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**An Important
Subject for
Catholic Educators**

The well-known Jesuit, Father Joseph Rickaby, some time ago went to the trouble of translating from an article in the Revue de Philosophie the opinions therein enunciated by Monsieur Herliet. The version was thought so good and the subject so important for educators, that it has been recently published in brochure form.

Personality, as the original author accepts the phrase, is not meant (says the Jesuit) in the sense in which the philosopher and the theologian accept that term. According to the French writer it is self-determination which is not necessarily always a good characteristic in the sense that it makes for good. However, the Jesuit goes on, it is admitted that a character in which there is little or no self-determination is always a weak character, and, says he, a weak character is a dangerous character to have in this wicked world. The right aim of education is to bring out the true self and to form that self to good that is God. As to obedience (he says), it is of two kinds: (a) the sullen cowardly obedience of the slave, which runs the will and (b) that hearty and genial intelligent and God-fearing obedience, which is the best exercise for the will of youth.

As for Personality, it may be described as the simply being oneself and going completely the length of one's faculties. It is the synthesis of our being (says the original French writer) and he who possesses it has a profound and vast sense of life, is no longer a borrowed or second-hand being and knows what it is to live. A man or woman who possesses personality can build on solid foundations his or her life and eternity. That such a being is rare is admitted, and one such person in every thousand is about the ratio of their existence. Naturally, formidable powers are arrayed against it—external forces such as mediocrity and commonplaceness which prevent personality from coming to be, if they can do so. But there are also interior forces which prevent personality from flowering and of these the principal are atavism (or ancestral influences) and education, in the worse sense of the terms. Only an enlightened and well-tempered will can get the better of these powers. The duty of the educator is to seek out in each subject the forces which will neutralize these bad factors.

As for ancestral or hereditary influences (atavism), there is no denying that we are most of us what atavism has made us, and heredity puts on a triple character—namely, physical, intellectual and moral. It transmits not only the temperamental and physical peculiarities and attributes, but also a virtual attitude of mind and predisposition to one or another kind of life.

These attributes may vary according to the environment of the new generation, but fundamentally they are easily recognizable. Such interlocking of the spiritual and the material by heredity is a necessary consequence of the intimate union in us of spirit and matter forming one single being, and the results of which we see and take note of every day among ourselves and our friends and acquaintances. In the

case of a bad son, for example, born of good and honorable parents, we are forced from what we know of the family's past to recognize in him what the evolutionists term "a reversion to type," or the re-birth of some ancestor, near or remote, whose life was as that of the present exponent of the bad traits failed to fortify or rescue him from the atavistic evil destiny.

Now, in the opinion of the foremost educators and physiologists, heredity is not fatality. (If it were, there would immediately be provided an argument for pre-destination and the failure of Grace.) Education and discipline can eradicate the causes which move a character toward evil rather than good, although the main constituents of heredity are indestructible. The force is undoubtedly there, a force which may be motivated by the education of the will, and deflected from its natural bent to the performance of functions for which it may be pre-disposed only in a minimum degree. The educator fails in this regard in his attempt to apply the principle of turning out all children in the same mould, regardless of their individual characters. The contrary principle cannot be too often repeated, namely, that

"The destiny of a being answers to its activity, and its activity to its nature—since nature is made for activity and activity for destiny."

Upon this principle action should be taken. The gifts (or activities) of nature peculiar to each child should be exploited. They should be revealed to him in view of doing inward work in him; he should be taught to make use of them so as to make them truly his own by a slow process of labor spent upon them. Education is, therefore, able and ought to prepare the way for personality and render it possible to fructify. It should follow the personal bent, and should bring nothing artificial or forced to the surface and so create a superficial personality, which hides and ruins the real. Consequently, spontaneity and every manifestation of personal character should be encouraged and the child should be taught to will reasonably more than to obey, for so obedience will come to it in the necessary consequence of reasonable and of reasoned commands and habits; it will will good simply because it is good.

Modern education, particularly in the Godless schools, is mainly conceived on a principle of producing "show-results," and so it is that a pupil, having cut-and-dried ideas for the most part impressed upon him, with a view to his showing "results," in the average becomes a mentally stunted creature incapable of acting and judging for itself, accepting the "hand-me-down" ideas of others as the real criterion of his activity. So then we come to the age of twenty with an individuality in which there is nothing personal, neither the ground which comes of our ancestors, nor the cultivation which has been the work of un-intelligent education—a sight as sad as that of a King disrowned, says the Jesuit.

Not only sad, he goes on; it is also dangerous, for such a being must perforce be at the mercy of all the winds that blow and the currents that underlie all secular life. Haply, a moment of real self-consciousness comes to all of us, and a critical time comes when we realize our own virtual automatism or mechanical way of life and thought—or entire absence of personality and

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