

**THREE LECTURES ON
EDUCATION;
READ AT NEWTON
HALL, NOVEMBER, 1882**

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Three Lectures on Education; read at newton hall, November, 1882 by F. G. Fleay

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F. G. FLEAY

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ON
EDUCATION,

BY
F. G. FLEAY,

READ AT
NEWTON HALL, NOVEMBER, 1882.

WITH A PREFACE BY
FREDERIC HARRISON.

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1883.

PREFACE.

I HAVE been asked to explain the scope and occasion of the following Lectures, as having been to some extent responsible for their preparation by the author. The Positivist Society, in its work of organizing a system of popular teaching in the Sciences at Newton Hall, found the need of a general statement of the plan of Education put forth by Auguste Comte, which it is attempting to institute there in its essential features. Mr. Fleay consented to undertake that task, and the present volume contains the result.

On Mr. Fleay's relation to practical Education and also to the system of Positivism, a few words are needed. These Lectures are not the work of an adherent of Comte, who expounds his theory of Education from a book knowledge of the Positive Polity. On the contrary, they are the views of a man who has passed twenty years in the practical work of a professional teacher, and who did not study Comte until his professional life as a teacher was ended. His own convictions about Education had been formed quite independently, as the result of experience, tested by constant appeal to a very varied practice. The coincidences therefore, in the practical conclusions of one of our most completely trained University teachers with the general theory of the philosopher are in the highest degree instructive.

Mr. Fleay's own academic training and professional career, over a period of 40 years, are of an unusually comprehensive kind; inasmuch as, both at school and at Trinity College, Cambridge, he was himself distinguished in Languages, in Mathematics, and in the Moral and Physical Sciences; and in a career of twenty years as a Schoolmaster and Lecturer, he has been engaged in teaching Mathematics, Astronomy, Chemistry, Natural Science, Languages, and

Literature. As Head-Master for six years of the Modern and Scientific Side of the Leeds Grammar School, and subsequently as Head-Master of three other schools, he has had a personal experience in organizing the education of the young which falls to the lot of few. It was not till after the whole of his experience had been gained that Mr. Fleay devoted himself to study, relinquished holy orders, and seriously undertook the mastery of Comte's philosophical works.

To the Religion, or rather it is more exact to say, to the Worship of Humanity, in the sense applied to it by Auguste Comte, Mr. Fleay reserves his assent; and it was not as a professed exposition of the religious scheme of Positivism that these Lectures were given. Their business was to deal with the systematic training of the young in Physical and Moral Science down to the age of twenty-one. The degree to which Mr. Fleay has assimilated the general philosophy of Comte is sufficiently apparent to the reader. It is equally obvious that he does not deal with Education from any academic point of view, as an accumulation of knowledge for its own sake, but, as stated in the opening paragraph of the first lecture, the Formation of Character, Intellectual and Moral. Education is throughout regarded from its social side, as a moral and practical, not merely a mental training. I am not myself in the habit of seeing any strict contrast between Philosophy and Religion, Sympathy and Worship. They are related as the part to the whole, the organ and the function. And if nothing is directly said about worship in the Lectures in the conventional sense of this term, all that is urged in the Third Lecture as to the educational uses of Mythology, Poetry, and Fiction, is in complete harmony with what I understand Comte to have meant by his language about the Worship of Humanity.

There are four cardinal features of Education, viewed in its relation to the social Polity, in which the scheme of Comte is peculiarly emphatic, and wherein it goes counter to the current theories of our time. In all of these the

experience of Mr. Fleay is of great interest, and they are all insisted on in the following Lectures. According to Comte, Education must be free, universal, organic, and encyclopædic. That is to say, in the first place, there is no healthy education whilst it is in the hands of the State; or whilst it is the monopoly of privileged official bodies, be they academic or bureaucratic; nor can any Education thrive under the orders of a centralised army of inspectors and examiners. Education must be free in another sense. It is not to be bought and sold like butcher's meat, and regularly subject to the higgling of the market, and the law of supply and demand. Payment by results can do as little for Education as it could do for Government, Religion, or Poetry.

In the next place, the essential purpose of Positivist principles is to provide Education for all; to place it on a popular, not a class footing; to make it the great connecting social bond. Under the academic and bureaucratic theory, Education is a graduated thing, apportioned out, like an undertaker's bill, to the pretensions of certain favoured or vulgar classes. Education is a really anti-social institution whilst it remains the great instrument and badge of social privileges. It is true, that professional and technical instruction, by the nature of the case, must be varied to the wants of particular functions. But the moral, scientific, and artistic education, which is the basis of all technical training, should be offered to all citizens, and be the same substantially for all.

Thirdly, the only Education worth having from the point of view of society is an organic education. That is, a complete training for the life of a citizen, not a technical training in a given profession:—general, not specialist; abstract, not concrete, with a social, not a mental, standard as its aim. The true educator should be quite as much priest as professor; and should look to make his pupil a citizen rather than either. The instruction given by pedantic specialists in juvenile barracks, is every day becoming more of a technical drill. Our one hope is to go back to

the idea of all true apostles of Education—treat it as a social function for the forming the characters of good citizens.

Lastly, says Comte, the truly organic education, such as can form characters as a whole and minds all round, must be a training in the cardinal conceptions of human science. That is, it must treat systematically the dominant methods and results of logical, physical, and also of moral truth. Such an organic teaching is impossible without a solid philosophy, and a radical classification of human knowledge. Nor is this possible unless the co-ordination of the various sciences be not only understood in theory by the teacher, but be practically realised in the work of teaching. On this head, in a special manner, we may trust the experience of Mr. Fleay. He is probably one of the few living teachers we have who is at once fitted by his general training and studies to give such an education, and who has had practical knowledge of what can be done to accomplish it as a result.

Positivism itself, at least for the present, is in effect a scheme of general Education. Give but the full meaning to the term Education as the formation of character, intellectual and moral; take the true end of Education as the development of a healthy state of society; remember all that is implied in the word, general Education—that is, an Education real, useful, certain, precise, organic, relative, extended to all for the common service of Humanity; and the term General Education is nearly an answer to the question, What is the aim of Positivism?

Without pretending that the full sense of Education can be illustrated in three Lectures, the following pages will be found to treat of some of the leading features in that which is the want of our age.

FREDERIC HARRISON.

NEWTON HALL,
FLEUR-DE-LIS COURT, FETTER LANE, E.C.
FEB., 1883.

HOMER, 95.

THREE LECTURES ON EDUCATION.

LECTURE I.

ON SOME OF COMTE'S EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES.

IN A. Comte's "Synthèse," page 4, occur these words:—

This synthesis is intended to guide the general arrangement of universal education in conformity with the final indications of my principal treatise. For it to perform this office, it will be sufficient to fill up in it at convenient times the gaps that I am now compelled to leave in its general plan. The concrete or practical curriculum (encyclopédie) will be sufficiently outlined in the last division. [This volume was never written.] But the abstract or theoretic curriculum cannot be sufficiently laid down in the other two, which will relate only to the two extreme terms. Nevertheless, the fundamental science and the highest science being completely organised therein, my successors will easily extend the argument to the intermediate sciences, of which the physico-chemical group alone will require any prolonged labour. ("Synthèses," page 4.)

This Synthesis of Positivism, on which A. Comte was engaged in his final years of work, would, had he lived to complete it, have contained a full statement of his views on Education; that he did not live to accomplish this work is the more to be regretted because there is no subject on which prevalent theories and customary practices are so influenced by the anarchy which has invaded the thoughts and beliefs of the present time. So far are we from any consistent doctrine on this matter, that our received authorities have not even agreed as to what they mean by Education. One of the most influential writers thereon, Professor Bain, assumes in the very title of his treatise that Education is a Science. This is so opposed to the views of those who,

with Comte, regard Education as an Art, nay, as the highest of all arts, that it is desirable to state at the commencement of this series of lectures in what sense I use the word. It is necessary in such circumstances to throw aside the valuable rule that the proper place of definition is at the end, not at the beginning, of an exposition.

By Education, then, I mean "the voluntary action of mind upon mind for the purpose of influencing the formation of character," intellectual and moral. These are the words of W. J. Fox; sufficient, I think, and to the purpose. It would, of course, in three hours be impossible to treat of such a subject with any fulness; that would need a volume, such a volume as Comte himself intended to dedicate to it, such as it is to be hoped some competent successor of his will before long compose. All that I can expect to accomplish here and now is a mere sketch, of which to-day's lecture is a first instalment, wherein I propose to consider a few of those principles based on science, biological or psychological, which have been enunciated by Comte as the foundations of the Art of Education. Among these there is none more important than that of the different stages, viz:—That the whole system of education should be altered at definite periods of life; about the ages of 7, 14, and 21. The received doctrine among schoolmasters, or rather the accepted practice, is that no break should be introduced in the training of pupils, and even the large public schools, which heretofore seemed to be in a sort of rough agreement with Comte's theory, are now establishing preparatory schools, in which the system of the upper schools shall be led up to by similar discipline and similar method of teaching in the lower. This has a plausible air of consistency about it, while Comte's method looks at first sight artificial and constrained. The full defence of it will naturally evolve in our second and third lectures, when I shall consider in some detail the training to be given in the second and third stages; but the ground of the law itself may be noticed now. Of course the importance of the biological change at the epoch of puberty is denied by no one, and the probability that this should be accompanied by a psychological change is manifest enough; but it has been said to me, Why a change of method at the age of 7? Surely the fact that a child "is cutting its second teeth" has nothing to do with his education, nor indeed with his mental development in any way. If Comte had shown us