

1 Many Sana m Corpore Sano
is a short but full description of a happy
state. he who has these two has little
more to wish for & he who wants either
of them is but little better for anything
else. Men's happiness or misery is
most part of their own making. He
whose mind directly not wisely will never
take the right way, & he whose body is craz-
zy & feeble will never be able to maintain
it. I confess there are some men
contributions of body & mind so vigor-
ous & well framed by nature that they
need not much assistance from others
but by the strength of their natural genius
are from their cradles carried towards
to is excellent & by the ^{vigour} ~~strength~~ of their
contributions are able to do wonders but
these examples are but few, & I think

Facsimile page of the original draft of
Some Thoughts concerning Education.

SOME THOUGHTS CONCERNING EDUCATION

(Including Of the Conduct of the Understanding)

John Locke

Edited by
John William Adamson

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BOOKS ON LOCKE AND HIS PERIOD

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SOME THOUGHTS CONCERNING
EDUCATION

THE text here followed is that of the first edition, supplemented by passages from later editions which are historically interesting, or of special educational value at the present time: such passages are enclosed in square brackets. Summaries of insertions in later editions are here printed in italic type. Sections 3-28 deal with the care of health; modern medical opinion does not endorse all their recommendations, and they are therefore represented here by Locke's summary, sections 29, 30. The sections are numbered as in the latest editions, for convenience of reference. It has not been thought advisable to retain the original spelling and punctuation.

Locke's original draft, which extends to sections 1 to 166 only, was acquired by the British Museum in 1913 from a descendant of Edward Clarke. It is Additional MS. 38,771, "Some Directions concerning ye Education of his son sent to his worthy Freind, Mr. Edward Clarke of Chipley, 1684." The manuscript contains one hundred pages, each measuring $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches by $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Apologizing for the "disjoynted parts" observable in "these papers," Locke continues, "I began them before my ramble this sommer about these provinces and thinking it convenient you should have them as soon as might be, I writ severall parts of them as stay gave me leasure and oportunity any where in my journey soe yt [that] great distance of place and time intervening between the severall parts often broke the thread of my thoughts and discourse and therefor you must not wonder if yt they be not well put together and yis must be my excuse for ye faults in ye method, order and connection."

TO
EDWARD CLARKE,
OF
CHIPLEY, Esq.;

SIR,

These Thoughts concerning Education, which now come abroad into the world, do of right belong to you, being written several years since for your sake, and are no other than what you have already by you in my letters. I have so little varied any thing, but only the order of what was sent you at different times, and on several occasions, that the reader will easily find, in the familiarity and fashion of the style, that they were rather the private conversation of two friends, than a discourse designed for public view.

The importunity of friends is the common apology for publications men are afraid to own themselves forward to. But you know I can truly say, that if some, who, having heard of these papers of mine, had not pressed to see them, and afterwards to have them printed, they had lain dormant still in that privacy they were designed for. But those whose judgment I defer much to, telling me, that they were persuaded, that this rough draft of mine might be of some use, if made more public, touched upon what will always be very prevalent with me: for I think it every man's indispensable duty, to do all the service he can to his country; and I see not what difference he puts between himself and his cattle, who lives without that thought. This subject is of so great concernment, and a right way of education is of so general advantage, that did I find my abilities answer my wishes, I should not have needed exhortations or importunities from others. However, the meanness of these papers, and my just distrust of them, shall not keep me, by the shame

of doing so little, from contributing my mite, when there is no more required of me than my throwing it into the public receptacle. And if there be any more of their size and notions, who liked them so well, that they thought them worth printing, I may flatter myself they will not be lost labour to every body.

I myself have been consulted of late by so many, who profess themselves at a loss how to breed their children, and the early corruption of youth is now become so general a complaint, that he cannot be thought wholly impertinent, who brings the consideration of this matter on the stage, and offers something, if it be but to excite others, or afford matter for correction; for errors in education should be less indulged than any. These, like faults in the first concoction, that are never mended in the second or third, carry their afterwards-incorrigible taint with them through all the parts and stations of life.

I am so far from being conceited of anything I have here offered, that I should not be sorry, even for your sake, if some one abler and fitter for such a task would in a just treatise of education, suited to our English gentry, rectify the mistakes I have made in this, it being much more desirable to me, that young gentlemen should be put into (that which every one ought to be solicitous about) the best way of being formed and instructed, than that my opinion should be received concerning it. You will, however, in the meantime bear me witness, that the method here proposed has had no ordinary effects upon a gentleman's son¹ it was not designed for. I will not say the good temper of the child did not very much contribute to it; but this I think you and the parents are satisfied of, that a contrary usage, according to the ordinary disciplining of

¹ A reference, perhaps, to Francis Cudworth Masham (b. 1686), son of Sir Francis Masham, the owner of Oates, Locke's home from 1691.

children, would not have mended that temper, nor have brought him to be in love with his book, to take a pleasure in learning, and to desire, as he does, to be taught more than those about him think fit always to teach him.

But my business is not to recommend this treatise to you, whose opinion of it I know already; nor it to the world, either by your opinion or patronage. The well educating of their children is so much the duty and concern of parents, and the welfare and prosperity of the nation so much depends on it, that I would have every one lay it seriously to heart; and after having well examined and distinguished what fancy, custom, or reason advises in the case, set his helping hand to promote that way in the several degrees of men, which is the easiest, shortest, and likeliest to produce virtuous, useful, and able men in their distinct callings. Though that most to be taken care of is the gentleman's calling;¹ for if those of that rank are by their education once set right, they will quickly bring all the rest into order.

I know not whether I have done more than shewn my good wishes towards it in this short discourse; such as it is, the world now has it, and if there be any thing in it worth their acceptance, they owe their thanks to you for it. My affection to you gave the first rise to it, and I am pleased, that I can leave to posterity this mark of the friendship that has been between us. For I know no greater pleasure in this life, nor a better remembrance to be left behind one, than a long-continued friendship with an honest, useful, and worthy man, and lover of his country.

I am, Sir,

Your most humble and most faithful servant.

¹ A phrase reminiscent of such "courtesy" books as *The Gentleman's Calling* (1659), *The Lady's Calling*, *The Courtier's Calling*. See Introduction.

SOME THOUGHTS CONCERNING EDUCATION

1. A SOUND mind in a sound body, is a short but full description of a happy state in this world: he that has these two, has little more to wish for; and he that wants either of them, will be but little the better for any thing else. Men's happiness or misery is most part of their own making. He whose mind directs not wisely, will never take the right way; and he whose body is crazy and feeble, will never be able to advance in it. I confess there are some men's constitutions of body and mind so vigorous and well framed by nature, that they need not much assistance from others, but by the strength of their natural genius, they are from their cradles carried towards what is excellent; and, by the privilege of their happy constitutions are able to do wonders. But examples of these are but few; and I think I may say that, of all the men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education. 'Tis that which makes the great difference in mankind. The little, and almost insensible impressions on our tender infancies, have very important and lasting consequences; and there 'tis, as in the fountains of some rivers, where a gentle application of the hand turns the flexible waters into channels, that make them take quite contrary courses; and by this little direction, given them at first in the source, they receive different tendencies, and arrive at last at very remote and distant places.

2. *Health*.—I imagine the minds of children, as easily turned, this or that way, as water itself; and though this be the principal part, and our main care should be about the inside, yet the clay cottage is not to be

neglected. I shall therefore begin with the case, and consider first the health of the body, as that which perhaps you may rather expect, from that study I have been thought more peculiarly to have applied myself to;¹ and that also, which will be soonest dispatched, as lying, if I guess not amiss, in a very little compass.

Sections 3 to 28 treat of health. For reasons already given, they are replaced by the author's summary, section 30; but sections 6 and 9 are retained for their references to girls. See note on p. 21.

6. I have said *he* here, because the principal aim of my discourse is, how a young gentleman should be brought up from his infancy, which in all things will not so perfectly suit the education of daughters; though, where the difference of sex requires different treatment, 'twill be no hard matter to distinguish.

9. *Air*.—Another thing that is of great advantage to every one's health, but especially children's, is, to be much in the open air, and very little, as may be, by the fire, even in winter. By this he will accustom himself also to heat and cold, shine and rain; all which if a man's body will not endure, it will serve him to very little purpose in this world: and when he is grown up, it is too late to begin to use him to it: it must be got early and by degrees. Thus the body may be brought to bear almost anything. If I should advise him to play in the wind and sun without a hat, I doubt whether it could be borne. There would a thousand objections be made against it, which at last would amount to no more, in truth, than being sun-burnt. And if my young master be to be kept always in the shade, and never exposed to the sun and wind, for fear of his complexion, it may be a good way to make him a beau, but not a man of business.²

¹ Cf. sec. 29. Locke practised medicine at Oxford in 1667, and in London with his friend, Dr. Sydenham, between that year and 1670. Though commonly known as "Dr. Locke," he never proceeded beyond the M.B. degree.

² *I.e.*, a man of affairs.

And although greater regard be to be had to beauty in the daughters, yet I will take the liberty to say, that the more they are in the air, without prejudices to their faces, the stronger and healthier they will be; and the nearer they come to the hardships of their brothers in their education, the greater advantage will they receive from it all the remaining part of their lives.¹

29. *Physic*.—This is all I have to trouble you with, concerning his management, in the ordinary course of his health; and perhaps it will be expected from me, that I should give some directions of physic, to prevent diseases: for which, I have only this one very sacredly to be observed: Never to give children any physic for prevention. The observation of what I have already advised, will, I suppose, do that better than apothecary's drugs and medicines. Have a great care of tampering that way, lest, instead of preventing, you draw on diseases. Nor even upon every little indisposition is physic to be given, or the physician to be called to children; especially if he be a busy man, that will presently fill their windows with gally-pots, and their stomachs with drugs. It is safer to leave them wholly to nature, than to put them into the hands of one forward to tamper, or that thinks children are to be cured in ordinary distempers, by anything but diet, or by a method very little distant from it. It seeming suitable both to my reason and experience, that the tender constitutions of children should have as little done to them as is possible, and as the absolute necessity of the case requires. A little cold-stilled red poppy-water, which is the true surfeit-water, with ease and abstinence from flesh, often puts an end to several distempers in the beginning, which, by too forward applications, might have been made lusty diseases. When such a gentle treatment will not stop the growing mischief, but that it will turn into a formed disease, it will be time to seek the advice of some sober and discreet physician. In this part, I hope, I shall find an easy belief; and nobody can have a pretence to doubt the advice of one, who has spent some

¹ Cf. end of secs. 119 and 165.

time in the study of physic, when he counsels you not to be too forward in making use of physic and physicians.

30. And thus I have done with what concerns the body and health, which reduces itself to these few and easily observable rules. Plenty of open air, exercise, and sleep; plain diet, no wine or strong drink, and very little or no physic; not too warm and strait clothing; especially the head and feet kept cold, and the feet often used to cold water and exposed to wet.

31. *Mind.*—Due care being had to keep the body in strength and vigour, so that it may be able to obey and execute the orders of the mind: the next and principal business is, to set the mind right, that on all occasions it may be disposed to do nothing but what may be suitable to the dignity and excellency of a rational creature.

32. If what I have said in the beginning of this discourse be true, as I do not doubt but it is, viz. that the difference to be found in the manners and abilities of men, is owing more to their education than to any thing else; we have reason to conclude, that great care is to be had of the forming children's minds, and giving them that seasoning early, which shall influence their lives always after. For when they do well or ill, the praise or blame will be laid there: and when any thing is done untowardly, the common saying will pass upon them, that it is suitable to their breeding.

33. As the strength of the body lies chiefly in being able to endure hardships, so also does that of the mind. And the great principle and foundation of all virtue and worth is placed in this, that a man is able to deny himself his own desires, cross his own inclinations, and purely follow what reason directs as best, though the appetite lean the other way.

34. *Early.*—The great mistake I have observed in people's breeding their children has been, that this has not been taken care enough of in its due season; that the mind has not been made obedient to rules, and pliant to reason, when at first it was most tender, most easy to be bowed. Parents being wisely ordained by nature to

love their children, are very apt, if reason watch not that natural affection very warily; are apt, I say, to let it run into fondness.¹ They love their little ones, and 'tis their duty: but they often with them cherish their faults too. They must not be crossed, forsooth; they must be permitted to have their wills in all things; and they being in their infancies not capable of great vices, their parents think they may safely enough indulge their little irregularities, and make themselves sport with that pretty perverseness, which they think well enough becomes that innocent age. But to a fond parent, that would not have his child corrected for a perverse trick, but excused it, saying it was a small matter; Solon very well replied, 'Ay, but custom is a great one.'²

35. The fondling must be taught to strike, and call names; must have what he cries for, and do what he pleases. Thus parents, by humouring and cockering them when little, corrupt the principles of nature in their children, and wonder afterwards to taste the bitter waters, when they themselves have poisoned the fountain. For when their children are grown up, and these ill habits with them; when they are now too big to be dandled, and their parents can no longer make use of them as playthings; then they complain, that the brats are untoward and perverse; then they are offended to see them wilful, and are troubled with those ill humours, which they themselves inspired and cherished in them. And then, perhaps too late, would be glad to get out those weeds which their own hands have planted, and which now have taken too deep root to be easily extirpated. For he that has been used to have his will in every thing, as long as he was in coats, why should we think it strange that he should desire it, and contend for it still, when he is in breeches? Indeed, as he grows more towards a man, age shows his faults the more, so that there be few parents then so blind, as not to see them; few so insensible as

¹ *I.e.*, foolishness.

² Quoted by Montaigne in the essay, *De la Coustume*, i., chap. xxii.

not to feel the ill effects of their own indulgence. He had the will of his maid before he could speak or go; he had the mastery of his parents ever since he could prattle; and why, now he is grown up, is stronger and wiser than he was then, why now of a sudden must he be restrained and curbed? Why must he at seven, fourteen, or twenty years old, lose the privilege which the parents' indulgence, till then, so largely allowed him? Try it in a dog, or an horse, or any other creature, and see whether the ill and resty¹ tricks they have learned when young, are easily to be mended when they are knit: and yet none of those creatures are half so wilful and proud, or half so desirous to be masters of themselves and others, as man.

36. We are generally wise enough to begin with them, when they are very young, and discipline betimes those other creatures we would make useful to us. They are only our own offspring, that we neglect in this point; and having made them ill children, we foolishly expect they should be good men. For if the child must have grapes, or sugar-plums, when he has a mind to them, rather than make the poor baby cry, or be out of humour, why, when he is grown up, must he not be satisfied too, if his desires carry him to wine or women? They are objects as suitable to the longing of one of more years, as what he cried for, when little, was to the inclinations of a child. The having desires suitable to the apprehensions and relish of those several ages, is not the fault; but the not having them subject to the rules and restraints of reason: the difference lies not in the having or not having appetites, but in the power to govern, and deny our selves in them. And he that is not used to submit his will to the reason of others, when he is young, will scarce hearken or submit to his own reason, when he is of an age to make use of it. And what a kind of a man such an one is like to prove, is easy to foresee.

Section 37.—Parents, by example and incitement, commonly teach children to be violent, to love finery, to lie and be gluttonous. Cf. Section 116.

¹ Restive, restless.

38.¹ *Craving.*—It seems plain to me, that the principle of all virtue and excellency lies in a power of denying our selves the satisfaction of our own desires, where reason does not authorize them. This power is to be got and improved by custom, made easy and familiar by an early practice. If therefore I might be heard, I would advise, that, contrary to the ordinary way, children should be used to submit their desires, and go without their longings, even from their very cradles. The first thing they should learn to know, should be, that they were not to have anything, because it pleased them, but because it was thought fit for them. If things suitable to their wants were supplied to them, so that they were never suffered to have what they once cried for, they would learn to be content without it; would never with bawling and peevishness contend for mastery; nor be half so uneasy to themselves and others as they are, because from the first beginning they are not thus handled. If they were never suffered to obtain their desire by the impatience they expressed for it, they would no more cry for other things than they do for the moon.

39. I say not this, as if children were not to be indulged in any thing, or that I expected they should, in hanging sleeves, have the reason and conduct of counsellors. I consider them as children that must be tenderly used, that must play, and have playthings. That which I mean is, that whenever they craved what was not fit for them to have, or do, they should not be permitted it, because they were little and desired it: nay, whatever they were importunate for, they should be sure, for that very reason, to be denied. I have seen children at a table, who, whatever was there, never asked for anything, but contentedly took what was given them; and at another place, I have seen others cry for every thing they saw, must be served out of every dish, and that first too. What made this vast difference, but this; that one was accustomed to have what they called or cried for, the other to go without it? The younger they are, the less, I think,

¹ Sec. 37 in first edition.

are their unruly and disorderly appetites to be complied with; and the less reason they have of their own, the more are they to be under the absolute power and restraint of those, in whose hands they are. From which I confess, it will follow, that none but discreet people should be about them. If the world commonly does otherwise, I cannot help that: I am saying what I think should be; which, if it were already in fashion, I should not need to trouble the world with a discourse on this subject. But yet I doubt not, but when it is considered, there will be others of opinion with me, that the sooner this way is begun with children, the easier it will be for them, and their governors too. And that this ought to be observed as an inviolable maxim, that whatever once is denied them, they are certainly not to obtain by crying or importunity; unless one has a mind to teach them to be impatient and troublesome, by rewarding them for it, when they are so.

40. *Early*.—Those therefore that intend ever to govern their children, should begin it whilst they are very little; and look that they perfectly comply with the will of their parents. Would you have your son obedient to you, when past a child? Be sure then to establish the authority of a father, as soon as he is capable of submission, and can understand in whose power he is. If you would have him stand in awe of you, imprint it in his infancy; and, as he approaches more to a man, admit him nearer to your familiarity: so shall you have him your obedient subject (as is fit) whilst he is a child, and your affectionate friend when he is a man. For methinks they mightily misplace the treatment due to their children, who are indulgent and familiar when they are little, but severe to them, and keep them at a distance when they are grown up. For liberty and indulgence can do no good to children: their want of judgment makes them stand in need of restraint and discipline. And, on the contrary, imperiousness and severity is but an ill way of treating men, who have reason of their own to guide them, unless you have a mind to make your children, when grown up, weary of you; and

secretly to say within themselves, "When will you die, father?"¹

41. I imagine every one will judge it reasonable, that their children, when little, should look upon their parents as their lords, their absolute governors; and, as such, stand in awe of them: and that, when they come to riper years, they should look on them as their best, as their only sure friends; and, as such, love and reverence them. The way I have mentioned, if I mistake not, is the only one to obtain this. We must look upon our children, when grown up, to be like ourselves, with the same passions, the same desires. We would be thought rational creatures, and have our freedom; we love not to be uneasy under constant rebukes and brow-beatings; nor can we bear severe humours, and great distance, in those we converse with. Whoever has such treatment when he is a man, will look out other company, other friends, other conversation, with whom he can be at ease. If therefore a strict hand be kept over children from the beginning, they will in that age be tractable, and quietly submit to it, as never having known any other: and if, as they grow up to the use of reason, the rigour of government be, as they deserve it, gently relaxed, the father's brow more smooth to them, and the distance by degrees abated, his former restraints will increase their love, when they find it was only a kindness to them, and a care to make them capable to deserve the favour of their parents, and the esteem of every body else.

42. Thus much for the settling your authority over your children in general. Fear and awe ought to give you the first power over their minds, and love and friendship in riper years to hold it: for the time must come, when they will be past the rod and correction; and then, if the love of you make them not obedient and dutiful, if the love of virtue and reputation keep them not in laudable courses, I ask, what hold will you have

¹ The thought occurs in Montaigne, ii., chap. viii., "On the affection of fathers for their children," with which these earlier sections of the *Thoughts* should be compared.

