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# CONDORCET ON EDUCATION

by CHARLES DUCE

Into a family of straitened noble stock which for centuries had borne arms was born on 17 September 1743 Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Caritat de Condorcet, Marquis already of that ilk as his father had died some weeks before. He grew up in a mean, petty-bourgeois environment, his lot not made lighter by the fact that until his eighth year his mother clothed him as a girl. He was bored; and this was a boredom which was to remain with him for his whole life, relieved by only one remedy: work. This he did, notwithstanding the hatred with which he viewed the educational system of the Jesuit College of Reims to which he was sent at the age of eleven; it was a bare four years later that his prodigious progress in Latin and mathematics won him the right to study at the Collège de Navarre in Paris. It was a right his further brilliance in mathematics confirmed, even if he did eschew the society of his fellow-students and seek out instead that of a professor of philosophy. Such an intellectual idyll lasted but for two short years, however, and he returned to the boredom of his home town for two much longer years devoted to the private study of geometry.

Overcoming with a considerable struggle his family's amazement that a Caritat de Condorcet might prefer the sciences to the church or the army, Condorcet returned to Paris and forced himself on the notice of the scientific world with his 'Essay on integral calculus' before turning his mind to sociology as well and his time to a young lady who set about improving his knowledge of the philosophical humanism of the time. In the succeeding years he was elected a member, then the permanent secretary of the Academy of Sciences; he got involved in a romantic and ill-fated attachment to his philosophical mentor, frequented Parisian high society, met and corresponded with Voltaire, became on familiar terms with the reigning politicians. He later, in 1775, followed up the grain riots with articles on the economic plight of the peasants, rather calling forth the disapproval of his Academy, and developed his opinions in a singularly liberal manner<sup>1</sup>: in due course some of his pamphlets were burnt, his political ally Turgot was dismissed, and his mentor died from an overdose of opium on top of her tuberculosis. Nevertheless, the political situation developed in a manner sufficiently well known to dispense with being elaborated here; as for Condorcet, he married in 1786 and with his wife translated Thomas Paine and Adam Smith—two of the thinkers whose ideas were basic to the coming Revolution.

Elected to the Académie française, Condorcet showed in his intro-

<sup>1</sup> J. Bouissounouse: *Condorcet, le philosophe dans la Révolution*, Paris, 1965.

ductory speech the same revolutionary spirit as in his earlier pamphlets, welcoming the fact that the young king had concluded his 'first political alliance' with the revolutionary people of America<sup>1</sup>; he later expressed himself most forcibly on the need to free the enslaved coloured people there and elsewhere. Meeting Thomas Paine gave a further encouragement to Condorcet's liberal opinions and spurred him to write more about the developing of Turgot's social ideas. He was one of the original members of the national party which, despite the large spectrum of opinion embodied in it, demanded a constitution of the king. In the torrent of pamphlets which were written now, we must single out Condorcet's 'Letters of a nobleman to the gentlemen of the Third Estate'—in which he first begins to develop his theories on education and government, theories to be realized in some measure by the Revolution. Condorcet was not concerned in the Constituent Assembly, but only with the administrative committee in Paris; he was passed over in the Assembly's choice of a tutor for the royal heir, and thus, perhaps, put himself in a more favourable position for the Legislative Assembly. On the third ballot, he was elected on 26 September 1791, and was immediately placed on the committee for public education; having spent two years on the five mémoires delving deeply into the social and political meaning of education, he played the preponderant part on this committee from the start.

The Ancien Régime, which was closely linked with the church, entrusted education almost entirely to it. This, in its way, was by accident a Good Thing, as the only way in which the church could expand was for it to increase the number of schools in France.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the educational situation was not as black as it has been painted; but at the same time it was by no means an egalitarian or even efficient system. During the eighteenth century new ideas and philosophies of education were thrown up—one writer in the 1760's made the remark that education was in fashion at that time, and everyone wrote about it—and plans for the educational system of the country were published by Diderot, Rousseau, La Chalotais, Roland d'Erceville, Condillac and Turgot, as well as Condorcet. Certainly to the modern ear, some of these seem a fit subject for laughter in their proposals and basic assumptions; but it seems valuable to look briefly at them in order to estimate the situation which was at hand when Condorcet came to write his report. Barnard maintains,<sup>3</sup> with some justice, that from the Rolland plan of 1768 to Condorcet's plan of 1792 we find the influence of the movement of which La Chalotais was the chief exponent; education was no longer regarded as an instrument for securing the everlasting salvation of the soul of the individual; it was now the chief means of

<sup>1</sup> Bouissounouse, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Compare Condorcet, *Œuvres*, VII, p. 444. (*Œuvres de Condorcet*, ed. Condorcet O'Connor & Arago, Vol. VII, Didot Frères, Paris, 1847.)

<sup>3</sup> H. C. Barnard: *The French Tradition in Education*, Cambridge, 1922.

ensuring the well-being of the State and for that reason public instruction must be the direct concern of the State itself.

Briefly, in his 'Essay on national education' of 1763, La Chalotais puts forward the following reasons for a system. 'The public good and the honour of the nation require that we should establish a civil education that will prepare each succeeding generation to fill successfully the various professions of the state. The most ignorant and unenlightened centuries have always been the most vicious and corrupt. The aim of education being to prepare citizens for the state, it obviously must be closely related to the laws and constitution of the state; nothing could be worse than for it to be contrary to them. The most serious omission in our present system of education is the complete neglect of instruction in personal and social morality. Good books giving the material and method of instruction are all that is necessary for constructing a good plan of literary education; and these books are easy to compile. Then education will be an easy matter; all that will be required of masters, tutors and governesses is that they should be religious, moral and able to read well. This will revive home education, which is the most natural form of it, and the most beneficial to morality and society.'<sup>1</sup> I leave you to judge for yourselves how much this conforms to Condorcet's ideas, but for the present it is desirable to point out that, while La Chalotais maintained that it was the State, the larger part of the nation that must be kept principally in view in education, the Talleyrand report which preceded that of Condorcet also said it was the duty of education to teach all children their first and indispensable duties. On the other hand, Condorcet, while he accepted the principle of a state-controlled system of education, proposed to divorce education from politics by the creation of an autonomous system of education controlled wholly by the teaching profession itself.<sup>2</sup> Kandel, writing in 1933,<sup>3</sup> remarked that such a system had recently been revived in France, but inspired by syndicalist theory and a desire for professional self-determination.

While these reports might be regarded with some amusement, one cannot deny that they do at least treat of man as a rational being; this is less in evidence when we consider Rousseau and others of his kind. Vauvenargues deserves—just—to be looked at briefly; Geraldine Hodgson<sup>4</sup> says that he strikes us as being 'so infinitely superior to Rousseau'. Perhaps the point in the latter's practice—as distinguished from his theory—which irrevocably repels many readers, is his want of feeling. He has plenty to say about emotion, though at times he does not seem to realize how devastating an effect sarcasm can have on most children. Vauvenargues, on the other hand, disillusioned in all his life but, one understands, at least undefeated by the end of it, knew

<sup>1</sup> L. R. de La Chalotais: *Essai d'éducation nationale*, n. pl., 1763.

<sup>2</sup> Condorcet: *Œuvres*, VII, pp. 297–306, 547.

<sup>3</sup> I. L. Kandel: *Comparative Education*, London, 1933.

<sup>4</sup> G. Hodgson: *Studies in French Education*, Cambridge, 1908.

in Hodgson's opinion, 'the place and worth in mortal life of sympathy'. With this introduction one can well understand why it is that Hodgson condemns Rousseau's ideas on the grounds of his behaviour to his own (illegitimate) children, whom he sent to an orphanage; she places Galiani above him as far as the worth of his ideas is concerned. Moreover (this is an aspect of the beliefs of her time rather than a permanent valid comment), she thinks Rousseau unrealistic because he wants equality of opportunity; whereas Galiani, because he teaches that the prime aim is to enable children to bear injustice and boredom, is more highly rated by her. So much for the lecturer in education at Bristol at the beginning of this century!

'Émile' deserves perhaps to be roughly handled in the context of educational realism. The need to assert the natural goodness of man has thrown his whole system out of gear and distorted its emphasis. Consequently Rousseau adopted a highly artificial system, asserting a dichotomy between man and society which has no basis in experience and which immediately destroys the practical possibilities of the treatise. Indeed, Rousseau is forced to admit that egotism is unavoidable in society, and must therefore impose a peculiar isolation on both tutor and child, and to demand of the tutor what only a man with super-human powers of perceptiveness might have. As Bantock points out,<sup>1</sup> interest and a certain natural curiosity do not always have the efficacy which is alleged on their behalf. But despite these criticisms a sense of historical perspective is desirable for a study of 'Émile'; Rousseau has absorbed many of the current ideas on education and modified them to his thesis—getting away from the formalized education which was more Condorcet's idea. We cannot therefore support Francisque Vial's suggestion<sup>2</sup> that Condorcet's ideas came directly from Rousseau's; but then she considers 'Émile' to be the greatest treatise on education ever written in France and possibly elsewhere, greater than Locke's work and the basis for all developments in the Revolution. Condorcet, to her, has just put forward the practical application of Rousseau's ideas.

Although at the time of the Revolution there was considerable regret at the shortage of primary schools in France, it was felt that there were other more pressing things to attend to—a feeling which did much to inhibit any progress for some years—and it is for this reason that we find that there is no mention of education as a right in the Declaration of the Rights of Man (the United Nations have at least improved on this). Education was first written into the Constitution in 1791. Illiteracy was rife in certain areas of France; when Turgot came to the Limoges area, he found that the only way he could establish relations with the parish was to write to the priest, the only man who could read or write there. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, the situation was not all black. On

<sup>1</sup> G. H. Bantock: '“Émile” Reconsidered', in the *British Journal of Educational Studies*, II, no. 1 (November, 1953).

<sup>2</sup> F. Vial: *La doctrine d'éducation de J.-J. Rousseau*, Paris, 1920.

the eve of the Revolution there were twenty-two universities in France, of which the oldest were at Paris, Toulouse and Montpellier, all thirteenth-century foundations. The later provincial universities were frequently ahead of the capital in their amenities (law being a case in point). Although the Jesuits had been formally expelled from France in 1762, their colleges had not been closed, and these added to the total of colleges in the country. It is estimated that in 1789 one in every 382 people in France was in a college, or one in every 31 of student age.<sup>1</sup> However, the colleges were commonest in the north, east and Paris areas, perhaps because in the south the village was less a normal aspect of the community. This, then, was the situation facing the Revolution. The Cahiers of 1789 summarized the aspirations of educationalists from the preceding few years, demanding a state system of education, the expansion of technical and medical schooling, and the provision of a wide realm of instruction for children. All the works published in the first few years of the Revolution agree on the fundamental aim to serve the development of society at the same time as that of the individual. But when the Constituent Assembly abolished the old régime in the administrative and political spheres, it did not touch education until the first enquiry of 1791 was instituted. This was unfinished, and thus between 1789 and the middle of 1793 there was not a single law passed relating to educational organization, partly owing to the struggle between the Gironde and the Montagne factions in the Assembly. Thus Talleyrand's report, substituting for class instruction a course-instruction system, was not even considered.

Condorcet's contribution to the development in France must necessarily be seen, not in the terms of a theoretical elaboration in the mould of Rousseau, but in those of a practical, administratively viable system. It is not enough to maintain, as Vial does,<sup>2</sup> that he owed his inspiration to Rousseau; for in this we would overlook the gulf which separates the theories of 'Émile', at best inapplicable save by a momentous development in the thought of educationalists and the workings of time on society's view of the educational enterprise, at worst the dreams of yet another intellect caught up in the Romantic fallacy, from the realistic appeal to the foundations of French Revolutionary society. Condorcet was not a member of the Constituent Assembly; but in the first years of the Revolution he made good use of his time in what cannot be described as less than a deeply altruistic piece of educational research, at the end of which he published the immense fruits in five mémoires, 'Sur l'instruction publique'.<sup>3</sup> These are at the same time philosophical works, devoted to the meaning and purpose of education in his time and the time which he saw before him, and sociological planning for the development of education.

<sup>1</sup> C. Fourrier: *L'enseignement français de l'antiquité à la Révolution*, Paris, 1964.

<sup>2</sup> F. Vial: *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> Condorcet: *Œuvres*, pp. 167-448.



However, it is less with these researches in their entirety than with Condorcet's own résumé of them that we should concern ourselves. After the shelving of Talleyrand's report, the Legislative Assembly was still no less urgently concerned with the need for a reform in the national educational system, and charged Condorcet and his committee with the task of presenting a new report. Demonstrating less that he was an imaginative man drawing profit from a happy chance of circumstances in order to turn his hand to the theory of education than that he was a thinker of depth armed with the fruit of an earlier call to the subject, Condorcet discharged his responsibility with a summary of his researches.<sup>1</sup> It was his and France's misfortune that his report arrived at a critical moment; concerned with a declaration of war against Prussia, the Assembly had little time to devote to the report, and it met almost the same fate as Talleyrand's.

'To offer all individuals of the human race the means to provide for their needs, to ensure their well-being, to know and exercise their rights, to understand and fulfil their duties, to ensure for each one the faculty of perfecting his industry, to render himself capable of the social functions to which he has the right to be called, to develop the whole range of talents with which nature has endowed him, and by this means to establish between all citizens an equality of fact and to realize the political equality recognized by the law—this must be the first goal of a national educational system.'<sup>2</sup>

Before opening his report proper with these words, Condorcet discussed the need for a system of education at some length.<sup>3</sup> He pointed out that servitude and ignorance go hand in hand, that an educated people follows responsible and enlightened leaders, while an ignorant people is easily duped by rogues.<sup>4</sup> Even if the law conserves their liberty, the people must know which man is capable of maintaining the law, or else must come to depend entirely upon one man or one class. Is it therefore not necessary that there should be two classes, those who lead and are free and those who depend and are not? Often the very institutions which have seemed to defend liberty have endangered it, laid open society to tyranny in the guise of popular rulers.<sup>5</sup> The maintenance of liberty requires a degree of education proportionate to the needs of the citizens, and a perfection of teaching methods to enable the material which can practically be taught to approach more closely to these needs—for it is clear that the average man cannot devote as much time to study as a brilliant scholar can.

Equality of minds is a chimaera, but equality of opportunity, to develop such talent as one has, should not be.<sup>6</sup> This, equally, should

<sup>1</sup> *Rapport et Projet de Décret—Œuvres*, pp. 449 to end of Vol. VII.

<sup>2</sup> *Œuvres*, VII, p. 449.

<sup>3</sup> *Sur la nécessité de l'instruction publique, Œuvres*, VII, p. 439 f.

<sup>4</sup> *Œuvres*, VII, p. 439.

<sup>5</sup> Condorcet: *Œuvres*, VII, p. 440.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 441–2.

naturally be independent of any other force, in order that the greatest level of achievement may be possible. It is necessary to establish specialist schools open to all, in order that the future teachers of pupils in such schools may also be taught to the highest possible degree. Corporate bodies of learning are not a danger, as some people fear; their value may be computed by the fact that they enable less well-off students to publish and pursue their research.<sup>1</sup>

All previous developments in education, although they opened it to a greater number (even, for example, the development of printing), still kept it to a select class, and thus consistently consolidated the hold of the minority over the majority.<sup>2</sup> Democracy can be maintained only if the people understand what the freedom is which they would preserve, and a knowledge of the basic law is not enough unless they can also apply it. Finally, wider knowledge will provide a more plentiful source of experts to ensure the economic development and security of the nation.

Condorcet continues his report with a further statement of its aims. He says it must direct teaching in such a manner that the perfection of the arts augments the happiness of the mass of citizens and the comfort of those who cultivate these arts, so that a greater number of men may become competent to exercise the functions which are necessary to society, and in order that a constantly growing number of informed men may open up a source of help in our needs, remedies in our difficulties, and means to the greater individual happiness and general good. Education must finally cultivate in each generation the physical faculties, the intellectual and moral ones, contribute to this goal towards which every society should aspire. It is the duty of the government to provide such an education for its people.<sup>3</sup>

We see that Condorcet's first reasons—that ignorance would compromise the idealism of the Revolution—are in essence the same as those of Talleyrand. And although in general his ideas seem liberal, it was perfectly feasible for Compayré<sup>4</sup> to pick out one part of the work—where Condorcet says that those sons of families which can dispense with their earning power should continue their education—as a denial of actual equality for all; however, this must be seen as a substantial perversion of the intent of the text which was made in a time when equality was almost a dirty word. Nonetheless, Compayré picks a point which does not seem altogether without justification—that it is exceptionally difficult to educate every man to such a point that he is no longer dependent upon others in some measure. But this is not the point—for we are concerned more with the basic essentials of the system than with the higher reaches of knowledge; Condorcet speaks, it is true,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 443–4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 445–6.

<sup>3</sup> Condorcet: *Œuvres*, VII, p. 450.

<sup>4</sup> G. Compayré: *Histoire critique des doctrines de l'éducation en France depuis le XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, 1879.



of mathematical possibilities rather than realities in an industrialized nation, but he is no fool.

The importance of education is of a nature at once both political and moral—political, because education alone can ensure that liberty is not accorded which conflicts with the well-being of the community; moral, because vice was in Condorcet's view a form of relaxation from boredom in spare time, which could be avoided by the furnishing of intellectual rather than sensual pursuits.<sup>1</sup> In short, the basic task of the popular educator is to replace the sensation by the idea. Condorcet, in common with most men of his time, believes in human perfectibility; he feels that providing at least primary education will put within everyone's reach the chance to develop his talent—for he feels that much talent was at present lost by the lack of channels through which to exploit it. He feels that what intellect we possess we pass on to our descendants—not entirely true, perhaps, but it is still important that the environment for a child should be one of enquiry and learning.

If stabilization of liberal politics, development of the rights of man and equality of the individuals, moralization of the people and social progress without limit are what Condorcet expects from education, what structure does he envisage in order to fulfil this promise? He draws first a fine but important distinction between education and instruction—a point to be borne in mind is that throughout this essay the word education is used to translate 'instruction'—by saying that instruction is the instilling of knowledge, whereas education is instilling belief.<sup>2</sup> So on the question of the State's part in this he maintains that, if the State believes it is competent to deal with instruction, it should recognize its incompetence to deal with matters of education—that is, it should not abuse its power by endeavouring to force upon the citizens a political, religious or moral creed other than where morality is consistent with and necessary to the good of the community. The Constitution, in recognizing for each the right to choose his own religious practices, does not allow the introduction of a system of education which would give to certain dogmas an advantage contrary to liberty of opinion. It is therefore necessary to separate rigorously from morals the principles of all particular religions and admit to education no religious cult. The State's power, in other words, should end on the threshold of the conscience; it should not invade the rights of parents to choose for the upbringing of their children the beliefs which they believe to be fundamental. Similarly, in sharp contrast to La Chalotais, Condorcet says that the Constitution should be taught as an historical fact, but not as a sacred and immutable revelation.<sup>3</sup> Compayré, again, mistrusts this excessive liberalism, and maintains that a little superstition is a good thing to ensure the life of a constitution.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Condorcet: *op. cit.* note on pp. 464–5.

<sup>2</sup> Condorcet: *Œuvres*, VII, p. 200 f.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211

<sup>4</sup> G. Compayré: *op. cit.*

Condorcet says that education should be equally available for men and women—partly to spur on the men, one suspects, but also so that the women may not only pass on the knowledge which they have gained to their children, but also enjoy equally the freedom which the constitution safeguards for them in the law. Compayré, again, says that this fails to recognize the essential differences between the sexes, and he thinks, quite misguidedly, that Condorcet is not one ‘of those who would claim for women the equal right to participate in public offices’. He is wrong, of course; Condorcet meant precisely what he said when he spoke of equality of opportunity for women as well as men. Compayré invites disbelief in his criticism by claiming that women are not anywhere near as intelligent as men, and that they cannot develop what intelligence they have got because of what nature has destined to be their function (not, be it added, because man has seen fit to prevent them from developing it). However, Condorcet does approve the idea that women must be educated as natural educators of their children,<sup>1</sup> as intellectual companions for their husbands and as spurs to men’s own intellectual progress;<sup>2</sup> he also makes it plain that equality is not qualified by one’s sex. He wants co-education, so that the girls in a class may spur on the boys by their wish to impress or by their need to emulate should the girls actually turn out to be better;<sup>3</sup> Compayré maintains that this may be all right for the lower classes, but it would never do for the upper ranks. In his time, however, there was no admission that women were equal in rights or abilities—an idea which, although in question still, is more acceptable to us.

Condorcet proposes five degrees of education<sup>4</sup> (not three as most critics seem to think). They are the primary or elementary school, in which the basic necessities will be taught, and the secondary school in which these will be developed and some moral science will be added (these are generally classed as one stage, although Condorcet makes it clear that they are separate stages). Then there will be the institutes, for classical studies (basically, what he means by this is not Classics, but studies of the same order as what was then taught in various secondary schools, whether arts or sciences), and they will be followed by the lycées; what he means by these is not what they have been most times, that is secondary schools, but a sort of college on the American system, or an undergraduate college. The last level, which is ignored by most critics to give them their three stages, is the National Society of Sciences and Arts, to replace the académies which had existed up to then; one might regard this as a set of graduate colleges, and it could be seen in the I.N.S.A. or other higher polytechnics in present-day France. As far as the distribution of these is concerned<sup>5</sup> (and it is as much in this as

<sup>1</sup> Condorcet: *Œuvres*, VII, p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 453.

<sup>5</sup> Condorcet: *Œuvres*, VII (*Projet de décret*), pp. 529 ff.

in the whole system that Condorcet shows that his plan is a finished article), there will be a primary school for each village and hamlet of more than 400 inhabitants, and a village school in any community more than 6000 feet from any such school; the estimated number of these is 31,000. There will be one secondary elementary school for each district and town of more than 4000 inhabitants (estimated total 2100). There will be at least one institute for each department, but Condorcet envisaged a total of 110 and laid down in an appendix<sup>1</sup> where they were to be, with alternative towns if desired by the Assembly. There would be nine lycées in the 'most learned towns', which may seem rather a small number of universities by present-day standards, but which at the time would probably have been sufficient for the next few decades. Finally the S.N.S.A. was to be divided into four académies<sup>2</sup> (it was not stated where it was to be, but half the staff were to reside in Paris, the rest in the provinces; now the I.N.S.A. is in fact in Lyon); they were to be for mathematics and the natural sciences, for moral and political sciences, for sciences applied to the arts, and for the liberal and fine arts.

On the question of priorities, Condorcet saw that elementary education could for the time being be detached and developed individually, while such people as could benefit immediately from higher education (which, he says, cannot clearly yet be open to all), should as far as possible not be excluded from it, although it would not in the first stage be dealt with as so urgent as the provision of elementary education. The administrative section of the educational system should be answerable only to the elected representatives of the people, as this is the least corruptible higher organization. Condorcet asserts the principle that education is useful to all walks of life, to remove the greatest dependence of the people on the few rather than on the law, and therefore regards the first stage as of the utmost urgency.<sup>3</sup> It should be independent of anything inhibiting its development or the teaching of ideas contrary to those of the government or other force—in other words, it need not teach a lack of criticism of the government or constitution. As the primary stage was to be established at once, Condorcet laid down its nature and syllabus in greatest detail, for the essentials for the enjoyment of civil rights and the discharge of simple public offices such as jury service or the lower grades of the civil service. There should be instruction in reading, writing and simple grammatical notions, arithmetic, particularly measurement, environmental studies, morals and the basis of social studies.<sup>4</sup> It should be a four year course, from 7 to 11 (be it noted that this is what the French system was until about five years ago). There should be an open course for all citizens on Sundays

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 554–7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 501.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit. (Rapport)*, p. 451.

<sup>4</sup> Condorcet: *Œuvres*, VII, p. 229, p. 530.

in civics. No law, not even the Rights of Man, would be presented as sacred, but merely as the development so far of reason (and therefore susceptible of alteration by further developments of reason). The further study course on Sundays would prevent the effacing of what had previously been learnt at school for those who do not go further and would keep this knowledge up to date as well as enabling the people to pursue their studies on their own. There would of course also be (a thing which is sadly neglected in the French system in many ways) some physical education at this stage of schooling.<sup>1</sup>

The secondary schools were to be staffed according to their size; their syllabus was to include mathematics at a higher level, biology, chemistry, moral and social sciences, as well as commerce. There would be weekly public lectures at this level also, and the school would provide a small library as well as laboratory facilities. Condorcet defends this weekly lecture on the grounds that with forty or fifty a year one can learn a great deal, and they might repeat every other year. They would thus inhibit the decline of the individual into an unthinking machine even if that is what his job requires of him.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, interest would inhibit boredom (and he, as I implied with the opening paragraphs, should know); this he regarded as 'the chiefest cause of immoral or criminal behaviour'.<sup>3</sup>

Writing in 1889, Gréard<sup>4</sup> remarks about the foundation nine years before of a school for girls that the movement was a bit overdue in its effect. He points out that Condorcet had advocated this and that the Constituent Assembly had embodied this principle in its laws. And it was nearly ninety years before a law was passed which really established them. This characterizes the fate of Condorcet's report, which was never publicly debated. United in a political crisis when the report arrived, the Assembly was more concerned with arresting the king and proclaiming a republic at the time, and it was not until nine months later that a new committee presented a report embodying the recommendations for primary education outlined above. It was passed without comment, but as for the rest it was surrounded by argument after argument, plan after plan, and never really got off the ground. Caught up in the political turmoil of the Terror, Condorcet fled from the threat of arrest for associating with proscribed men. Slowly he made his way towards Fontenay, until hunger made him enter a village for food. He had no papers; legend has it that he asked for an omelette, and when asked how many eggs he said a dozen. He died in prison while awaiting trial; perhaps he killed himself. He is remembered as a mathematician, except that in a few towns there is a Lycée Condorcet, the origin of whose name the pupils probably do not know.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 458.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 191-2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 464.

<sup>4</sup> O. Gréard: *Éducation et instruction*, Paris, 1889 (Vol. II).