

EDUCATION AND HEREDITY.

A STUDY IN SOCIOLOGY.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

IN this posthumous work I have taken the liberty of inserting many marks of quotation, which no doubt would have been added upon revision if the untimely death of the lamented author had not intervened. I must express my obligations to all who have assisted me while engaged upon this translation. I am glad of this opportunity of expressing my indebtedness to M. Alfred Fouillée for his extreme courtesy to a complete stranger, and for the trouble he has taken to explain such difficulties as I have from time to time referred to him for solution. In particular, I have to acknowledge the advice and unfailing sympathy received from my friend Mr. G. F. Stout, whose ungrudging assistance has been invaluable.

W. J. G.

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INTRODUCTION.

JEAN-MARIE GUYAU, philosopher and poet, was born on the 28th of October 1854, and died at the age of thirty-three. His early training was mainly due to his mother, who is known in France as the author of various works on education, and to his step-father, M. Fouillée, one of the most remarkable of living French philosophers. At the age of nineteen, M. Guyau wrote a volume on the Utilitarian moralists from Epicurus to Bentham and his school. Portions of this work, which was "crowned" by the *Académie des sciences morales et politiques*, were afterwards expanded into two treatises. The first of these was on the Philosophy of Epicurus; it received a full and appreciative notice in the English *Journal of Philology*; the second treatise was an exposition and criticism of contemporary English Ethics. At the age of twenty his health broke down, and he was practically compelled to reside for the rest of his life on the shores of the Mediterranean. During the few years that remained to him he showed himself marvellously prolific, producing a series of works on the leading problems of philosophy, marked by striking originality and power. In addition, he also published a volume of poems, entitled *Vers d'un philosophe*, exhibiting a unique vein of genius. They represent in the clearest and simplest language the emotional aspect of philosophy; in the fullest sense they justify

their title, they are the verses of a *philosopher* who was in his inmost nature a genuine *poet*. From the bibliography appended to this Introduction the reader will see that M. Guyau gave to the world three sociological studies on Art, Religion, and Education respectively. The last of these is here presented in an English dress. Perhaps a few preparatory words on its distinctive aim and value may be acceptable to the general reader.

The main value of M. Guyau's work on Education and Heredity is to be found in the point of view from which it is written. The ultimate good of society is ever present to his mind as the one standard by which to estimate and regulate all educational aims and methods. At the same time he holds that the good of the individual is only to be found in social activity. The development of the life of each of us is measured by the range and intensity of our human interests. Thus, though Guyau is essentially practical, he is not utilitarian in the bad sense of the word. He does not set up as the ultimate aim of education the acquirement of useful knowledge, or the training of the intellect, or the passing of examinations. These ends are to be pursued only in so far as they conduce to the "conservation of social tissue," and to the progress of the race.

In accordance with his general principle, Guyau gives the first place in order of value, and in order of treatment, to moral education. Like Plato, he draws a distinct line of demarcation between the morality of impulse and the morality of insight. The morality of impulse takes the form of inward imperatives which impose themselves on the mind of the agent without his knowing whence they come, or why they

possess authority. These inward imperatives are in part instincts transmitted by heredity. But according to Guyau it is also possible to create them by education. In order to elucidate this point he lays stress on the analogy between the operation of natural instinct and that of suggestions made to hypnotised subjects, which are afterwards spontaneously carried into action. In such cases the person who performs the suggested action commonly feels himself under a kind of necessity or obligation to act as he does, but he cannot trace back this necessity or obligation to its true source. The artificially created impulse governs him as if it were an innate instinct. Now, just as hypnotic patients are suggestible because their mental organisation is disordered, so young children are suggestible because their mental organisation is as yet imperfect. What the experimenter is able to do in the one case, the educator ought to be able to do in the other.

But the morality which is based on a blind sense of obligation is only a preparation for the morality which is based on insight. Guyau's views on the subject of direct moral instruction are coloured by his peculiar ethical theories. He seems to start with the assumption, which is perhaps not altogether justifiable, that every healthy child has a natural disposition to be active for the sake of being active. So soon as he is made aware of his powers and capabilities he will straightway endeavour to realise these powers and capabilities. For the same reason he will prefer the higher modes of self-realisation to the lower, so soon as he becomes alive to the distinction between them. Thus a child in good physical health and with moral instincts need only be shown

how he can live the most complete life. When once he feels that he *can*, he will at the same time feel that he *ought*. Ideas tend by their very nature to act themselves out. The more pervasive and persistent the ideas the more potent and enduring is this tendency.

Now the representation of an ideal self may be made the most pervasive and persistent of ideas, and may thus become the dominant principle of conduct. To effect this is the aim of ethical education. It is of course essential that the child should be brought to see and feel his true relation to the society of which he forms a part. He must be led to understand that his own self-realisation is possible only if and so far as he widens and deepens his social interests and sympathies.

Physical education is, in Guyau's opinion, second in importance only to moral education. For on it depends the general health and vigour of the race—the general store of energy necessary to moral and intellectual activity. To train the intellect at the expense of bodily health is to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. This becomes apparent when we consider the question from the point of view of the race. An individual may be supposed to gain an equivalent in the way of worldly success and so forth for the physical exhaustion produced by over-pressure. But the general result to the race can only be decay.

Guyau's consistently sociological point of view makes his treatment of intellectual education very interesting and suggestive. He is led by it to emphasise the claims of æsthetic and literary culture. For him the word useful means useful to the community and to the race as a whole. Whatever then

makes men more human by giving them a wider and fuller sympathy with their fellow-men is useful *par excellence*. Now Guyau holds that it is the function of art and literature to bind society together. They supply common sources of enjoyment disconnected from the private aims and interests of the individual. They give definite form and vivid colouring to ideals in an objective embodiment which is common property, and in this way they tend to excite a common impulse towards the realisation of ideal ends. Lastly, in so far as they reflect human life and emotion, they tend to widen the mental horizon of the individual by giving him enlarged sympathy and insight. With these ideas of the nature and scope of art it is not surprising that Guyau should regard æsthetic education as more important than scientific. Botany and chemistry are good in their way; but poetry is indispensable.

The reader may perhaps be somewhat perplexed by the title of the book. He may be led to expect a discussion of the relative parts played by "nature and nurture" in forming the character of the individual. Now the only passage in which this subject is directly discussed is contained in the last section of Chapter II. The book as a whole seems to be concerned merely with Education apart from Heredity. Nevertheless, the title, *Education and Heredity*, is quite appropriate. It indicates the general standpoint of the author. Guyau never for a moment loses sight of the fact that every child is a possible parent, and that on the education of the child depends the future of the race. The physical, intellectual, and moral health of each generation must be so cared for as to ensure the physical, intellectual, and moral health of posterity.

G. F. S.

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

La Morale d'Épicure et ses rapports avec les doctrines contemporaines.

La morale anglaise contemporaine.

Les Problèmes de l'esthétique contemporaine.

Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation ni sanction.

L'Irréligion de l'avenir, étude de sociologie.

Vers d'un philosophe.

L'Art au point de vue sociologique.

La Genèse de l'idée de temps.

Le manuel d'Épictète, traduction en Français.

Cicéron : De Finibus, édition classique.

Pascal : Entretien avec M. de Sacy, édition classique.

La Première année de lecture courante, livre de morale pour les écoles primaires.

L'année préparatoire.

L'année enfantine.

PREFACE.

IT is in paternity alone that man first "sounds the depths of his heart"—in complete, conscious paternity, that is to say, in the education of his child. Ah! the patter of the little feet! the light and gentle pattering of the feet of the generations, that come as doubtful and uncertain as the future. And perhaps that future will be determined by the way in which we bring up the new generations.

Flaubert says that life ought to be an incessant education, that "from speaking to dying" everything has to be learned. Left to chance, this long education is every moment deviating. Even parents, in most cases, have not the slightest idea of the aim of education, especially when the children are still very young. What is the moral idea set before most children in a family? Not to be too noisy, not to put the fingers in the nose or mouth, not to use the hands at table, not to step into puddles when it rains, etc.¹ A reasonable being! In the eyes of many parents the reasonable child is a marionette, which is not to stir unless the strings are pulled; he is supposed to have hands which are meant to touch nothing, eyes which are never to sparkle with desire for what he sees, little feet which must never trot noisily on the floor, and a silent tongue.

¹ From a higher point of view, is the ideal of most men more elevated of its kind?

Many parents bring up their children, not for the children's sake, but for their own. I have known parents who did not wish their daughter to marry, because it would involve separation from her; others who did not want their son to take up this or that profession (that of a veterinary surgeon, for instance), because it was displeasing to *them*, etc. The same rules dominated their whole course of conduct towards their children. That is egoistic education. There is another kind of education which has as its object, not the *pleasure* of the parents, but the *pleasure* of the child as estimated by the parents. Thus a peasant, whose whole life has been spent in the open air, will consider it his duty to spare his son the labour of tilling the soil; he will bring him up to make him a government clerk, a poor official stifled in his office, who, cooped up in a town, will sooner or later die of consumption. True education is disinterested: it brings up the child for its own sake; it also and especially brings it up for its country and for the human race as a whole. In the various works I have published I have had a single end in view: the linking together of ethics, æsthetics, and religion, with the idea of *life*—life in its most intensive, extensive, and therefore most fruitful form; it is this idea therefore which will supply us in this volume with the object of education, the fundamental formula of pedagogy. Pedagogy might be defined as the art of adapting new generations to those conditions of life which are the most intensive and fruitful for the individual and the species. It has been asked if the object of education is individual or social; it is simultaneously individual and social: it is, to speak accurately, the search for means to bring the most intensive

individual existence into harmony with the most extensive social life. Besides, in my opinion, there is a profound harmony underlying the antinomies between individual existence and collective existence; whatever is really conformable to the *summum bonum* of individual life (moral and physical) is *ipso facto* useful to the whole race. Education ought, therefore, to have a triple end in view:—1st. The harmonious development in the human individual of *all* the capacities proper to the human race and useful to it, according to their relative importance. 2nd. The more particular development in the individual of those capacities which seem peculiar to him, *in so far as they cannot disturb the general equilibrium of the organism*. 3rd. To arrest and check those tendencies and instincts which may disturb that equilibrium—in other words, to aid heredity in proportion as it tends to create permanent superiority within the race, and to resist its influence when it tends to accumulate causes pernicious to the race itself. Thus education becomes the pursuit of the means of bringing up the largest number of individuals in perfect health, endowed with physical or moral faculties as well developed as possible, and thereby capable of contributing to the progress of the human race.

It follows that the whole system of education should be orientated with reference to the maintenance and progress of the race. In time past the creeds of a race acted by means of education, and preserved either the elect of a people or the nation as a whole. In this direction, therefore, education must act to-day. In my opinion education has been far too much looked upon as the art of bringing up the individual—apart from the family and the race.

From the individual we try to get the best yield ; but it is as if a farmer were to endeavour for a few years to get the largest possible crops from a field without restoring to the land what he has taken from it : the field would eventually be exhausted. This is the case with exhausted races ; but with this difference, that land lasts for ever, and in the long run regains its original fertility by rest and lying fallow, while the exhausted race may grow weaker and disappear for ever. Recent studies in heredity (Jacoby, De Candolle, Ribot), statistics of the professions, etc., have shown in a very striking manner that certain environments, certain professions or social conditions, are fatal to the race in general. People talk of the "devouring existence" of our great towns, without realising that they are not using a mere figure of speech, but are speaking the sober truth. Towns are the whirlpools of the human race, said Jean Jacques. As much may be said, not only of great towns, but of most places where there is a fashionable world, where there are *salons*, theatres, and political assemblies ; all excess of nervous excitement in the individual will, by the law of organic equilibrium, introduce into the race either mental weakness or diseases of the nervous system, or some form of physiological derangement which will issue in sterility. According to the statisticians, there are "devouring" provinces and towns, districts peopled only at the expense of the neighbourhood which is thus more or less exhausted ; similarly, there are "devouring" professions ; and they are often the most useful to the progress of the community, and at the same time the most tempting to the individual. In fact, some have gone so far as to assert that every intellectual superiority in the

struggle for existence is a sentence of death for the race, that progress is literally made by the sacrifice of the very individuals or races who have worked the hardest in the direction of progress, that the best condition for the permanence of the race is life as little intellectual as possible, and that all education which over-excites a child's faculties, which tries to make the child a rare and exceptional being, is *ipso facto* endeavouring to destroy both the individual and the race.¹

I think this assertion is partly true for education as at present organised, but I shall show that education, when better understood and more far-sighted in its aims, might remedy this exhaustion of the race, just as in agriculture exhaustion of the soil is remedied by rotation of crops.

It is only in modern times that *science* has been formed; a crowd of subjects of knowledge have sprung up, which are not as yet adapted to the human mind. This adaptation can only be produced by a rational division and classification of the different subjects of study; and the mind is exposed to suffering and overpressure because this division is not yet effected. It follows that the science of education must be harmonised with new conditions. Education must be *organised*—that is to say, we must establish the *subordination* of subjects of study and their *hierarchy* in the social unity.² As Spencer justly remarks, the more perfect and therefore the more complex an organism is, the more difficulties beset its harmonious development.

¹ *Vide Galton, Natural Inheritance*, Appendix F, p. 241. (Tr.)

² *Vide Dr. J. Ward, "Educational Values," Journal of Education*, November 1890. (Tr.)

The education of each new-comer in the case of the lower races of animals is not of long duration ; and whatever is not actually taught it by others will be taught it by life, and that without great danger ; its instincts are simple, therefore but few experiences are necessary for its guidance. But the higher we rise in the scale of beings, the longer is the evolution ; the necessity of a real education then begins to make itself felt ; the adults must help, support, and succour the young for a longer period, as, for instance, in the case of the higher mammiferous animals, the mother must carry the young and suckle it. So even in animals we find the germ of a kind of primitive pedagogy : education is a prolongation of this suckling, and its necessity is derived from the laws of evolution.

Here, however, a serious objection is presented, to which Spencer's own ideas have given rise. Must it be maintained, as has been done, that education is useless, or even powerless, because human evolution is necessary, and that evolution always depends on heredity? In the last century the importance of education was so far exaggerated that a man like Helvetius naïvely asked if all the difference between men does not spring from nothing but the difference of instruction they have received, and from their varied environment ; if talent and virtue alike cannot be taught. We are now thrown upon distinctly opposite assertions by recent studies in heredity. Many philosophers and men of science now believe that education is radically powerless when it has to modify to any great extent the racial temperament and character of the individual ; according to them a criminal as well as the poet *nascitur non fit* ; the child's