

**A COMPENDIOUS EXPOSITION  
OF THE PRINCIPLES AND  
PRACTICE OF PROFESSOR  
JACOTOT'S CELEBRATED SYSTEM  
OF EDUCATION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649325795

A Compendious Exposition of the Principles and Practice of Professor Jacotot's Celebrated System of education by Joseph Payne

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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**JOSEPH PAYNE**

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A COMPENDIOUS EXPOSITION  
 OF THE  
**Principles and Practice**  
 OF  
**PROFESSOR JACOTOT'S**  
 CELEBRATED  
**SYSTEM OF EDUCATION,**

*Originally established at the University of Louvain, in the Kingdom of the  
 Netherlands.*

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BY JOSEPH PAYNE.

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"Already are Schools, after the method of Jacotot, spread over France and the Netherlands,—already does almost every town and province in the north of these countries possess either an establishment upon the principle, or one or more instructors."—*Foreign Quarterly Review*, February, 1830.

"M. Jacotot a rendu un service inappréciable à l'humanité. La méthode de M. Jacotot repose sur des principes aussi certains que féconds en heureux résultats."—*De la Méthode Jacotot, par M. Rey de Grenoble.*

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London :

PRINTED FOR R. STEPHENS, SOUTHAMPTON ROW, RUSSELL SQUARE.

1830.

[ Price Two Shillings. ]

## P R E F A C E.

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A FEW particulars respecting the origin and progress of Jacotot's System of Education, may, perhaps, form an appropriate Introduction to this little Treatise. M. Jacotot, a native of Dijon, became, in the year 1818, Professor of the French Language at the University of Louvain, and there established the celebrated system, which, from its principle of unlimited applicability, he has denominated "Universal Instruction." He here, in the course of his professional duties, accidentally made the important discovery, for which he more especially claims the merit of originality,—that *it is not necessary to explain in order to teach*, or in other words, that *the pupil may be made to discover for himself every thing requisite to be known*. Called upon to teach the French language, while unacquainted with the native tongue of his pupils, he put into the hands of the latter, Fenelon's Telemaque, with a Dutch translation, directing them (through an interpreter) to commit to memory the French text, and to gather the meaning from the version which accompanied it. These pupils having thoroughly

learned half of the first book, were made to repeat incessantly what they knew, and to read over the remainder attentively, so as to be able to relate the substance of it. Their thorough acquaintance with both the subject and the phraseology was ascertained by rigid interrogation, and they were then directed to write compositions in French, deriving all the necessary materials from their model-book. Their success in this exercise surprised even the Professor himself; and on considering the circumstances, he was led to observe, that all the results had been attained without explanations on his part. He instantly resolved to ascertain to how great an extent this principle might be applied, and to *tell* his pupils nothing whatever. He found that, as they became more and more acquainted, by repetition, with the twenty-four books of *Telemaque*, they spontaneously observed, in their compositions, every rule both of orthography and grammar, until at length they showed themselves capable of writing (with regard to style) as well as the best French authors, and consequently better (as *Jacotot* said) than himself and his professional colleagues. The complete success of this experiment led to the institution of others, in which the spirit of the principle was carefully preserved, and the entire process and ultimate results accurately scrutinized. The principle that explanations are unnecessary,)

was discovered to be not merely general but universal; and it was further observed, that the method founded upon this principle is actually the method by which we acquire every thing that we learn without the aid of an instructor. The perception of this identity, tended to confirm and harmonize the notions already springing up in the mind of Jacotot, and laid the foundation of the System.

An allusion to its progress is seen in the motto to this pamphlet, and in the present instance this must suffice. To trace its history through the many controversies of which it has been the subject, might be interesting, but is here impracticable. It may easily be imagined, that the Universal Instruction has some claims to attention, when it is stated, that "the sale of M. Jacotot's own publications is immense, and the number of explicatory pamphlets in the French language, published in France and other places, almost incredible."\* It is at length beginning to excite an interest in England, and already many eminent private teachers have adopted the method with unquestionable success. A Guide to French, in conformity with its principles, has just been announced by M. Tarver, teacher of French at Eton College; and M. Henri,

\* Foreign Quarterly Review, February, 1830. This Number contains a sensible exposition of the system, scarcely, however, doing justice to its characteristic merits.



one of the most zealous of Jacotot's disciples, now residing at Boulogne, is expected shortly to introduce the system, in a practical shape, to the British public.

In the meanwhile, the writer of the present Treatise has attempted to unfold the general principles and method in the following pages, to which he respectfully invites the attention of all who feel an interest in the important science of education. It is believed, that the system of Jacotot, alone deserves the name of a *System* of Education. If its individual principles are not novel, the united whole is at least a novelty;—the wonderful results which it has effected are novelties. It embraces the advantages, without the blemishes, of other systems; and presents, in harmonious combination, all those elements that have ever been deemed, by common consent, valuable and effective in practical tuition. It is, in short, a *κτῆμα ἐς αἰετ*,—a possession for ever; and the writer of the following pages feels that his humble name derives an unanticipated degree of honour, from its being that of the first Englishman who has publicly expressed his thorough conviction of the validity of the principles, and efficacy of the method of the Universal Instruction.

3, Rodney Buildings,  
New Kent Road.

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE  
OF THE  
NEW SYSTEM OF EDUCATION.

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LEARN SOMETHING THOROUGHLY, AND REFER EVERY  
THING ELSE TO IT.

THE above sentence comprises the entire method of the Universal Instruction. Whenever this precept is neglected, the constitutional character of the system is disregarded, and the success of the teacher's endeavours is no longer guaranteed by M. Jacotot. The spirit of it so completely pervades every part of the machinery of the method, that the one cannot, by any means, be separated from the other. As, however, the terms in which it is expressed may not intuitively convey the requisite notions to the mind of the reader, an attempt will be made to develop more fully their strict signification, as connected with the system of Jacotot. Their real import here is, that whatever department of education be in question, something,—some particular fact, or group of facts,—shall be thoroughly impressed on the memory and comprehended by the judgment; and that this individual fact, or group of facts, shall serve as a kind of rallying point, around which all other facts, subsequently acquired, shall be made to attach themselves, according to their resemblances and inherent relations. The habit thus formed, of referring, by reflection, every thing learned for the first time to something previously learned, tends, of course, to connect the entire mass together; and in this is seen the superiority, as well as the peculiarity, of Jacotot's System of Education. This system is indeed entirely conformable to the laws of nature, and the

generally received opinions of common sense. He only can be said to understand a subject thoroughly, who distinctly perceives the relation of every part of it to every other part, and who clearly traces the entire series of associated ideas which make up the whole, from the beginning to the end, or back from the end to the beginning. But who can do this? All, indubitably, who are instructed by the method of Jacotot; for this method leads uniformly and invariably to that end. Will not every one then agree, that the system which can accomplish so important a design is undeniably superior to all others that have hitherto been projected?—Without doubt, if it can be done.—But it has been done, and repeatedly, and the reader will presently judge for himself, whether the process followed is likely to effect its purpose.

It may not be amiss to consider, in the first instance, what is generally meant by the expression,—*learning a thing*. To learn any thing is evidently not the same as to forget it; yet we might almost imagine it were, by referring a moment to the common plan pursued in the old method. Will any one maintain that, speaking generally, at the end of his seven years or more of school instruction, he actually recollects one thousandth part of the facts that have been brought before him, or the observations that have been addressed to him, connected with the course of tuition? A considerable portion of all this combined mass of information has remained perfectly unintelligible to him, from the first moment that it was introduced to his notice, to the time at which he throws down his books and enters on the world. He perceived neither the end nor the design of it; and perhaps even the terms in which it was expressed were never thoroughly comprehended, although repeated incessantly in his hearing. In illustration of this it may be asked, Does one child in a hundred *understand* a single page of that book which is put into his hands as soon as he can read, and over which he pores, year after year, and, at length, by dint of constant repetition, has thoroughly impressed on his memory—the English Grammar? This may well be doubted. He learns, indeed, what is to him a jargon of unintelligible technicalities, like nothing that