Book IV. That the Laws of Education Ought to Be in Relation to the Principles of Government

1. Of the Laws of Education. The laws of education are the first impressions we receive; and as they prepare us for civil life, every private family ought to be governed by the plan of that great household which comprehends them all.

If the people in general have a principle, their constituent parts, that is, the several families, will have one also. The laws of education will be therefore different in each species of government: in monarchies they will have honour for their object; in republics, virtue; in despotic governments, fear.

2. Of Education in Monarchies. In monarchies the principal branch of education is not taught in colleges or academies. It commences, in some measure, at our setting out in the world; for this is the school of what we call honour, that universal preceptor which ought everywhere to be our guide.

Here it is that we constantly hear three rules or maxims, viz., that we should have a certain nobleness in our virtues, a kind of frankness in our morals, and a particular politeness in our behaviour.

The virtues we are here taught are less what we owe to others than to ourselves; they are not so much what draws us towards society, as what distinguishes us from our fellow-citizens. Here the actions of men are judged, not as virtuous, but as shining; not as just, but as great; not as reasonable, but as extraordinary. When honour here meets with anything noble in our actions, it is either a judge that approves them, or sophist by whom they are excused.

It allows of gallantry when united with the idea of sensible affection, or with that of conquest; this is the reason why we never meet with so

strict a purity of morals in monarchies as in republican governments.

It allows of cunning and craft, when joined with the notion of greatness of soul or importance of affairs; as, for instance, in politics, with finesses of which it is far from being offended.

It does not forbid adulation, save when separated from the idea of a large fortune, and connected only with the sense of our mean condition.

With regard to morals, I have observed that the education of monarchies ought to admit of a certain frankness and open carriage. Truth, therefore, in conversation is here a necessary point. But is it for the sake of truth? By no means. Truth is requisite only because a person habituated to veracity has an air of boldness and freedom. And indeed a man of this stamp seems to lay a stress only on the things themselves, not on the manner in which they are received.

Hence it is that in proportion as this kind of frankness is commended, that of the common people is despised, which has nothing but truth and simplicity for its object.

In fine, the education of monarchies requires a certain politeness of behaviour. Man, a sociable animal, is formed to please in society; and a person that would break through the rules of decency, so as to shock those he conversed with, would lose the public esteem, and become incapable of doing any good.

But politeness, generally speaking, does not derive its origin from so pure a source. It arises from a desire of distinguishing ourselves. It is pride that renders us polite; we are flattered with being taken notice of for behaviour that shows we are not of a mean condition, and that we have not been bred with those who in all ages are considered the scum of the people.

Politeness, in monarchies, is naturalised at court. One man excessively great renders everybody else little. Hence that regard which is paid to our fellow-subjects; hence that politeness, equally pleasing to those by whom, as to those towards whom, it is practised, because it gives people to understand that a person actually belongs, or at least deserves to belong, to the court.

A courtly air consists in quitting a real for a borrowed greatness. The latter pleases the courtier more than the former. It inspires him with a certain disdainful modesty, which shows itself externally, but whose pride insensibly diminishes in proportion to its distance from the source of this greatness.

At court we find a delicacy of taste in everything -- a delicacy arising from the constant use of the superfluities of life, from the variety, and especially the satiety, of pleasures, from the multiplicity and even confusion of fancies, which, if they are but agreeable, are sure of being well received.

These are the things which properly fall within the province of education, in order to form what we call a man of honour, a man possessed of all the qualities and virtues requisite in this kind of government.

Here it is that honour interferes with everything, mixing even with people's manner of thinking, and directing their very principles.

To this whimsical honour it is owing that the virtues are only just what it pleases; it adds rules of its own invention to everything prescribed to us; it extends or limits our duties according to its own fancy, whether they proceed from religion, politics, or morality.

There is nothing so strongly inculcated in monarchies, by the laws, by religion and honour, as submission to the prince's will; but this very

honour tells us that the prince never ought to command a dishonourable action, because this would render us incapable of serving him.

Crillon refused to assassinate the Duke of Guise, but offered to fight him. After the massacre of St. Bartholomew, Charles IX, having sent orders to the governors in the several provinces for the Huguenots to be murdered, Viscount Dorte, who commanded at Bayonne, wrote thus to the king:[1] "Sire, among the inhabitants of this town, and your majesty's troops, I could not find so much as one executioner; they are honest citizens and brave soldiers. We jointly, therefore, beseech your majesty to command our arms and lives in things that are practicable." This great and generous soul looked upon a base action as a thing impossible.

There is nothing that honour more strongly recommends to the nobility than to serve their prince in a military capacity. And, indeed, this is their favourite profession, because its dangers, its success, and even its miscarriages are the road to grandeur. Yet this very law of its own making honour chooses to explain: and in case of any affront, it requires or permits us to retire.

It insists also that we should be at liberty either to seek or to reject employments, a liberty which it prefers even to an ample fortune.

Honour therefore has its supreme laws, to which education is obliged to conform.[2] The chief of these are that we are permitted to set a value upon our fortune, but are absolutely forbidden to set any upon our lives.

The second is that, when we are raised to a post or preferment, we should never do or permit anything which may seem to imply that we look upon ourselves as inferior to the rank we hold.

The third is that those things which honour forbids are more rigorously forbidden, when the laws do not concur in the prohibition; and those it

commands are more strongly insisted upon, when they happen not to be commanded by law.

3. Of Education in a Despotic Government. As education in monarchies tends to raise and ennoble the mind, in despotic governments its only aim is to debase it. Here it must necessarily be servile; even in power such an education will be an advantage, because every tyrant is at the same time a slave.

Excessive obedience supposes ignorance in the person that obeys: the same it supposes in him that commands, for he has no occasion to deliberate, to doubt, to reason; he has only to will.

In despotic states, each house is a separate government. As education, therefore, consists chieflv in social converse, it must be here very much limited; all it does is to strike the heart with fear, and to imprint on the understanding a very simple notion of a few principles of religion. Learning here proves dangerous, emulation fatal; and as to virtue, Aristotle[3] cannot think that there is any one virtue belonging to slaves; if so, education in despotic countries is confined within a very narrow compass.

Here, therefore, education is in some measure needless: to give something, one must take away everything, and begin with making a bad subject in order to make a good slave.

For why should education take pains in forming a good citizen, only to make him share in the public misery? If he loves his country, he will strive to relax the springs of government; if he miscarries he will be undone; if he succeeds, he must expose himself, the prince, and his country to ruin.

4. Difference between the Effects of Ancient and Modern Education. Most of the ancients lived under governments that had virtue for their

principle; and when this was in full vigour they performed actions unusual in our times, and at which our narrow minds are astonished.

Another advantage their education possessed over ours was that it never could be effaced by contrary impressions. Epaminondas, the last year of his life, said, heard, beheld, and performed the very same things as at the age in which he received the first principles of his education.

In our days we receive three different or contrary educations, namely, of our parents, of our masters, and of the world. What we learn in the latter effaces all the ideas of the former. This, in some measure, arises from the contrast we experience between our religious and worldly engagements, a thing unknown to the ancients.

5. Of Education in a Republican Government. It is in a republican government that the whole power of education is required. The fear of despotic governments naturally arises of itself amidst threats and punishments; the honour of monarchies is favoured by the passions, and favours them in its turn; but virtue is a self-renunciation, which is ever arduous and painful.

This virtue may be defined as the love of the laws and of our country. As such love requires a constant preference of public to private interest, it is the source of all private virtues; for they are nothing more than this very preference itself.

This love is peculiar to democracies. In these alone the government is entrusted to private citizens. Now a government is like everything else: to preserve it we must love it.

Has it ever been known that kings were not fond of monarchy, or that despotic princes hated arbitrary power?

Everything therefore depends on establishing this love in a republic;

and to inspire it ought to be the principal business of education: but the surest way of instilling it into children is for parents to set them an example.

People have it generally in their power to communicate their ideas to their children; but they are still better able to transfuse their passions.

If it happens otherwise, it is because the impressions made at home are effaced by those they have received abroad.

It is not the young people that degenerate; they are not spoiled till those of maturer age are already sunk into corruption.

6. Of some Institutions among the Greeks. The ancient Greeks, convinced of the necessity that people who live under a popular government should be trained up to virtue, made very singular institutions in order to inspire it. Upon seeing in the life of Lycurgus the laws that legislator gave to the Lacedæmonians, I imagine I am reading the history of the Sevarambes. The laws of Crete were the model of those of Sparta; and those of Plato reformed them.

Let us reflect here a little on the extensive genius with which those legislators must have been endowed, to perceive that by striking at received customs, and by confounding all manner of virtues, they should display their wisdom to the universe. Lycurgus, by blending theft with the spirit of justice, the hardest servitude with excess of liberty, the most rigid sentiments with the greatest moderation, gave stability to his city. He seemed to deprive her of all resources, such as arts, commerce, money, and walls; ambition prevailed among the citizens without hopes of improving their fortune; they had natural sentiments without the tie of a son, husband, or father; and chastity was stripped even of modesty and shame. This was the road that led Sparta to grandeur and glory; and so infallible were these institutions, that it signified

nothing to gain a victory over that republic without subverting her polity.[4]

By these laws Crete and Laconia were governed. Sparta was the last that fell a prey to the Macedonians, and Crete to the Romans.[5]

The Samnites had the same institutions, which furnished those very Romans with the subject of four-and-twenty triumphs.[6]

A character so extraordinary in the institutions of Greece has shown itself lately in the dregs and corruptions of modern times.[7] A very honest legislator has formed a people to whom probity seems as natural as bravery to the Spartans. Mr. Penn is a real Lycurgus: and though the former made peace his principal aim, as the latter did war, yet they resemble one another in the singular way of living to which they reduced their people, in the ascendant they had over free men, in the prejudices they overcame, and in the passions which they subdued.

Another example we have from Paraguay. This has been the subject of an invidious charge against a society that considers the pleasure of commanding as the only happiness in life: but it will be ever a glorious undertaking to render a government subservient to human happiness.[8]

It is glorious indeed for this society to have been the first in pointing out to those countries the idea of religion joined with that of humanity. By repairing the devastations of the Spaniards, she has begun to heal one of the most dangerous wounds that the human species ever received.

An exquisite sensibility to whatever she distinguishes by the name of honour, joined to her zeal for a religion which is far more humbling in respect to those who receive than to those who preach its doctrines, has set her upon vast undertakings, which she has accomplished with success. She has drawn wild people from their woods, secured them a maintenance,

and clothed their nakedness; and had she only by this step improved the industry of mankind, it would have been sufficient to eternise her fame.

They who shall attempt hereafter to introduce like institutions must establish the community of goods as prescribed in Plato's republic; that high respect he required for the gods; that separation from strangers, for the preservation of morals; and an extensive commerce carried on by the community, and not by private citizens: they must give our arts without our luxury, and our wants without our desires.

They must proscribe money, the effects of which are to swell people's fortunes beyond the bounds prescribed by nature; to learn to preserve for no purpose what has been idly hoarded up; to multiply without end our desires; and to supply the sterility of nature, from whom we have received very scanty means of inflaming our passions, and of corrupting each other.

"The Epidamnians,[9] perceiving their morals depraved by conversing with barbarians, chose a magistrate for making all contracts and sales in the name and behalf of the city." Commerce then does not corrupt the constitution, and the constitution does not deprive society of the advantages of commerce.

7. In what Cases these singular Institutions may be of Service.

Institutions of this kind may be proper in republics, because they have virtue for their principle; but to excite men to honour in monarchies, or to inspire fear in despotic governments, less trouble is necessary.

Besides, they can take place but in a small state,[10] in which there is a possibility of general education, and of training up the body of the people like a single family.

The laws of Minos, of Lycurgus, and of Plato suppose a particular attention and care, which the citizens ought to have over one another's

conduct. But an attention of this kind cannot be expected in the confusion and multitude of affairs in which a large nation is entangled.

In institutions of this kind, money, as we have above observed, must be banished. But in great societies, the multiplicity, variety, embarrassment, and importance of affairs, as well as the facility of purchasing, and the slowness of exchange, require a common measure. In order to support or extend our power, we must be possessed of the means to which, by the unanimous consent of mankind, this power is annexed.

8. Explanation of a Paradox of the Ancients in respect to Manners. That judicious writer, Polybius, informs us that music was necessary to soften the manners of the Arcadians, who lived in a cold, gloomy country; that the inhabitants of Cynete, who slighted music, were the cruellest of all the Greeks, and that no other town was so immersed in luxury and debauchery. Plato[11] is not afraid to affirm that there is no possibility of making a change in music without altering the frame of government. Aristotle, who seems to have written his Politics only in order to contradict Plato, agrees with him, notwithstanding, in regard to the power and influence of music over the manners of the people.[12] This was also the opinion of Theophrastus, of Plutarch[13] and of all the ancients -- an opinion grounded on mature reflection; being one of the principles of their polity.[14] Thus it was they enacted laws, and thus they required that cities should be governed.

This I fancy must be explained in the following manner. It is observable that in the cities of Greece, especially those whose .principal object was war, all lucrative arts and professions were considered unworthy of a freeman. "Most arts," says Xenophon,[15] "corrupt and enervate the bodies of those that exercise them; they oblige them to sit in the shade, or near the fire. They can find no leisure, either for their friends or for the republic." It was only by the corruption of some democracies that artisans became freemen. This we learn from Aristotle,[16] who maintains that a well-regulated republic will never

give them the right and freedom of the city.[17]

Agriculture was likewise a servile profession, and generally practised by the inhabitants of conquered countries, such as the Helotes among the Lacedæmonians, the Periecians among the Cretans, the Penestes among the Thessalians, and other conquered[18] people in other republics.

In fine, every kind of low commerce[19] was infamous among the Greeks; as it obliged a citizen to serve and wait on a slave, on a lodger, or a stranger. This was a notion that clashed with the spirit of Greek liberty; hence Plato[20] in his Laws orders a citizen to be punished if he attempts to concern himself with trade.

Thus in the Greek republics the magistrates were extremely embarrassed. They would not have the citizens apply themselves to trade, to agriculture, or to the arts, and yet they would not have them idle.[21] They found, therefore, employment for them in gymnic and military exercises; and none else were allowed by their institution.[22] Hence the Greeks must be considered as a society of wrestlers and boxers. Now, these exercises having a natural tendency to render people hardy and fierce, there was a necessity for tempering them with others that might soften their manners.[23] For this purpose, music, which influences the mind by means of the corporeal organs, was extremely proper. It is a kind of medium between manly exercises, which harden the body, and speculative sciences, which are apt to render us unsociable and sour. It cannot be said that music inspired virtue, for this would be inconceivable: but it prevented the effects of a savage institution, and enabled the soul to have such a share in the education as it could never have had without the assistance of harmony.

Let us suppose among ourselves a society of men so passionately fond of hunting as to make it their sole employment; they would doubtless contract thereby a kind of rusticity and fierceness. But if they happen to imbibe a taste for music, we should quickly perceive a sensible

difference in their customs and manners. In short, the exercises used by the Greeks could raise but one kind of passions, viz., fierceness, indignation, and cruelty. But music excites all these; and is likewise able to inspire the soul with a sense of pity, lenity, tenderness, and love. Our moral writers, who declaim so vehemently against the stage, sufficiently demonstrate the power of music over the mind.

If the society above mentioned were to have no other music than that of drums, and the sound of the trumpet, would it not be more difficult to accomplish this end than by the more melting tones of softer harmony? The ancients were therefore in the right when, under particular circumstances, they preferred one mode to another in regard to manners.

But some will ask, why should music be pitched upon as preferable to any other entertainment? It is because of all sensible pleasures there is none that less corrupts the soul. We blush to read in Plutarch[24] that the Thebans, in order to soften the manners of their youth, authorised by law a passion which ought to be proscribed by all nations.

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1. See d'Aubigny's History.

2. We mention here what actually is, and not what ought to be; honour is a prejudice, which religion sometimes endeavours to remove, and at other times to regulate.

3. Politics, i. 13.

4. Philopoemen obliged the Lacedæmonians to change their manner of educating their children, being convinced that if he did not take this measure they would always be noted for their magnanimity. -- Plutarch, Philopoemen. See Livy, xxxviii.

5. She defended her laws and liberty for the space of three years. See the 98th, 99th, and 100th book of Livy, in Florus's epitome. She made a braver resistance than the greatest kings.

6. Florus, i. 16.

7. In fece Romuli. -- Cicero, Letters to Atticus, ii. 1.

8. The Indians of Paraguay do not depend on any particular lord; they pay only a fifth of the taxes, and are allowed the use of firearms to defend themselves.

9. Plutarch in his Questions Concerning the Greek Affairs, xxix.

10. Such as were formerly the cities of Greece.

11. Republic, iv.

12. Politics, viii. 5.

13. Pelopidas.

14. Plato, in his seventh book of Laws, says that the præfectures of music and gymnic exercises are the most important employments in the city; and, in his Republic, iii, Damon will tell you, says he, what sounds are capable of corrupting the mind with base sentiments, or of inspiring the contrary virtues.

15. Memorabilia, v.

16. Politics, iii. 4.

17. Diophantes, says Aristotle, Politics, ii. 7, made a law formerly at Athens, that artisans should be slaves to the republic.

18. Plato, likewise, and Aristotle require slaves to till the land, Laws, viii. Politics, vii. 10. True it is that agriculture was not everywhere exercised by slaves: on the contrary, Aristotle observes the best republics were those in which the citizens themselves tilled the land: but this was brought about by the corruption of the ancient governments, which had become democratic: for in earlier times the cities of Greece were subject to an aristocratic government.

19. Cauponatio.

20. Book v.

21. Aristotle, Politics, vii-viii.

22. Ibid., viii. 3.

23. Aristotle observes that the children of the Lacedæmonians, who began these exercises at a very tender age, contracted thence too great a ferocity and rudeness of behaviour. -- Ibid., viii. 4.

24. Pelopidas.