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Rabelais - his educational theories

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RABELAIS - HIS EDUCATIONAL THEORIES
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Many now consider Rabelais one of the greatest literary geniuses that France has yet produced on account of his imagination, fantasy, realism, general interest, human appeal, satire and philosophy, humorous and serious sides and his merit as a literary artist. He appeared in the sixteenth century, at the time of the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Humanistic movement. Due to the discovery of ancient Greek and Latin manuscripts and to the invention of printing, there was a great increase in learning. Moreover, an awakened interest in the outside world was aroused by a spirit of discovery and exploration. As there were so many changes and innovations at this time, it was not strange that the greater part of the writers of this century were reformers. Rabelais was one of these, and he satirized his time in his writings. He opposed the educational theories of the Middle Ages strongly, and gave his own views on education.

Rabelais was born at Chinon in Touraine. The exact dates of his birth and death are unknown, but he was probably born about 1490. Not a great deal has been found about his youthful years, but Rabelais presumably had a happy childhood. There has been much confusion concerning the occupation of Rabelais' father, who was, it is now believed, a lawyer. Many critics, for a long time, thought him an apothecary or innkeeper. When Rabelais was ten years old his father decided to make a monk of him. Therefore, he had Rabelais carefully educated at
the Benedictine Abbey of Seuilly, and in 1519 Rabelais entered
the Franciscan monastery, Fontenay-le-Comte.

On account of his predilection for Greek, Rabelais had to
leave the monastery. He then began a roving life, visiting
various universities, at Poitiers, LaRochelle, Bordeaux, Tou-
louse, Montpellier, (where he received his medical degree),
Avignon, Valence, Angers, Bourges, Orleans and Lyons, (where he
was a hospital physician). He made three journeys to Rome and
resided in Turin and Metz.

To understand Rabelais' educational ideas, one must know
both Rabelais himself and his time. As he was a universal
scholar, he wanted nothing unknown to his pupils. He advised
languages because he, himself, adored antiquity, and he advised
sciences because he, himself, was plunged in the study of other
things than books. Besides languages, Rabelais studied botany,
physics, astronomy and medicine. He profited by what the an-
cient authors said in regard to medicine and made their works
known. He probably chose Montpellier for study because he
could complete his work there in three years and at a cheaper
cost than he could at Paris, where it took six years and con-
siderably more money. Moreover, Montpellier was attractive to
him because of its very great reputation, and because many bril-
liant men were there. In this university, he learned surgery.
This had made great advances through the practice of dissection,
which the Arabs introduced, and also from the ideas which an-
tiquity gave to medicine. Rabelais, also, took a small part in
the medical controversies of his time. He observed, experimented,
vented surgical instruments, and worked in both the library and
laboratory.
In his varied career, Rabelais was a professor, a writer, a doctor, a student, a priest and a traveler. However, Faguet says that Rabelais traveled because it was the custom of students of that time to travel, and not because Rabelais had a mania for travel. Rabelais was a vagabond, wandering from one university to another continually and never residing in one place for any length of time. It was through this travel that he became so well acquainted with the country of France in such detail. His accurate descriptions reveal his exceeding great knowledge and familiarity with the geography of France, especially in that section of the country in which he spent his younger days.

Rabelais was a changeable, inconstant man, and a fantastic writer, fond of long digressions and change of subject. In writing on education, his imagination reached method. He exhausted his subject and neglected nothing from the physical and intellectual to the moral side of education.

It was fortunate that Rabelais had practicality enough to obtain such powerful protectors as the Bishop Geoffroy d'Estinac, Cardinal du Bellay, and de Chantillon, whose generosity enabled him to obtain a living, and whose protection was very valuable when complaint was made that his books were against the Sorbonne. However, Rabelais repudiated all suspected bonds with Calvin and Dolet, softened the attacks his two books contained against the Sorbonne, and tried to keep a veneer of good appearances over his works. The Sorbonnists considered Greek a heresy, and also strongly opposed printing, which could spread the new ideas of the Renaissance. In 1242, the people were forbidden to translate the
sacred books into the vernacular and books on saints' lives were only tolerated. Marguerite of Navarre and Rabelais were attacked by the Sorbonnists but their protectors were more powerful than their persecutors.

Nevertheless, like most of the writers of the sixteenth century, Rabelais was a reformer and a steadfast opponent of the Scholastics and Sorbonnists. His humanistic ideas and interest in Greek were entirely contrary to these. As the Sorbonne, which still followed scholastic teaching, was on the alert to oppress those who attacked their principles, Rabelais used a joking and humorous tone to cover his satire. It was only by buffoonery that the keen satire of men and of civil and religious institutions could be exposed without danger. Besides, Rabelais saw that by pleasing he could keep those powerful patrons, under whose protection he could say what many other authors could not.

The principal works of Rabelais were "Gargantua" and the five books of "Pantagruel." Besides these he wrote a few almanachs. All of his works, but the fifth book of "Pantagruel" which was published after his death, were published between the years 1532 to 1552. To make his ideas known to all, Rabelais used the allegorical form, which contributed much to the success of his work. Rabelais was not didactic, for he created characters with distinctive personalities who spoke for themselves. Through these Rabelais introduced the principles he wanted known. Besides the protection of humor and entertainment which Rabelais used to cover his satire, as a precaution, at first he wrote under the name "Alcofridas Nasier." "Gargantua" and "Pantagruel" contained many ideas which later writers followed and developed. Although in
both of these works his pedagogical ideas are found, Chapters 14, 15, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 52-57 in "Gargantua" and Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 in the first book of "Pantagruel" contain in brief and concise form the greater part of his educational ideas. It matters little to us whether or not Rabelais wrote "Gargantua" before the first book of "Pantagruel, although this question is debated considerably.

Rabelais was one of the first of the humanistic and realistic writers in France; that is, he believed in learning facts through classic literature and also through experience and observation. Because of his interest in medicine, he was one of the first also to combine "the education of a scholar with the physical education of a nobleman."

He may be considered as a forerunner of Montaigne, Fenelon and Rousseau, all of whom had at the bottom of their doctrines the training of both the mind and body. He believed in the goodness of nature, but he meant physical nature, where Montaigne meant human nature and where Rousseau meant the nature of the child. According to J. P. Munroe, Rabelais was in the same class as Bacon, Comménius, Montaigne, and Locke, and was, therefore, one of the most authentic precursors of modern education. He was a promotor of the methods of objective instruction founded on the direct observation of things, and used active methods which make an appeal to the personal initiative of the pupils.

He presented to the teachers of youth a very simple and useful formula: that they should return to antiquity but remain

* Plattard, page 8
faithful to nature. He wished the Greeks and Romans to be studied, less for the purpose of imitating them than for the purpose of learning to feel and think as they did, of judging things rightly, and of maintaining harmony in the development of the body and soul of youth. Moreover, he emphasized the point that it was not sufficient to adorn the mind alone, but one must also engage in life with a robust and alert body.

But, Rabelais wished first to amuse and then to instruct and moralize. In the prologue, Rabelais said the book was for the entertainment of the "illustrious drinkers." In spite of this, he impressed the readers that his book was not merely one for amusement but begged them to get the substantial marrow of it. He compared his work to the "Sileni of old, which were small boxes painted on the outside with wanton and toyish figures of bridled geese, flying goats, satyrs, and such as would produce laughter, although inside were kept precious jewels and fine drugs."

This would seem to prove that Rabelais consciously formulated theories on education and that his ideas were not just chance or incidental ones. Faguet says that there is nothing complicated in Rabelais. He believes that Rabelais was simply an excellent story-teller who wrote first to amuse and who included in his works much that is of an autobiographical nature.

Bruntière also says, "Rabelais' pedagogy has already been praised too highly in our opinion. Noone could conceive anything more fantastic." He believed that Rabelais' combination of entertainment, and physical and mental training was impractical. Moreover, the fact that Rabelais' reforms did not cause any immediate stir and were not put into practice within a few years proves to

1) Prologue of Gargantua
2) Bruntière, page 149
Brunetièrè that these ideas are of small value.

Somewhat to the contrary, Stapfer says, ¹ "Although one can prove the literary debt which Rabelais owed to his predecessors, this does not diminish his merit in any way, for the originality of the pedagogy of Rabelais consists much less in innovations and in the ingenuity of his particular ideas than in the reason, measure and harmony of the general thought."

Coutaud thinks that Rabelais was conscious of the grandeur of an educator because of the noble and lofty language, free from jokes and farces, which he used when talking of education.

It was most striking when an author who often overreached himself in his humor wrote passages of such majesty. In the writers of the century of Louis XIII, we again find this lofty style. The letter of Gargantua to his son was especially noted in this regard. ² "This piece is more remarkable as it is entirely the result of the will and talent of the author.----But what art! What beautiful and noble language and how the severity of the subject is happily tempered by the grace and variety of the discourse. Other elevated pieces are the prologues of Rabelais, so pointed and spiritual, which always find the truths of which Plato furnished the model and that Blaise Pascal has reproduced in his immortal Provinciales."

It was in the parts which apply to education especially in which Rabelais was serious and did not try to amuse.

Rabelais' educational ideas included physical, mental and moral training. He wanted his characters to have well-rounded

1 Stapfer, page 314
2 Delécluze, page 56
abilities and to be able to cope with any circumstance. The artificial education of the Scholastics trained only the mind and was pure memory work. Rabelais wanted an education which would be applicable to real life and which developed all the faculties and did not make one mad or silly. Thus, Rabelais tried to make education interesting and to have an even balance between all phases of it.

Gargantua's education was developed in accordance with these ideas. With Gargantua, Rabelais satirized the old educational methods of his childhood and gave an exposition of his own ideas in favor of the humanistic methods. As his subject, he started with a giant who had for his teacher a great theological doctor and Sorbonnist, Thubal Holofernes. The latter, first of all, taught Gargantua the A, B, C so he could say it backwards, but it took him five years and three months. He also spent many hours with Gargantua on time-honored text books and confined him to certain exercises of style and the recitation and reading of good books. This method was not successful, nor was that of the next teacher, Jobelin Bridé, any better. Under his tutelage, Gargantua studied such books as the "Doctrinale Puerorum" of Alexander de Villa.

But although Gargantua studied very hard his father discovered that his son did not know as much as Eudémon, a page, who had studied but two years. When Eudemon was introduced to Gargantua, he was able to talk and looked at him with a frank gaze and easy manner, but Gargantua stood stupidly, was unable to utter a word and began to cry. This distressed Grandgousier so
much that he decided to have Gargantua study under another teacher whose training would give him knowledge which he could apply and which would make him able to take his place in the world.

Gargantua was sent to Paris with Eudemand, a sure and proven guide, Ponocrates, as his tutor. Ponocrates, seeing the difficult task he had before him, did not wish to make too sudden a break with Gargantua's old ideas, and so changes gradually but unmistakably. After he showed Gargantua the bad effects of the old system, Ponocrates adopted a new system having a variety of exercises and work and in which every moment of time was used profitably. He took no account of the former knowledge of his pupil but gave him the works of the scholars to develop his attitudes and to form his taste.

That Gargantua made good use of his time may be seen by the program he followed daily. Every morning Gargantua arose at four o'clock. During his bath, the Bible was read to him. First Gargantua and his tutor observed the time and stars. This was followed by a review of the lessons of the previous day and an explanation of the most difficult passages. The lesson of the day was next read to him. For variety, Gargantua had then some moderate exercise as tennis until he was fatigued. Then the lesson of the day was explained.

Dinner came at ten. This was a frugal meal compared to supper. During the meal a book was read and everything on the table was used as a possible subject for discussion. Ancient authors who had written on these topics were also discussed.

While resting after the meal, Gargantua and Ponocrates played cards, not for amusement but to study the various combinations,
and to exercise the mind. This naturally helped with the
rules of arithmetic and from these, Ponoocrates led Gargantua
to the study of geometry, the sciences and music.

This was followed by a second three hour period of hard
study. This was a continuation of the oral lesson of the morn-
ing but consisted also in some written work. When this was
over, Gargantua had a variety of exercises such as horseback
riding, rowing, swimming, diving, fencing, climbing, hunting,
tennis, or gymnastic exercises. These were useful open air
exercises to develop the muscles methodically and to strengthen
the body.

Afterwards, Gargantua and his tutor, while walking, dis-
cussed the trees, meadows, fields and flowers and what the an-
cients said about them; and Gargantua learned botany by collecting
plants and flowers in these fields and studying about them.

Supper at six o'clock was a copious meal. During this
Gargantua and his tutor held another improving and interesting
conversation. In the evening, they played cards and dice, or
visited learned men. They studied practical astronomy by a
second observation of the stars and finished with a brief review
of what was learned during the day. Before going to bed,
Gargantua gave thanks to God for his mercies.

When it rained, Gargantua instead of exercising outdoors,
tried his hand at carpentering, painting and sculpture, or
visited workshops to see the progress of industry. He went to
the apothecary's to learn the simplest curatives or else visited
the jeweller's, clock-maker's, printer's or dyer's. From this
we can see that Rabelais had thought of professional and industrial
teaching; and before Rousseau he suggested a manual workshop.

Once a month for recreation, Ponocrates and his pupil would take a walk to such places as Chantilly, St. Cloud or Bologne. However, the training of the mind was not forgotten. They discussed what the ancients would say about the things they saw, using passages from such works as Virgil's "Georgics" or Hesiod's "Works and Days." Gargantua and his tutor would also joke, drink, sing, catch quails and frogs.

This program made in the enthusiasm of the Renaissance for science was an encyclopaedia of human knowledge. Gargantua's daily program was, of course, too extensive and arduous to be attempted by an ordinary person, but Gargantua was a prince and giant endowed with extraordinary abilities. Moreover, he had an exceptional teacher. He had the first private instruction, and travelled but little to learn the duties of a modern sovereign and the limits of his power. Rabelais pointed out that the pedagogical culture of a youth who must one day be a man of wealth clever in counsel, vigorous in action and able to combat. In the case of Pantagruel, Rabelais pointed out that, if it was true that travel forms youth, it must be recommended to the princes who were going to reign, especially when the royal court was in a state of corruption. In the physical training and martial exercise, Rabelais was following the precepts of the tutors of Italian princes. Rabelais had the pedagogic sense. He knew both pleasures and studies were necessary; even though he gave more of both than was necessary for an ordinary child. Moreover, Rabelais exaggerated in language and vocabulary. As he was dealing with giants, one should not apply the principles Rabelais gave
unless they are in proportion to human reality. The gigantic amount studied would be possible with only enormous persons. On the other hand, Rabelais may have been so enthused with his new ideas that he forgot his characters were giants, but nevertheless his program would be too large for ordinary people. Milton, in his plan, also gave his pupils too much erudition. Montaigne and Fenelon did not make this mistake as they had had more exact experience and therefore realized the necessities and limitations of education.

Therefore, Rabelais' scheme was just an outline of the ideal way to educate. Necessarily he did not indicate any precise moment in the course of Gargantua and Pantagruel to correspond with any definite period of youth. He combined secondary and still higher education, but he could do this because he could expect very positive and scientific talents in his exceptional pupils.

Gargantua's instruction was perpetual. There was no hour without profit to develop a man healthy and vigorous in mind and body. However, the amount of time given to serious study was but six hours. The program was complete, not complicated, and the studies were judiciously distributed. The regularity of the program which was followed day by day must also be noted. The program, nevertheless, was not dogmatic. In teaching, Ponoocrates followed the natural order of life, and the method of teaching conformed to the season and weather. It was a truly Socratic form of education, founded on the intimate penetration of the intelligence of the master and pupil who pursue knowledge by talks, useful reflections while walking, and frequent meetings with well-known people.
Ponocrates had almost a paternal authority over Gargantua. He did not believe in the constraining effects of the Middle Ages which did not understand education without the ferule, from which not even princes were exempted. Rabelais did not even admit the existence of vigorous punishments. The youth of Gargantua was healthy and happy. When it was necessary to punish Gargantua in his youth, he was bound in irons for a short time but was not beaten. Montaigne also did not like to see little ones suffering. Those who are happy in infancy see life better for themselves and others and will not become inhuman in later life. Rabelais would leave the child free to make mistakes and to correct errors, but he would not leave the child entirely to himself. He would keep him in close boundaries. His pupil had no leisure. He was never out of the supervision of his tutor, and was never allowed to play in the true sense of the word.

As a form of discipline, both Rabelais and Montaigne believed in hardening the pupil by accustoming him to the severity of the cold, wind and sun. They wished the pupil to become a vigorous and virile boy.

Rabelais did not have the mother play any part in the education of the child. Montaigne and Rousseau also did not see the mother as the first educator. Rabelais had the old monastic prejudice of women as inferior creatures. He neglected the feminine element except in the Abbey of Thelema, where they were perfect ladies. Nevertheless, in his own century, he was surrounded by such learned women as Marguerite of Navarre, Anne of Bretagne, Louise of Savoie, Catherine de Médicis, Diane of Poitiers and Princess Renée, the daughter of Louis XII.
Finally, Rabelais' theory for princes was as good for a nobleman or peasant, if only the discipline and education were modified slightly. It could be used to advantage in colleges, in families, or with a tutor. The important matter was the spirit and method of the education.

Rabelais, in his works, spent considerable time in discussing physical education. In the prologue of the fourth book of "Pantagruel," he said, "Without health there is no life." Rabelais said that he was a physician and it would not be sensible for a doctor to be in poor health and yet attempt to cure others, "for the physician will hardly be thought very careful of the health of others who neglects his own." Therefore, it was first and foremost because he was a doctor that Rabelais paid so much attention to physical education as a means to health.

In Gargantua's program, five hours were given to physical exercise. Never before had the training of the body been so important.

Rabelais gained his ideas in regard to physical education from three sources: first, from his own observations of his time; second, from the idea of returning to nature and of giving the child all liberty; third, from those ideas which were well known in classical antiquity.

He protested against the Scholastic schools which filled the mind with knowledge and had no care of the body. He taught in opposition to cloistered life and wanted both physical exercise and science. He recommended a balance between the body and mind by alternating exercises and study.

1) Pantagruel 4th Book Prologue
In Rabelais' time, the adults had opportunities for exercise but the children had none. The bourgeoisie as well as the nobility practiced the chivalric arts and tennis. When Rabelais spoke of prowess on foot and on horseback, he spoke of exercises familiar to the lords and bourgeoisie who thereby gained strength, skill, endurance, lightness, and boldness.

Rabelais said it was necessary for scholars to walk and exercise in the open air in order to keep healthy. They should not shut themselves indoors on account of too indiscreet study of books. Ponzocrates, therefore, urged Gargantua to take walks and to exercise.

But, before Rabelais, Plato had mentioned exercise as a means to health, and had said that amid without a vigorous body is worth nothing. Plato would have the State regulate all exercises of both the body and mind of its citizens. Aristotle had thought of the alternation of physical and intellectual work. He also believed that games given to children have a value.

Rabelais was an apostle of open air games as well. He was a connecting link between Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon and the new world of modern educators. In the greatest centuries of antiquity, the people did not separate gymnastics and the arts. To them, a masterpiece of education was a person physically perfect, a good citizen, and one well versed in the arts.

In both "Gargantua" and "Pantagruel," Rabelais stressed physical exercise. He mentioned all varieties and Gargantua was trained in all of these. Gargantua learned to wield the lance, to use the battle-ax, and to toss the pike, but not because Rabelais wished his characters to be skillful in war, because Rabelais had a hatred of war. It was because it was part of the
necessary training of a prince. These exercises were done with greater compliance by Gargantua than by Pantagruel because in Pantagruel's time, the mind tended to gain the supremacy. The exercise of Pantagruel consisted mostly in tennis and dancing. Montaigne, would reduce the gymnastic training, although he emphasized dancing more. Fenelon was also against shutting his pupil up with books which develop literary faculties rather than a sense of observation.

Rabelais was also a forerunner of the association of education and hygiene. He demonstrated the benefits of a dietetic and vegetarian regime. He spoke of the necessity of good food and pure air to insure a good physical condition and in order to have intellectual force and concentration. He was careful, too, that, during the hour of digestion, gentle instruction, music and games should be used in passing away the time. Besides he emphasized the importance of cleanliness in health. "Good order was always observed, and the young giant was even 'combed, curled, trimmed and perfumed.'"

Although many great French educators have written about the importance of physical education, France has still retained the old monastic idea that the body should be sacrificed to the mind. Rabelais was the first to preach for health, and Montaigne again insisted on its importance. In the eighteenth century, Rousseau stood for a natural education where the body was cared for as well as the mind. The French overlooked and did not comprehend the fact that the mind and body are intimately related. Although the French did have compulsory military training, they did not lay much

1) Whibley, page 56
stress on physical training until they came across it in other countries at the time of the Great War.

However, before this, others had spoken of its importance. In 1881, J. Baptiste Blatin said, "I wish to call the attention of the Chamber and the Government to one of the phases of our national education which has been profoundly neglected."

At the time of the War, "France began a widespread movement for the improvement and extension of physical education and games throughout the country, not merely to develop agility and endurance in individuals but to strengthen the nation as a whole. In 1917, a commission was appointed to study a reorganization in the schools. Circulars were sent to academies urging the development of games and sports in secondary, normal and higher elementary schools. It was pointed out that such training could be organized without encroaching on class work. A Union des Sociétés Françaises de Sports Athlétiques was founded to promote the development of school athletic clubs and to secure playing fields. It was suggested in the circular that participation should not be made compulsory and no boy should be allowed to take part without the written consent of his parents, so that the state might be relieved of responsibility for accidents."

As was often the case, an idea originating in one country, was improved by another and returned to the original.

1) Baptiste Blatin "Discours sur l'éducation" page 1
2) U. S. Commissioners Report 1918, page 74
Rabelais, however, did not emphasize physical education entirely. He gave intellectual work just as important a place. In his writings, he wished his three principal characters, Grandgousier, Gargantua and Pantagruel, each to represent a different epoch.

Grandgousier represented the feudal age. He was vulgar in his tastes and aspirations. He wanted his child to have the education he did not have. The ideas he suggested might have taken place in the last years of the reign of Louis XII.

Gargantua represented the period of great erudition, curiosity, and the investigation of old manuscripts. From these was prepared the material on which the modern spirit is based. The fifteenth century saw the birth of many great reformers who with their works and genius made the glory of the Renaissance; Gargantua's time, however, being nearer the fifteenth century than the Renaissance only prepared the minds for the enthusiastic cult of antiquity. The diffusion of knowledge in all branches was made a little later. In this period the study of old documents and of Latin and Greek writing was begun. With Ponocrates, however, we hardly left Gothic and Scholastic times. The most exquisite works of antiquity were not yet in the hands of the people. The poets and novelists of Rome were less known than Plinius, Hippocrates, and Aristotle's physical and logical books. Virgil was still only an adviser in the agricultural arts. The information of the hero was much less literary than scientific for the greatest erudition was still to come.

Gargantua had progressed over his father, for he learned how to govern people, to command an army, to be prudent, and be a man
of letters. He wrote in Roman or Gothic letters, read manuscripts of ancient days, and recognized the constellations. He became somewhat of a free thinker without much respect for monks, but that was the fashion of his time. He was physically strong, but still had a mind polished and modernized by instruction. A resemblance has been drawn between Gargantua and Francois I. The latter also profited by his time at meals.

1) "The table was a true school." Besides, he visited Estienne and had learned conversations in the office of the printer. This was an education of the same idea as Gargantua, who visited workshops to learn their speciality. Francois I was, however, very religious in a different way from Gargantua and did not allow heretics in his kingdom.

Pantagruel was as erudite as the men of the preceding age and like them, a subtle reasoner. He had not yet lost faith, but scepticism was gaining and he expressed the doubts and hesitations of the men of his generation. He had in him the spirit of investigation and also of joking negation and satire. Pantagruel was always philosophizing and was less of a man of action than Gargantua and Grandgousier. He had more modern ideas, such as settlement by parleys. According to him "All the wealth of Heaven and earth is not worth the moving of our affections or the troubling of our senses and mind."

Many believed that Rabelais, in writing of Pantagruel was, on the whole, writing an autobiography of himself. Faguet believed that Rabelais was not a great creator of types but rather a maker of personages who have his own leanings. It was thus

1) Coutand page 22
that Faguet would explain the similarity of the three important characters of Rabelais' works.

Pantagruel was more like Rabelais than any other of his characters. Pantagruel is sent to a public school at Poitiers. There he worked with other scholars, subject to the common rules of exercises and play. But Rabelais preferred him to have the advantages of a freer life, more dangerous, more suggestive of ideas, and more fertile in information. He, therefore, made Pantagruel a wandering scholar so that he had to come in contact with certain difficulties to prove his intelligence and fame his wisdom, while still leaving him the full and free possession of his will. Rabelais did not believe that a cloistered home or school life was suitable to one who was going to play the part of a public man. He wished Pantagruel to learn the world and to fortify himself with lessons of science and the morals of a good man, able to withstand flattery. Pantagruel travelled and learned curious details of the lives of his contemporaries and heard the political and religious quarrels. With Panurge and his other gay companions, he learned to become democratic.

Pantagruel tried medicine and law, learned to dance, to wield the sword in both hands, and to play tennis. He visited various cities, and after visiting the renowned schools of the Provinces he came to Paris where the center of learning was, the University of Paris.

It was while he was here that Pantagruel received the famous letter from his father. This letter furnished the plan of an education in which the influence of the Renaissance had not as yet made itself felt.
Gargantua deplored in a touching fashion the fact that he was not able in his youth to taste the liberal and honest learning which his son could have. He showed paternal tenderness and talked as a Christian, exhorting his son to do good. He placed his advice under the authority of God in order to inspire, respect and obtain greater obedience. He said "Science, without conscience, is the ruin of the soul." He wished his son to love God, to be humble, to revere his teachers, and to keep company with those he wished to resemble.

This high thought, written in such concise form and with such sensitiveness, somewhat in the style of Cicero, was not in the works of the other educators of the time as Erasmus, Budé, Vivés, Verulian, or Mathurin Cordier. They wrote only for children while Rabelais expressed in beautiful language the duties to God and to man. He talked to Gargantua with words destined for already mature scholars, often forgetful of religion and social morals. It was necessary to speak to these in a higher and more severe voice to recall to them what obligations of justice and charity are imposed on a man living in society and what political virtues he must have.

The letter showed the deep love between the father and son and has a strong religious tone. He wished Pantagruel to employ his youth in profiting well in his studies and virtues. However, "the exhortations to study held less place than the parallel between the ignorance of the past times and contemporary culture. Also the program which Gargantua proposes for his son is an ideal to attain, but Rabelais did not think even of sketching for us the

1) Plattard page 65
method of arriving at a culture so vast; we have in it no mention of the original processes of instruction which he displays in Gargantua."

First of all, Pantagruel was to learn Greek perfectly and then Latin, Hebrew, Chaldean, and Arabic. He wished him to imitate the Latin and Greek styles and to adopt this intellectual discipline. Rabelais himself was an ardent Greek scholar and had the heroes of his works speak Greek. Greek was to be learned first because Rabelais wanted to go from the most useful to the least useful subject. It was strange that Rabelais did prefer Greek, for in his time Latin was far more prevalent. In the schools Latin was studied and Greek was neglected, except in the Jesuit schools where both were studied equally. Nevertheless, Rabelais gave preference to Greek, and in having Pantagruel learn Greek is in advance of his time in regard to secondary knowledge. The Latins themselves accepted the superiority of the Greeks. Besides Latin was studied in beautiful models and was more inclined to soften youth than to give him the necessary vigor.  

"Three times in his letter he repeats the sacred name of Plato. This name alone is the sign of a decisive evolution not only in Education but in progress even of the human spirit." It was a new idea to suggest Plato as a model because Aristotle had been the master for so long to the exclusion of others. When Rabelais wrote his book, there were only two complete editions of Plato.

Besides Latin and Greek, Gargantua wanted Pantagruel to study the Semitic languages, Hebrew, Chaldean and Arabic. This was an
innovation in discord with the prejudices of the official world in the first years of the Renaissance. There seems to have been some antipathy to having the original writings, on which the dogmas were founded, translated into the vernacular. The Church, however, made some effort to teach the oriental languages. But the Semitic languages had been studied by all the excellent minds of the Middle Ages for culture. As a result of the Arabic conquest, they learned the culture of letters, sciences, geography, history, philosophy, mathematics, the study of medicine, and translations from the Hebrews. Rabelais wished the languages to be studied so they could translate the old Testament and the Scriptures and so they could read again the old medicine books of the Greeks, Arabs and Latins. Rabelais, himself, was greatly interested in the Semitic languages. Many scholars were enthused over the ideas of the Cabbalists, but Rabelais had too positive a mind to be much affected by these.

However, Rabelais advised strongly against the study of astrology which was much in favor at the court of Francois I, where they devised horoscopes. Rabelais, himself, was interested in it and wrote several almanachs but he had the good sense to prescribe and condemn it formally in Pantagruel’s program of instruction. Duchâte and several others, however, would have cultivated this science and have opened a school for it.

Rabelais wanted his pupil to study history, but to use history as an accessory to Latin and Greek. Also, he wanted him to translate Latin into the vernacular, and history, in the vernacular into Latin. Gargantua encouraged Pantagruel in the study of history

1) Coutaud page 50
and geography as a necessary complement for the discussion and full intelligence of the ancient texts. For a long time, people had shown a disdain for history. History was merely fantasy and fables, but it was interesting in spite of its unlikelihood. The sixteenth century scorned these. The Chansons de Geste and the Fabliaux gave some idea of the history of their time. The poets and troubadours were dispersors of instruction, reciting long poems and making history known. These made use of such works in prose as the "Oceanus historicalis", a sort of general history, by John Columna. The use of vulgarization began to make the study of national annuals more accessible. Other historians of the time were Villehardouin, Joinville, Froissart, Christine de Pisan, and Comenius. All had the intention of being sincere except Villehardouin. The latter were not the ones whom Rabelais thought of in his works. He meant the ancient Greeks and Romans. Rabelais himself was not especially devoted to history although he displayed his knowledge of geography, physics, and politics in Pantagruel.

The geography in his works, Rabelais got from fantasy, classic authors, and his own travels. He lived his book and was a continuous traveler. In the Middle Ages there was a very incomplete knowledge of geography as well as history. The original maps of the Arabs, Italians, and Germans were rectified by soldiers, merchants, monks and pilgrims. The pilgrims spread the knowledge, and the effects of this exchange of ideas were felt everywhere even in architecture and music. The Crusades incited a taste for adventure and a desire to see the unknown as well as inciting
religious fervour. Much geography was learned from these and what was learned from books and traditions was made known in long poems. But the poem was abandoned as soon as the national tongue was sufficiently formed. In the Middle Ages, Ptolemy's system of geography and astronomy, which was similar to the ideas of the Church on these, was in vogue. At the end of the fifteenth century the interest in geography increased with the voyages of discovery. In the programs of instruction of the sixteenth century, geography has the same rank as history, arithmetic, and the vernacular.

To study astronomy and mathematics, Rabelais would first look at the works of the scholars, but he would join this to the resources of experience. Rabelais was engaged in astronomical observation under the form of annual almanachs, which brought him less money than honor.

Music was not to be neglected. The practical utility of song and music has been understood in all times. Rabelais said in order to rest the imagination from straying in paths where it would become enervated, it was good to be moved by either vocal or instrumental music. The pupil of Ponocrates learned music not only to exercise the thorax and lungs but also to give pleasure. That Gargantua sang in four or five parts showed that he was up to the music of his time. Rabelais gave a list of the musicians of his day from Les Flamands to the blindman of Florence. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries they chanted songs on very light texts, and musicians received more for a little madrigal than for a solemn piece. Also Francois I paid more attention to profane music than to Chapel music.
Besides singing, Rabelais would have his pupil able to dance and to play instrumental music. Gargantua learned to play the lute, the virginal, the harp, and the viol, and Pantagruel even neglected his studies for dancing and tennis at Orleans. Dancing was well thought of in most universities, and was both a hygienic exercise and a pleasure according to Rabelais. In the sixteenth century each province had its own particular dances and the court adopted or rejected them according to the caprice of the moment.

Pantagruel had many opportunities while traveling to visit a large number of libraries. By Rabelais' time, there were large numbers of libraries, and they were well frequented. As science and letters progressed the commercial utility of libraries was appreciated, and they were encouraged by special privileges given to printers and booksellers. At first, booksellers had exclusive rights on their books for three years, but later this was increased to twelve years. However, the clergy and Sorbonnists tried to bridle printers and libraries for they blamed these for spreading the new ideas. Gargantua said that in the time of Plato or Cicero there was no such commodity as a library. In Gargantua's time also, there were but few libraries, for the manuscripts were copied by monks and the art of printing had just begun.

Pantagruel, however, when he had an argument with Thaumauste, lived near the library and could obtain all the books he needed at the Sorbonne. He could also consult the great scholars who were grouped around the university, thus making Paris the capital in the kingdom of letters. In the time of Gargantua, the scholars were reduced to a hard and humble life and were always needy, as
was Rabelais himself in his early years.

Francois I was one of the first to encourage the taking up of good studies, and he had his own library with Budé as a director. But Francois I was not the first king to have a library; Charlemagne, St. Louis, and Charles V all had libraries before him. The rich nobles imitated Francois I.

Rabelais himself had his own library in spite of his wanderings. He owned many precious manuscripts of which he made valuable use. Moreover, Rabelais had access to numerous ample libraries which he could appreciate. He could explore the most important public and private collections of France and Italy, and must have made many discoveries. He was received as a friend by the d'Estissac's, Du Bellay's, de Guise's and at Rome by the members of the Sacred College.

Rabelais was the first one to suggest a pedagogical library for princes. Although other writers, Erasme, Budé, Fortinis, Piccolomini and Estienne wrote on the education of monarchs, their works were published after "Pantagruel."

As has been shown, Rabelais did not depend entirely on books for the education of his characters. He considered these important, but included also observation, experiment, and travel. He wanted his pupil to study positive science by observation and experiment. Gargantua advised his son to study curiously the facts of nature. He wanted nothing unknown to him and it was not in one single sentence that he advised the study by observation of natural history, medicine and science. ¹"And as to the knowledge of the works of nature, I would have thee devote thyself to its exact study, so that there be no sea, river, or fountain of which

1) Tilley p. 166
thou dost not know the fishes; all the fowls of the air, all the
trees, shrubs, and evergreens of the forest, all the herbs of the
earth, all the metals hidden in the womb of the abysses, the
precious stones throughout the East and the South - let nothing
be unknown to thee." Rabelais took great care to develop this
faculty of observation, in astronomy, in botany by collecting
plants, and in many other cases. The experimenting, which the
characters had, was more the training gained through experience
and observation, rather than purposive experiments. But at a
time when all knowledge was supposed to be in Greek and Latin,
it was a great step in advance that things besides books should
be studied and that observation should be trained as well as
memory.

But, Rabelais wanted his pupils to know masses of facts.
Montaigne, on the other hand, wished his pupil to have a general
education, which would enable him to judge; "that is to think
clearly and rightly for himself and to be able to act well. He
wished his pupils to take up certain subjects, not for the material
which they contained, but for the valuable training the mind might
gain. Rabelais wanted his pupils to know all of the things which
he learned and was particular that they should learn many subjects.
Rabelais' education was the more substantial of the two, for the
method which was boasted of by Montaigne would let artifice and
illusion enter into the daily existence of the child. His refined
classicism favored, without doubt, beautiful thought, but it made also
prejudices and perhaps some egotism. Montaigne could have received

1) Compayré, "Montaigne & the Education of the Judgment", page 66
to advantage from the heroes of Rabelais, more than one lesson in humanity."

The habitual search for pleasure was not always conducive to firmness and breadth of mind. Faguet said that "Rabelais resembles more a Buffon, Darwin, or Spencer, than an Erasmus, or Budé, and especially he does not resemble Montaigne. The latter, at the bottom, did not want the child to know anything but wanted his pupil to reason and have good sense. Rabelais esteemed judgment but wanted man to know very much."

Montaigne surpassed Rabelais perhaps in the finesse of thought and in the happy choice of terms in his work, although he was less coherent for he repeated his ideas over and over. Rabelais wrote clearly and concisely.

It was strange that Montaigne, with his exceedingly good literary taste judged Rabelais' "Gargantua" as "a book merely to amuse us." He did not realize that Rabelais was an educator as well as he was.

Another new idea which Rabelais suggested was that of co-education. No one before him had ever imagined such an idea, and schools were only for boys.

The Abbey of Thelema might be called a co-educational institution. It was given to Friar John by Gargantua as a reward for his bravery, but the monk wanted it to be run by certain rules. As other monasteries were surrounded by walls, this one was not to be shut in and the door was to be always open. In convents, everything was ruled by the sound of bells; this one was to have no bells and the people could do as they wanted to at any time. As homely and ugly men and women were usually

1) Faguet page 105
placed in monasteries, in the Abbey of Thelema there was to be only beautiful, gracious, and well bred people. Also the men and women could leave this place whenever they wished. It was really an abbey only in name.

Rabelais constructed in detail the Abbey of Thelema explaining how it should be built. He wanted it hexagonal in form with towers at each corner, and furnished most elaborately. Besides the parts which served as dormitories, for the men at the southeast, and women at the northwest; there were fountains, libraries, gardens and tennis courts.

Besides, Rabelais described the costumes to be worn by the men and women. At the beginning, the women dressed as they judged was the best, but finally they wore a certain uniform. But, it was of most elaborate stuffs and decorated with precious jewels.

The only rule which Gargantua gave was "Do as you wish." The Thelemites could govern their lives as they willed; eating, working and sleeping when it pleased them. He did not believe any other rules were necessary. As nature itself was considered good by him, it would lead the people rightly. Those in the Abbey were well-born, noble, and well educated persons so Rabelais imagined a life of absolute liberty, and a courteous and intellectual life without restraint.

In the first place, the Abbey was endowed with a rich donation from Gargantua. In the same way educational institutions are usually started. 1 "The time was spent in cultivating poetry, music, drawing and painting. They enacted plays, went hunting, and had

1) Fleury page 293
gymnastics, horseback riding and swimming, etc; but no one was employed in lucrative work." Each person when entering brought with him a dowry, which was approximately sufficient for his expenses.

This was a life very similar in many ways to that in a co-educational institution. There was a great deal of freedom, and yet most of the time was spent in studying and recreation, in which both the men and women took part. In Rabelais' opinion, however, no more time was lost here than was lost in Gargantua's program, but of course now it would be impractical to have things run without a schedule.

Rabelais' ideas on moral and religious education were also different from those of his time. 1) "In the Abbey of Thelema they have no common place of worship, but each member has a private chapel in his or her apartments. 'Worship God as thou wilt' is the only command of the Thelemite religion."

In religion, in the eyes of the Sorbonnists, Rabelais was a heretic. But he was not an atheist, and was open to ideas of tolerance and liberty, repudiated by authority and dogma. He was prudent because he feared the Sorbonne theologians, who burned philosophers, and Rabelais was not built for a martyr. His real opinion appeared in the letter of Gargantua. He believed in the existence of God and in the immortality of the soul. The importance of the Holy Scriptures was emphasized and they are studied thoroughly in Greek, Hebrew and Latin. Montaigne, however, regarded the diffusion of the Bible by means of a translation into the vernacular as more dangerous than helpful. Montaigne also objected

1) Tilley page 159
to the promiscuous singing of psalms and so would not have approved of Rabelais' service. After meals, Gargantua often sang hymns. In Gargantua's letter to Pantagruel, he spoke in quite a religious tone.

Neither Gargantua nor Pantagruel would become famous. They go out from the hands of their preceptors, rich in precise information, well exercised in observation and endowed with a healthy judgment. What mattered was that the education should be truly liberal and always worthy of the name of humanistic. "The task of the teachers is quite as much to teach that politeness and delicateness in virtue that our good language of the seventeenth century expressed in the words 'l'honnête homme'". Tilley said Rabelais' education was remarkable for its large-mindedness, good sense, and freedom from the feuds and prejudices of the educationalists of all ages, rather than for any subtle or deep insight into the human mind. The aim was not so much to fill the pupil with harmony as to train the body and mind. Genius was always controlled by common sense.

1) Gebhart page 230
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