

**THE SOPHISTES OF PLATO:
A DIALOGUE ON TRUE
AND FALSE TEACHING**

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The Sophistes of Plato: a dialogue on true and false teaching by Plato & R. W. Mackay

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PLATO & R. W. MACKAY

**THE SOPHISTES OF PLATO:
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THE
SOPHISTES OF PLATO:

A DIALOGUE
ON TRUE AND FALSE TEACHING.

TRANSLATED, WITH
EXPLANATORY NOTES, AND AN INTRODUCTION
ON
ANCIENT AND MODERN SOPHISTRY.

BY
R. W. MACKAY, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF "THE PROGRESS OF THE INTELLECT;" "THE TUBINGEN SCHOOL
AND ITS ANTECEDENTS," ETC.



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CONTENTS OF INTRODUCTION.

Two kinds of Education—Mr. Grote's so-called "German fiend" *Die Sophistik*—Its Existence and Connotation—Its Connection with the Political and Intellectual State of Athens—Speculative Theories of the Sophists; Perverse Applications of them by the *Eristici*—Philosophical Disparagement of Sophistical Culture Justified—Immoral Teaching of the Sophists—Teaching for Pay—Teaching to Please—Instances of Modern Sophistry—Tendency of Party or Class "Unionism" to Distort the Notion of Right and Wrong—Mr. Lowe's Recent Education Speech—The Objects of Education—The Sophist and the Martyr.

CORRECTIONS AND OMISSIONS.

Page 72, line 1. Literally, "more moderate than that of ordinary Eristic cavillers,"—or "than that of the generality of those devoting themselves to the business of controversy."

P. 81, l. 6. For *have* read *had*.

After l. 8, insert—

THEÆT.—Yes.

STRANG.—And now in regard to the Sophist; shall we assume him to be an ignoramus, or one really and truly a Sophist?

P. 88, l. 12 from below. "But the artificial kind, which embarks in general and systematic controversies on the essential nature of justice, injustice, and all other things, do we not usually call this the 'Eristic' or wrangling art?"

L. 5 from below insert—

STRANG.—Let us now try to find a suitable name for each.

THEÆT.—We must do so.

P. 105, l. 14. For *is* read *was*.

P. 113, l. 1 from below, in the note. For *belongs* read *belong*.

POSTSCRIPT.

THE following are extracts from the *Times* report of another speech on education just made by Mr. Lowe (Jan. 24th, 1868), affording additional proof that politicians, whether lay or ecclesiastical, are by no means the most reliable authorities on the subject :

“At a time when there was really nothing to learn or know, a number of foundations, which have continued to the present day unaltered, were made for teaching Latin and Greek.”

As if Latin and Greek were mere empty forms of language, having no solid intellectual and moral contents ;—as if all modern culture were not based upon the old culture, and properly so !

“Latin and Greek, though not a bad education, are not the best ; for the upper classes themselves, who *enjoy its advantages*, do not think it the best.” “We have got to the end of our study of the dead languages.”

Indeed ! Why, then, speak of it as a mere matter of grammar and dictionary, and recommend German as “a key to the more complete study of classical antiquity ?”

“Better to teach what is true, than what is demonstratively true.”

But he had before complained that the habit of

taking things for granted is not a good one, and proceeds to recommend mathematics as inuring the mind to reason out its own conclusions.

"The processes of nature contemplated by physical science are far superior to those *mere works of man*, which we call literature, and history, and the actions of mankind."

As if oxygen, hydrogen, pneumatics, etc., were to be considered the sole or the chief illustrations of the divine laws and operations, and not the actions and eventualities of man !

Mr. Lowe emphatically disclaims history and moral philosophy as means of education, because the one is uncertain in its facts, the other in its theory. And yet history contains the record of nature's infallible judgments on the past, while moral philosophy offers the only means of bettering the humanity of the future !

"Don't cram a boy with stupid books ; give him the most amusing French novel that can be found ; a story that will give him some little insight into life ; not an insipid moralist !"

"By these means we shall be doing what we can to enable a man, *if not to know any thing*, at least to make the most of what he does know !"

These extracts are not meant to imply that there is no truth in Mr. Lowe's remarks,—but only to show that the truth is so mixed up with what Plato would call "relative non-entity," in other words—crudity and error, as to effect little more than the investing these last with a dangerous plausibility.

INTRODUCTION.

A TRANSLATION of the following dialogue at the present moment may seem to need a few words of justification. It is obvious that at a time when the subject of education more than ever forces itself on public notice, its true nature and objects should as far as possible be agreed on and understood; and such understanding may be most easily arrived at by carefully distinguishing the genuine article from the spurious as tested by experience; in other words, by following the clear line of separation here traced between the philosopher and the Sophist, but which many eminent men of the present day are forward to cancel and forget. The word "Sophist" means generally educator or public teacher. Mr. Grote, in his *History of Greece*¹ gives a summary of the data from which its original significancy may be collected, showing its use in the general sense of a wise man, a clever man,—one

¹ Vol. viii. p. 479.