

1. James Gordon Clapp, "John Locke" in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 4., ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1967), p. 500.
2. John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. F. W. Garforth (London: Heinemann, 1925), pp. 129-130.

From *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693)

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 everyone 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 everywhere that way of training up youth, with regard to their several conditions, 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. For if those of that rank are by their education once set right, they will quickly bring all the rest into order.

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 anything 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 this kind are but few; and I think I may say that of all the men we meet with nine part 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 or 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 in channels that make them take quite contrary courses; and by this direction given them at first in the source they receive different tendencies and arrive at last at very remote and distant places. . . .

That which every gentleman (that takes any care of his education) desires for his son, besides the estate he leaves him, is contained, I suppose, in these four things, virtue, wisdom, breeding and learning. I will not trouble myself

whether these names do not some of them sometimes stand for the same thing, or really include one another. It serves my turn here to follow the popular use of these words, which, I presume, is clear enough to make me be understood, and I hope there will be no difficulty to comprehend my meaning.

I place virtue as the first and most necessary of those endowments that belong to a man or a gentleman, as absolutely requisite to make him valued and beloved by others, acceptable or tolerable to himself. Without that, I think, he will be happy neither in this nor the other world.

As the foundation of this there ought very early to be imprinted on his mind a true notion of God, as of the independent Supreme Being, Author and Maker of all things, from whom we receive all our good, who loves us and gives us all things. And consequent to this, instil into him a love and reverence of this Supreme Being. This is enough to begin with, without going to explain this matter any farther, for fear lest, by talking too early to him of spirits and being unreasonably forward to make him understand the incomprehensible nature of that Infinite Being, his head be either filled with false or perplexed with unintelligible notions of him. Let him only be told upon occasion that God made and governs all things, hears and sees everything, and does all manner of good to those that love and obey him; you will find that, being told of such a God, other thoughts will be apt to rise up fast enough in his mind about him, which, as you observe them to have any mistakes, you must set right. And I think it would be better if men generally rested in such an idea of God, without being too curious in their notions about a Being which all must acknowledge incomprehensible; whereby many, who have not strength and clearness of thought to distinguish between what they can and what they cannot know, run themselves in superstition or atheism, making God like themselves or, because they cannot comprehend anything else, none at all. And I am apt to think the keeping children constantly morning and evening to acts of devotion to God, as to their Maker, Preserver and Benefactor, in some plain and short form of prayer suitable to their age and capacity will be of much more use to them in religion, knowledge and virtue than to distract their thoughts with curious enquiries into his inscrutable essence and being.

Having laid the foundations of virtue in a true notion of God, such as the creed wisely teaches, as far as his age is capable, and by accustoming him to pray to him, the next thing to be taken care of is to keep him exactly to speaking of truth and by all the ways imaginable inclining him to be good-natured. Let him know that twenty faults are sooner to be forgiven than the straining of truth to cover anyone by an excuse. And to teach him betimes to love and be good-natured to others is to lay early the true foundation of an honest man; all injustice generally springing from too great love of ourselves and too little of others.

Wisdom I take in the popular acceptance for a man's managing his business ably and with foresight in this world. This is the product of a good natural temper, application of mind and experience together, and so above the reach of children. The greatest thing that in them can be done towards it is to hinder

them as much as may be from cunning, which, being the ape of wisdom, is the most distant from it that can be. . . . Cunning is only the want of understanding, which, because it cannot compass its ends by direct ways, would do it by a trick and circumvention; and the mischief of it is, a cunning trick helps but once, but hinders ever after. No cover was ever made so big or so fine as to hide itself; nobody was ever so cunning as to conceal their being so; and when they are once discovered, everybody is shy, everybody distrustful of crafty men; and all the world forwardly join to oppose and defeat them, whilst the open, fair, wise man has everybody to make way for him and goes directly to his business. To accustom a child to have true notions of things and not to be satisfied till he has them, to raise his mind to great and worthy thoughts and to keep him at a distance from falsehood and cunning, which has always a broad mixture of falsehood in it, is the fittest preparation of a child for wisdom. The rest, which is to be learned from time, experience and observation and an acquaintance with men, their tempers and designs, is not to be expected in the ignorance and inadvertency of childhood or the inconsiderate heat and unweariness of youth. All that can be done towards it during this unripe age is, as I have said, to accustom them to truth and sincerity, to a submission to reason and, as much as may be, to reflection on their own actions.

The next good quality belonging to a gentleman is good breeding. There are two sorts of ill breeding, the one a sheepish bashfulness, and the other a misbecoming negligence and disrespect in our carriage; both which are avoided by duly observing this one rule, not to think meanly of ourselves and not to think meanly of others.

The first part of this rule must not be understood in opposition to humility but to assurance. We ought not to think so well of ourselves as to stand upon our own value and assume to ourselves a preference before others because of any advantage we may imagine we have over them, but modestly to take what is offered when it is our due. But yet we ought to think so well of ourselves as to perform those actions which are incumbent on and expected of us without discomposure or disorder in whose presence soever we are, keeping that respect and distance which is due to everyone's rank and quality. There is often in people, especially children, a clownish shamefacedness before strangers or those above them; they are confounded in their thoughts, words and looks, and so lose themselves in that confusion as not to be able to do anything, or at least not to do it with that freedom and gracefulness which pleases and makes them acceptable. The only cure for this, as for any other miscarriage, is by use to introduce the contrary habit. But since we cannot accustom ourselves to converse with strangers and persons of quality without being in their company, nothing can cure this part of ill breeding but change and variety of company and that of persons above us.

As the before-mentioned consists in too great a concern how to behave ourselves towards others, so the other part of ill breeding lies in the appearance of too little care of pleasing or showing respect to those we have to do with. To avoid this, these two things are requisite: first, a disposition of the mind

not to offend others; and secondly, the most acceptable and agreeable way of expressing that disposition. From the one men are called civil; from the other well-fashioned. The latter of these is that decency and gracefulness of looks, voice, words, motions, gestures and of all the whole outward demeanor, which takes in company and makes those with whom we may converse easy and well pleased. This is, as it were, the language whereby that internal civility of the mind is expressed; which, as other languages are, being very much governed by the fashion and custom of every country, must, in the rules and practice of it, be learned chiefly from observation and the carriage of those who are allowed to be exactly well-bred. The other part, which lies deeper than the outside, is that general good will and regard for all people, which makes anyone have a care not to show in his carriage any contempt, disrespect or neglect of them, but to express, according to the fashion and way of that country, a respect and value for them according to their rank and condition. It is a disposition of mind that shows itself in the carriage, whereby a man avoids making anyone uneasy in conversation. . . .

You will wonder, perhaps, that I put learning last, especially if I tell you I think it the least part. This may seem strange in the mouth of a bookish man; and this making usually the chief, if not only, bustle and stir about children, this being almost that alone which is thought on when people talk of education, makes it the greater paradox. When I consider what ado is made about a little Latin and Greek, how many years are spent in it and what a noise and business it makes to no purpose, I can hardly forbear thinking that the parents of children still live in fear of the schoolmaster's rod, which they look on as the only instrument of education, as a language or two to be its whole business. How else is it possible that a child should be chained to the oar seven, eight or ten of the best years of his life to get a language or two which, I think, might be had at a great deal cheaper rate of pains and time, and be learned almost in playing?

Forgive me, therefore, if I say I cannot with patience think that a young gentleman should be put into the herd and be driven with a whip and scourge, as if he were to run the gauntlet through the several classes *ad capiendum ingenii cultum*. What then, say you, would you not have him write and read? . . . Not so, not so fast, I beseech you. Reading and writing and learning I allow to be necessary, but yet not the chief business. I imagine you would think him a very foolish fellow that shall not value a virtuous or a wise man infinitely before a great scholar. Not that I think learning a great help to both in well-disposed minds; but yet it must be confessed also that in others not so disposed it helps them only to be the more foolish or worse men. I say this that when you consider the breeding of your son and are looking out for a schoolmaster or a tutor, you would not have (as is usual) Latin and logic only in your thoughts. Learning must be had, but in the second place, as subservient only to greater qualities. Seek out somebody that may know how discreetly to frame his manners; place him in hands where you may, as much as possible, secure his innocence, cherish and nurse up the good, and gently correct and weed out any bad inclinations

and settle in him good habits. This is the main point, and this being provided for, learning may be had into the bargain, and that, as I think, at a very easy rate by methods that may be thought on.

QUESTIONS

1. Why, for Locke, should "errors in education be less indulged in than any"?
2. For Locke, how important is education?
3. Locke is concerned with the education of gentlemen. Do you think that what he says is applicable to the education of gentlewomen?
4. Why do you think Locke focuses on the education of one part of the population?
5. What are the four parts of education?
6. Why is learning the least important part of education for Locke?
7. Do you think Locke's criticisms are applicable to contemporary American educational practices?
8. Describe a Lockean classroom.
9. Respond to the teacher who says she or he has neither the time nor the right to do all of the things Locke recommends.
10. Locke uses the metaphor of the child being "chained to the oar." Do you think that is an appropriate metaphor for describing schooling? Can you think of others?
11. Do you think that a person can be learned but not educated? Do you think that a person can be educated but not learned?