019) Tracking: Cultivating the “Arts of Awareness” in early childhood. In Hutchins, B. D. (Ed) *Feminist research for 21st Century childhoods*. Bloomsbury. pp 101-110.
- Read, J. (2012) The time honoured Froebelian tradition of learning out of doors. In Bruce, T. (Ed) *Early Childhood Practice: Froebel Today*. London: Sage, pp. 100-114.
- Read, J. (2019) Tracing Froebel’s legacy: The spread of the kindergarten movement across Europe and beyond and his influence on educators. In Bruce, T., Elfer, P., & Powell, S (Eds) *The Routledge International Handbook of Froebel and Early Childhood Practice: Re-articulating Research and Policy*. London: Routledge, pp. 14-18.
- Rooney, T. (2019) Sticking: Children and the lively matter of sticks. In Hodgins, B.D (Ed) *Feminist Research for 21st Century Childhoods*. Bloomsbury, pp. 43-52.
- Taylor, A. (2013) *Reconfiguring the Natures of Childhood*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Taylor, A. (2017) Beyond Stewardship: Common World Pedagogies for the Anthropocene. *Environmental Education Research* 23, 10, pp. 1418-1461.
- Taylor, A. (2019) Countering the conceits of the Anthropos: scaling down and researching with minor players. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 40, 3, pp. 340-358.
- Taylor, A. (2019) Rabbiting: Troubling the legacies of invasion. In Hodgins, B.D (Ed) *Feminist Research for 21st Century Childhoods*. Bloomsbury, pp. 111-120.
- Taylor, A. & Pacini-Ketchabaw, V. (2019) *The common worlds of children and animals: relational ethics for entangled lives*. London: Routledge.
- Tovey, H. (2017) *Bringing the Froebel Approach to your Early Years’ practice*. McGraw Hill/OUP.
- Tovey, H. (2007) *Playing outdoors: Spaces and places, risk and challenge*. Maidenhead: McGrawHill/OUP.
- Wasmuth, H. (2020). *Fröbel’s pedagogy of kindergarten and play: modifications in Germany and the United States* (Ser. Routledge research in early childhood education). Routledge.
- Weston, P. (2002) *The Froebel Educational Institute: the origins and history of the college*. London: University of Surrey Roehampton.