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JOHN LOCKE

(1632–1704)

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John Locke was a great educator on several counts. In an immediate sense he was himself a practitioner and publicist of good education. This profile is concerned with his life in education, his theory of knowledge, his advice to parents on the upbringing of their children, and his educational priorities with specific reference to the curriculum. But Locke also made significant contributions to human understanding in such fields as theology, economics, medicine and science, and particularly political philosophy. This dual prominence places Locke, arguably the most significant educationist in English history, in a long and honourable tradition. As Nathan Tarcov observed: ‘philosophers have been able to stand out in the realms of both educational theory and political theory ever since the two fields of thought first flowed from their common fountainhead, the *Republic* of Plato’ (Tarcov, 1984, p. 1–2).

Seventeenth-century England

In the seventeenth century England experienced two revolutions. In 1649, after years of civil war, the first culminated in the execution of King Charles I of the Stuart family and the establishment of a Commonwealth, replaced in 1653 by a Protectorate under Oliver Cromwell. In 1660 the monarchy was restored under Charles II and, on his death in 1685, the throne passed peaceably enough to his younger brother, James. Once again, however, the country’s parliamentary traditions and Protestant Church were perceived to be in danger. Further resistance to the Stuart monarchy arose and in 1688 a second revolution occurred, though on this occasion James II fled to France, thus avoiding the fate of his father. The throne was assumed by his elder daughter Mary and her husband, Prince William of Orange.

These events must have touched the lives of many, if not all, of those who lived in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales during the seventeenth century. They are integral to an understanding of the life and work of John Locke, who was both a keen observer of, and at times a participant in, the political, constitutional, religious, economic and educational controversies of these momentous times. Indeed, he was closely connected with one of the great politicians of the day, Anthony Ashley Cooper, the first Earl of Shaftesbury.

In 1683 Locke thought it politic to remove himself to the Netherlands, though whether for his political or physical health is not entirely clear. In 1688 he returned to England as a supporter of the new regime and indeed was favoured by William of Orange with the offer of the post of ambassador to the Elector of Brandenburg, a post he refused. Nevertheless, other government appointments followed: as Commissioner of Appeal and member of a new Council of Trade. But the 1690s were important not mainly for Locke’s involvement in politics, but because it was now possible for him to publish his major works, works which in some cases he had been preparing for many years. These included the *Letter concerning toleration* (1689), *An essay concerning human*

understanding (1690), *Two treatises of government* (1690), and the book upon which his reputation as an educator mainly rests, *Some thoughts concerning education*, the first edition of which appeared in 1693 (hereafter referred to as *Thoughts*).

A life in education

John Locke was born on 29 August 1632 at Wrington in the county of Somerset in the south-west of England. His father, also named John, was a lawyer and small landowner who supported Parliament against Charles I and served as a captain in the Parliamentary army during the English civil war. His mother Agnes, the daughter of a local tanner, Edmund Keene, was some ten years older than her husband, and 35 years of age when John, the first of their three sons, was born. It would appear that Locke's father was a stern man (for example an advocate of the severe whipping of unmarried mothers) who did not believe in indulging his son as a child, but in keeping him in awe of his father and at some distance. Whether Locke as a boy appreciated the benefits of this severe regime is not clear. Certainly as an adult he counselled parents to a similar course: 'For, liberty and indulgence can do no good to children: their want of judgement makes them stand in need of restraint and discipline' (*Thoughts*, s. 40). 'He that is not used to submit his will to the reason of others, when he is young, will scarcely hearken or submit to his own reason, when he is of an age to make use of it' (*Thoughts*, s. 36).

Little is known about John Locke's early education, though he doubtless grew up in a bookish household, and it was not until the age of 15, in 1647, that he was sent to Westminster School in London, then under the aegis of one of its most famous headmasters, Dr Richard Busby. Busby's reputation was based upon the length of his tenure of office (some fifty-seven years), his scholarship, his skill as a teacher and his unsparing use of the birch upon recalcitrant boys.

Westminster must have come as a considerable surprise to the young Locke. The physical contrast between the large urban school with more than 200 boys, which stood in the very shadow of Westminster Abbey itself, and the far-reaching landscapes viewed from Belluton, the Locke home in Somerset, which stood above the little market town of Pensford, must have been considerable. Even more disconcerting, perhaps, to one who had been brought up in a strict Puritan and Parliamentary atmosphere, would have been the discovery that Richard Busby was an avowed Royalist, who made no secret of his political sympathies. Indeed, prayers for the King were offered within the school an hour or so before his execution, which took place on 30 January 1649 at Whitehall, only a few hundred meters away.

Locke's studies at Westminster were centred upon the classical languages of Latin and Greek, and he also began to study Hebrew. He was clearly a hardworking boy and in 1650 was elected to a King's scholarship. This gave him the right to free lodgings within the school, and also access to major scholarships at both Oxford and Cambridge. This became Locke's ambition and he took extra lessons with Busby for a fee of £1 per quarter, and spent the summers not in Somerset, but at the under-master's establishment at Chiswick, near London, for the purposes of further study. In 1652 Locke's diligence was rewarded when he was elected to a £20 scholarship to Christ Church, Oxford.

Though Locke no doubt felt gratitude towards Busby and Westminster School for his formal education, and for his entrance to Oxford, other aspects of school life were probably less congenial. The excessively hard academic regime (the day began at 5:15 a.m.), the severe floggings, coupled with the licence which prevailed among the boys outside the periods of formal instruction, appears to have contributed towards Locke's considerable aversion to schools, and a strong preference for private and domestic education. Certainly in 1691 he advised Edward Clarke that if his son's lack of educational progress were a result of a lack of application, one remedy might be to send him: 'to Westminster, or some other very severe school, where if he were whipped soundly whilst you are looking out another fit tutor for him, he would perhaps be the more pliant and

willing to learn at home afterwards' (quoted in Sahakian and Sahakian, 1975, p. 16).

Locke's formal, and no less rigorous, course at Oxford (the day began at 5 a.m.) would have included classics, rhetoric, logic, morals and geometry, and he took his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1656. This was followed by further study for the Master of Arts degree, taken two years later, in June 1658. Other subjects of study with which he was concerned were mathematics, astronomy, history, Hebrew, Arabic, natural philosophy, botany, chemistry and medicine.

Locke saw little point in the traditional scholastic disputations and wranglings that occupied so much of the undergraduate course. Rhetoric and logic, as taught in the Oxford of his day, earned his particular condemnation. Rather was he attracted to aspects of the new learning (including Cartesian rationalism) and from the beginning of his time at Oxford he kept a medical notebook, which began, simply enough, with family medical recipes collected by his mother. This progressed to the reading of the latest medical textbooks and to simple experimentation. The catalogue of his final library shows that of more than 3,600 books, 402 were medical and 240 scientific (Axtell, 1968, p. 71). In December 1658 Locke was elected to a senior studentship at Christ Church, and thereafter was able to broaden the range of his studies. In 1660 he was appointed Lecturer in Greek, and in 1662 Lecturer in Rhetoric. In 1663 he was elected to the office of Censor of Moral Philosophy, one of the senior disciplinary roles in the college.

Locke's work as a tutor was not merely confined to an academic role. Though he himself had been 20 years old when entering the university, the majority of students in his care came at an earlier age, most commonly 16 or 17. One indeed, Charles Berkeley, was only 13. Locke supervised not only their courses of study, and supplied them with individual reading lists according to their abilities and interests, but also exercised guidance in matters of finance and morals.

Locke's concerns for students would have been all the more pointed given that in 1663 he himself must have felt rather alone in the world. By that date both his parents and his two brothers were dead and, in spite of some female attachments, Locke remained a bachelor to his dying day.

In 1667, at the age of 35, Locke left the University of Oxford to take up a post in the household of the Earl of Shaftesbury at Exeter House in London. There his duties were to act as medical adviser to the family and as tutor to Shaftesbury's son, also named Anthony Ashley Cooper, then a somewhat sickly and rather backward boy of 15 or 16. Locke not only fulfilled this task but also arranged young Anthony's marriage to Lady Dorothy Manners, and subsequently attended her during one miscarriage and at the birth of her eldest son, the third Anthony Ashley Cooper, as well as other children.

For some years Locke continued in this role of medical and educational adviser to the family, even after Shaftesbury's death in 1683. He supervised the education of the third Anthony, both through the appointment of a governess, Elizabeth Birch, who could speak both Latin and Greek, and directly himself. Subsequently, the boy attended Westminster School.

Although Locke's medical advice was valued within the Shaftesbury household and outside (in 1675 he received the degree of Bachelor of Medicine from the University of Oxford), his own health was never robust. Locke suffered from asthma, and found London air uncongenial. In the 1670s, while in France for the benefit of his own health, he acted as tutor to Caleb, the son of Sir John Banks, a friend of Shaftesbury. For some two years from 1677, Locke and the young Caleb, who was 15 when he came under Locke's care, travelled in France, with much time spent in Paris.

By the 1680s Locke had gained considerable experience and reputation as a tutor to the sons of the nobility and gentry: at university, in a household and on the grand tour. In Holland from 1683 he was frequently called upon to give advice upon education. From 1687 Locke lived in Rotterdam in the house of his friend Benjamin Furly, who at the time had five children aged between 6 years and 12 months—Benjohan, John, Joanna, Rachel and Arent. No doubt Locke observed them closely and played some part in their upbringing. Indeed, he designed an engraved copy sheet for teaching children to write with Arent in mind.

But the *Thoughts* originated not from Locke's immediate concerns with the children of his

acquaintances in Holland but from a request from an English friend and distant relative, Edward Clarke. Clarke was a landowner who lived at Chipley in Locke's home county of Somerset and who was concerned with the education of his children, particularly his eldest son, also named Edward, who was 8 years old in 1684 when Clarke wrote seeking Locke's advice.

Locke's first letter was written on 19 July 1684 and was received by the Clarkes on 3 August. The letters continued throughout 1685 and 1686, even after 1687 by which time the Clarkes had engaged a tutor for their son. After Locke's return from Holland in 1689 it appears that the Clarkes, and others to whom they had shown the manuscripts, urged Locke to publish them. After much revision, the first edition of *Some thoughts concerning education* duly appeared in July 1693.

Locke's final years from 1691 were spent at Oates, a small Tudor manor house in Essex, just north of Epping Forest, some twenty miles from London. There he lived as a paying guest of Sir Francis and Lady Masham: writing further works on educational, philosophical and political subjects, publishing replies to his critics, visited by his friends, and taking much pleasure and interest in two of the Masham children, Esther and Francis. By this time he was a very famous man, described indeed by Lady Mary Calverley as 'the greatest man in the world' (quoted in Dunn, 1984, p. 4). His final years were painful, afflicted as he was by swelling of the legs and deafness, but his mind and pen remained as active as ever. He died at Oates on 28 October 1704 and was buried in the churchyard of the nearby parish church at High Laver. His epitaph (in Latin) which Locke wrote himself, in free translation begins:

Near this place lies John Locke. If you wonder what kind of man he was, the answer is that he was one contented with his modest lot. A scholar by training, he devoted his studies wholly to the pursuit of truth. Such you may learn from his writings.

All Locke's published works, including those that had been issued anonymously, were bequeathed to the Bodleian Library, Oxford. His personal papers, however, were left to his young cousin Peter King (who subsequently became Lord Chancellor of England) and remained within the family. Some use was made of this material, for example by the seventh Lord King in *The life and letters of John Locke*, published in 1829, and by Richard Aaron in his *John Locke*, the first edition of which appeared in 1937. Not until 1948, however, were these papers open to general access when King's descendant, Lord Lovelace, sold them, to the Bodleian Library. The Lovelace papers, which comprise some 4,000 items, provide substantial biographical material and the most revealing insights into the life and purposes of a rather private, indeed at times secretive, man who, through his public writings, became the leading philosopher and educational thinker in English history.

A theory of knowledge

Although the *Thoughts* was most immediately concerned with education, by far the most important of Locke's writings, and one which had great significance for education, was the *Essay concerning human understanding* (hereafter referred to as the *Essay*). Indeed, Peter Laslett went so far as to claim that 'everything else which he wrote was important because he, Locke of the Human Understanding, had written it' (Laslett, 1960, p. 37–38).

The *Essay* originated in 1671 when, as Locke records in his epistle to the reader, a group of five or six friends met to discuss a point in philosophy. Difficulties arose and Locke proposed a prior inquiry: 'to examine our own abilities, and see what objects our understanding were, or were not, fitted to deal with'. Two preliminary drafts of the work were prepared in 1671, but not until 1686 was the whole *Essay* in anything like final form. The first edition bore the date 1690, although copies were on sale in London and Oxford in December 1689 (Aaron, 1971, p. 55).

Locke's purpose was to examine the nature and extent of human knowledge and the degree

of assent which should be given to any proposition. He began by rejecting the doctrine of innate ideas, associated with Plato, and also in his own day with Descartes; indeed, the first book of the *Essay* was largely devoted to accomplishing this task. Unfortunately, Locke's alternative image of the mind as a 'white paper void of all characters' (*Essay*, 2.1.2) has often been interpreted as meaning that all human beings start as equals. Locke did not believe this; on the contrary, he was conscious that the differing personalities and mental and physical capabilities of individuals were to some extent a product of nature rather than of nurture.

Locke's rejection of innate ideas even extended to moral principles. Justice and faith were not universal, nor was the idea of God. Differences in the ideas of people stemmed not from differences in their abilities to perceive or release their innate ideas, but from differences in their experiences. Even though certain ideas appear to be widely held, he argued, indeed even:

If it were true in matter of fact that there were certain truths wherein all mankind agreed, it would not prove them innate, if there can be any other way shown how men may come to that universal agreement, in the things they do consent in, which I presume may be done (*Essay*, 1. 2. 3).

How then was knowledge acquired? How might men come to universal agreement? 'To this I answer, in one word, from experience' (*Essay*, 2. 1. 2). But experience itself, gained via the senses, was not sufficient of itself for knowledge. That also required the active agency of the mind upon such experience.

Follow a child from its birth and observe the alterations that time makes, and you shall find, as the mind by the senses comes more and more to be furnished with ideas, it comes to be more and more awake; thinks more, the more it has matter to think upon. After some time it begins to know the objects, which being most familiar with it, have made lasting impressions. Thus it comes, by degrees, to know the persons it daily converses with, and distinguishes them from strangers; which are instances and effects of its coming to retain and distinguish the ideas the senses convey to it (*Essay*, 2. 1. 22).

The senses at first let in particular ideas, and furnish this yet empty cabinet, and the mind by degrees growing familiar with some of them, they are lodged in the memory, and names got to them. Afterwards the mind, proceeding further, abstracts them, and by degrees learns the use of general names. In this manner the mind comes to be furnished with ideas and language, the materials about which to exercise its discursive faculty. And the use of reason becomes daily more visible, as these materials that give it employment increase (*Essay*, 1. 2. 15).

It must be admitted that Locke's derivation of all ideas ultimately from experience is not without its difficulties. Though, for Locke, experience embraced both sensation and reflection, clearly there are substantial qualitative differences between the simple sensations of infants, and the complex and abstract reflections of the mature adult mind. One way of attempting to resolve such difficulties is to recognize that Locke envisaged ideas of different types.

For example, John Yolton has suggested that ideas in Locke fall into four main categories:

Some of the ideas relate to children, to the learning process, to the early stages of the development of awareness [...] Other ideas relate to self-knowledge, to learning about our own mental operations [...] A third class of ideas found in Locke's derivation programme plays an explanatory role, helping to make sense of experience, linking one experience to others [...] Still other ideas relate to scientific observation, to the science of nature, expressing Locke's endorsement of the methodology of the Royal Society (Yolton, 1985, p. 140).

In the eighteenth century the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, would argue the extent to which 'though our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it arises out of experience', when he emphasized the active agency of the mind in manipulating experience. In the twentieth century Sigmund Freud, the Austrian founder of psychoanalysis, would explore the non-

rational forces of the human mind.

Locke, however, was neither a dogmatist nor a builder of systems. He acknowledged the possible existence of certain eternal verities—God, morality, the laws of nature—whose essence might be confirmed, rather than discovered by experience and reason. He also admitted the existence of some innate powers or qualities, recognizing that some children seem to be from birth innately more adept than others in certain respects. Nevertheless, in spite of these qualifications, Locke inclined towards nurture rather than nature and may be categorized as the founder of empiricism, a tradition that has predominated in English philosophical and educational thought until this day.

This empirical approach not only had importance for Locke's educational theory and practice but also was entirely consistent with the burgeoning contemporary revolution in thinking consequent upon the development of scientific knowledge. In seventeenth-century England this was represented in the work and writings of such men as Francis Bacon, Robert Boyle (who, though born in Ireland, was educated and settled in England), Edmond Halley and Isaac Newton. One expression of this new scientific spirit of inquiry was the Royal Society, formed in London in 1660. Boyle, Halley, Newton and Locke were all Fellows of the Royal Society, a body that eschewed discussion of religion and politics and concentrated rather upon the promotion of 'Physico-Mathematical Experimental Learning'.

Parents and children

Locke brought to the practice of education his own considered views on such subjects as philosophy, psychology, Christianity and government. His medical knowledge contributed to a concern for the physical, as well as the mental and spiritual, well-being of children. He was not only a founder of empirical thought, with all that meant for ways of learning, but he also may be counted as a pioneer of scientific psychology. He believed in the importance of observing children, and of tailoring education to their needs and capacities. Above all, though he was aware of innate differences between individuals, he was a firm believer in the power of education. As he stated in the first paragraph of the *Thoughts*: 'Of all the men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education' (*Thoughts*, s. 1).

The opening phrase of the *Thoughts*, 'A sound mind in a sound body is a short, but full description of a happy state in this world', a quotation from Juvenal, and indeed given in Latin in the letter to the Clarke family and in manuscripts prior to the first edition, launches the book into a discussion about the health of the child. Locke's advice in this respect was generally sensible, if at times a trifle idiosyncratic. Thus his views on 'plenty of open air, exercise and sleep; plain diet, no wine or strong drink, and very little or no physick' (*Thoughts*, s. 30) would command general support today, though his advice on toughening the feet by wearing thin or leaky shoes so that gentlemen's sons might acquire the ability, if necessary, to go barefoot as the poor do, might seem to be somewhat harsh. Locke's advocacy of the benefits of cold water extended to teaching children to swim, both for the general promotion of their health and for the preservation of life (*Thoughts*, s. 8).

Food for children, according to Locke, should be plain and wholesome, with sugar, salt and spices used sparingly. Locke was generally in favour of fruit—apples, pears, strawberries, cherries, gooseberries and currants were encouraged—but he was less keen on melons, peaches, plums and grapes. Clothes should not be too tight, neither for boys nor girls—important advice in an age when swaddling was still prevalent.

Other recommendations designed to accustom children to cope with minor physical adversity were that beds should not be excessively comfortable, nor mealtimes necessarily regular. One element of regularity, however, enjoined by Locke at some length, was the importance of regular bowel actions.

From the body Locke turned to the mind. He believed that parents should personally exercise firm and close authority over their children from an early age, with a view to relaxing this as they grew older: 'Fear and awe ought to give you the first power over their minds, and love and friendship in riper years to hold it' (*Thoughts*, s. 42). Locke criticized the over-indulgence of little children, and abhorred obstinate crying on their part, but had little use for any form of physical chastisement. Instead he recommended the careful application of 'esteem' and 'disgrace' (*Thoughts*, s. 56), enjoined parents to set a good example, and warned against the interventions of servants who 'by their flatteries [...] take off the edge and force of the parents' rebukes and so lessen their authority' (*Thoughts*, s. 68).

He advised parents and tutors to study their children and to note their dispositions and dislikes: 'for a child will learn three times as much when he is in tune, as he will with double the time and pains, when he goes awkwardly, or is dragged unwillingly to it' (*Thoughts*, s. 74). Toys should be simple and sturdy, possibly fashioned by the children themselves, rather than expensive and fragile.

Understandably, given his own experiences and roles in life, Locke urged upon the Clarkes the merits of a tutor rather than a school. For Locke, the best means of education was that 'children should from their first beginning to talk, have some discreet, sober, nay wise person about, whose care it should be to fashion them aright, and keep them from all ill, especially the infection of bad company' (*Thoughts*, s. 90), and he advised parents to 'spare no care nor cost to get such an one' (*Thoughts*, s. 92).

A good tutor, or indeed a good parent, would be able to encourage and to satisfy the proper and persistent questions of children, to guide them away from cruelty towards animals or other children, and to teach them the value of truth.

The *Thoughts* were written for a specific purpose: the education of the son of a country gentleman. Fundamental features of that education—the employment of a tutor, the close supervision by parents, the curriculum, even the details of diet—would have been available only to a very small proportion of the parents and children of seventeenth-century England. Locke was well aware of the niceties of rank and fortune, and proposed different routes for the son of a prince, a nobleman, and an 'ordinary gentleman's son'. Locke believed in a top-down approach to education, and that priority should be given to the sons of the gentry. In the dedicatory epistle to the *Thoughts*, he stated that 'if those of that rank are by their education once set right, they will quickly bring all the rest into order'.

Locke never wrote about popular education as such. Although in 1697, in his capacity as a Commissioner of Trade, he was involved with schemes for the establishment of workhouse schools which would have provided for destitute children aged 3 to 14 food, church attendance and craft training, Mason (1962, p. 14) concludes that 'these proposals represent Locke's contribution as an administrator rather than as an educationist'.

But although Locke was writing for a small minority of the population of his day, all boys and girls had parents, even though few children might go to school. Moreover, the theory of knowledge set out in the *Essay* was of universal application. In consequence, it is possible to argue that much of the advice to parents given in the *Thoughts*—good habits at an early age, paying attention to the child's real needs, the use of esteem and disgrace rather than of corporal punishment to discipline children, the importance of good parental example—was applicable to all ranks in society. Yolton and Yolton (1989, p. 18) have argued that, though the *Thoughts* are concerned with the education of a gentleman's son, the 'treatise is less about gentlemen than it is about developing a moral character. Morality was not limited to gentlemen.' This wider application was acknowledged by contemporaries, both within England and without. For example Pierre Coste, in the preface to his first French translation of the *Thoughts*, entitled *De l'éducation des enfans*, and published in Amsterdam in 1695, stated:

It is certain that this work was particularly designed for the education of gentlemen: but this does not prevent its serving also for the education of all sorts of children, of whatever class they are: for if you except that which the author says about exercises that a young gentleman ought to learn, nearly all the rules that he gives, are universal (Axtell, 1968, p. 52).

Priorities in education

Locke's hierarchy of values in the education of a gentleman's son was contained in four elements: virtue, wisdom, breeding and learning. Such lists were not unusual for seventeenth-century writers on education. Comenius, for example, proposed: erudition, morals, piety and physical welfare; while John Dury in *The reformed school* (c. 1650) suggested: godliness, bodily health, manners and learning. Indeed, the *Thoughts* may be placed in a long tradition of books designed for the instruction of young gentlemen. These included Thomas Elyot's, *The boke named the gouvernour* (1531), Roger Ascham's, *The scholemaster* (1570), and two books entitled *The compleat gentleman*, the first written by Henry Peacham in 1622, and the second by Jean Gailhard in 1678.

Pierre Coste was but the first of a number of writers about Locke (twentieth-century examples include Villey and Reicyn) who have noted similarities between the educational themes of Montaigne and Locke. Mason (1965, p. 72), however, has suggested that the closest match with Locke's list of priorities may be found in the work of the French churchman, Claude Fleury, himself the tutor to various princes, whose *Traité du choix et de la méthode des études* [treatise on the choice and method of studies] was available in manuscript form in the 1670s, and in a definitive printed format in 1686. Fleury's list was: virtue and religion, civility, reasoning and the fruits of experience. Locke was no doubt aware of Fleury's work; indeed his library contained a copy, in English, of the *Traité*. Such similarities, however, depended not upon simple borrowing, but upon the fact that writers such as Comenius, Dury, Fleury and Locke were attempting to reconcile the objectives of education as set down by the ancients, particularly by Aristotle, with the Christian faith. Indeed, as early as 1667 Locke produced the following list: virtue, religion, breeding, wisdom and study (Mason, 1965, p. 75).

Virtue was placed first in the education of a gentleman by Locke as 'absolutely requisite to make him valued and beloved by others, acceptable or tolerable to himself' (*Thoughts*, s. 135). Such virtue depended upon 'a true notion of God' and a love and reverence for 'this Supreme Being' (*Thoughts*, s. 136), which was to be promoted by simple acts of faith—morning and evening prayers, the learning and recitation of the Creed. It also required the development of 'a power of denying ourselves the satisfaction of our own desires, where reason does not authorize them' (*Thoughts*, s. 38).

Virtue, for Locke, was of supreme importance. As Yolton and Yolton (1989, p. 18–19) have observed:

Some thoughts is in effect a manual on how to guide the child to virtue. Close to half of its total sections are concerned with this topic [...] There is no other work in the seventeenth century that gives such a detailed account of moral man, and of how to develop that man into a responsible person.

Wisdom was to be of a practical kind: 'a man's managing his business ably and with foresight in this world' (*Thoughts*, s. 140). It did not mean being crafty or cunning, but rather to be open, fair and wise. Such wisdom Locke placed above the immediate reach of children, but children should be encouraged to strive towards this goal by becoming accustomed to truth and to sincerity, by submitting to reason and by reflecting upon the effects of their own actions. True wisdom involved the application of both reason and experience.

Good breeding was a subject upon which Locke had much to say. He sought to avoid a 'sheepish bashfulness' on the one hand and 'misbecoming negligence and disrespect' on the other

(*Thoughts*, s. 141). Locke's maxim for avoiding such faults was simple: 'Not to think meanly of ourselves, and not to think meanly of others' (*Thoughts*, s. 141). The best way to cultivate a proper conversation and behaviour was to mix with people of genuine quality. There is a foretaste of Newman's ideal of a gentleman in Locke's advice that two qualities are necessary: the first a disposition not to offend others; the second the ability to express that disposition in an agreeable way. A well-bred person would exhibit goodwill and regard for all people and eschew the habits of roughness, contempt, censoriousness, contradiction and captiousness. Not that children should be encouraged to an excess of ceremony, the 'putting off of their hats and making legs modishly' (*Thoughts*, s. 145).

Finally Locke came to learning. He acknowledged that some might be surprised that this was to be placed last, especially by such 'a bookish man' (*Thoughts*, s. 147). Locke, of course, wanted all sons of gentlemen to acquire the basics of learning—to read, to write, to express themselves clearly and to count. But he did question the wisdom of trying to bring every one to a knowledge of Latin and Greek, especially if such knowledge was to be instilled by fear and physical punishment.

Mason (1965, p. 70–71) has suggested that it is possible 'to regard each of Locke's essentials of a good education as the culmination of those broad influences conveniently termed the Christian, the Humanist, Courtesy and rationalist traditions'. This is a useful analysis but the identification should not be pressed too closely. The more important point to be made about Locke's list is that he gave priority to those concerns (virtue, wisdom, breeding) which continue throughout life, rather than to that type of 'learning' which is frequently associated with the formal schooling of the young.

The curriculum

Consideration of Locke's views on priorities in learning leads naturally to an examination of his proposals on the curriculum.

Locke had an overall view of the curriculum which was coupled with teaching methods. He believed in starting with the plain and simple, and of building, as far as possible, upon children's existing knowledge, of emphasizing the interconnections and coherence of subjects.

Children should be taught to read at the earliest possible age—as soon as they can talk. But the learning should not be irksome; on the contrary, Locke believed that it would be better to lose a whole year rather than to give a child an aversion to learning at this early stage. Locke commented upon how much energy, practice and repetition children happily put into play, and therefore suggested 'dice and play-things with the letters on them, to teach children the alphabet by playing' (*Thoughts*, s. 148). From letters they should proceed to syllables and then to easy and pleasant books, such as Aesop's *Fables*, preferably in an edition which included pictures. Locke advocated the use of 'pictures of animals [...] with the printed names to them' (*Thoughts*, s. 156). In recognition of the difficulties inherent in such essential learning as The Lord's Prayer, Creeds and Ten Commandments, Locke recommended that these should be learned not from the printed word but orally and by heart. Locke warned against the use of the Bible as a reading book for children, a most common practice in his day, 'for what pleasure or encouragement can it be to a child to exercise himself in reading those parts of a book, where he understands nothing?' (*Thoughts*, s. 158).

Writing should begin with correct holding of the pen and the copying of large letters from a sheet. Writing would lead naturally to drawing, with due attention to perspective, a most useful skill for those who would engage in travel, so that buildings, machines and other interesting phenomena might be quickly sketched. Locke believed that a good drawing was more useful in conveying an idea to the mind than several pages of written description. Locke also urged the value of shorthand for the purpose of making quick notes.

As soon as children could speak English they should begin French, by the conversational method. Once children could speak and read French well, a task which Locke envisaged would take but a year or two, they should begin Latin. Latin, Locke declared, was ‘absolutely necessary to a gentleman’ (*Thoughts*, s. 164), and once again he advised that it should be taught by the conversational method. Locke was against plunging children into a mass of grammatical rules, observing that if English could be learned naturally then the same must be true of other languages. He was also against the common practice of writing elaborate themes and verses in Latin. If there was a difficulty in securing a tutor who could teach through conversation, then Locke recommended the use of easy and interesting books in Latin, with the literal English translation written between the lines of Latin. Latin, of course, was still essential for certain professions and for attendance at the universities, for many lectures and books were provided only in Latin. But Locke also recognized that Latin (and Greek) occupied too large a part in the curricula of his day, particularly for boys who were intended for trade or farming. These would be better employed in learning to write a good hand and to maintain accounts, skills not generally taught in seventeenth-century grammar schools. Locke was also doubtful about the value of memory training, particularly the practice of learning pages of Latin by heart to promote this faculty. If children were to learn by heart it should be the learning of maxims, rules and other knowledge which had a direct utility in itself.

Other subjects which Locke commended for a gentleman’s son included geography, arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, chronology, and history, and generally in that order. Locke was particularly keen on this last: ‘as nothing teaches, so nothing delights more than history’ (*Thoughts*, s. 184). History would naturally lead on to a study of law and government, subjects of importance for future gentlemen who might be required to assume public office, either locally as Justices of the Peace, or at Westminster as Members of Parliament. Reasoning and eloquence, other skills necessary for public life, Locke urged, were best gained by practice and not by formal studies in rhetoric and logic.

In respect of science, which in the seventeenth century was usually referred to as natural philosophy and lacked disciplinary organization as such, Locke urged the study of the several manifestations of nature even though ‘all the knowledge we have [...] cannot be brought into a science’ (*Thoughts*, s. 193).

The curriculum should also include other types of accomplishment. Dancing was recommended from an early age, though learning to play a musical instrument was not encouraged as ‘it wastes so much of a young man’s time’ (*Thoughts*, s. 197). The two military exercises of fencing and riding the ‘great horse’ or charger were commended, though Locke feared that fencing might lead to duelling and on that ground suggested wrestling as an alternative.

Locke also advised that every gentleman’s son should learn at least one manual trade, and preferably two or three. Such a skill might be useful in itself, should the gentleman fall on hard times, but also promoted physical well-being and was a useful antidote to too much bookish study. Locke, who was himself a keen gardener, recommended ‘gardening or husbandry in general, and working in wood, as a carpenter, joiner or turner, these being fit and healthy recreations for a man of study, or business’ (*Thoughts*, s. 204). Other recommended pursuits included varnishing, engraving and working in base and precious metals. Locke advised all gentlemen and their sons to learn merchants’ accounts.

Though Locke put much store by recreation, he warned against such sedentary and potentially ruinous pastimes as cards and dice. On the other hand, he was a keen advocate of foreign travel, though he thought that this usually took place at the wrong age—between 16 and 21. Locke urged that children should either go abroad, with a tutor, between the ages of 7 and 14, so that they might learn foreign languages quickly and effectively, or after the age of 21 when, as young men of some maturity and experience, they might travel without supervision.

Conclusion

Four points may be made in conclusion.

The first is to note that Locke was, by any standards, an expert educationist. He was both a successful practitioner and writer to whom parents naturally turned for advice. Many of his educational maxims—praise in public, blame in private; the most efficient way of truly learning something is to have to explain it to others—are broadly recognized. Given this expertise, it is difficult to agree with M. V. C. Jeffreys who, while acknowledging Locke's common sense, wit and felicity of expression, described his views on education 'as the amateur, slightly garrulous reflections of an elderly bachelor' (Jeffreys, 1967, p. 108). Although by the time he wrote the *Thoughts* Locke was both elderly and garrulous, in educational matters he was hardly an amateur and, though a bachelor, he had a more genuine interest in children than many parents. As Yolton and Yolton (1989, p. 6) have commented: 'Locke was apparently fascinated with children and liked by them. His correspondence is filled with many references to the children of his friends.'

In consequence there are broad educational principles (as well as many maxims) in Locke's writings which are as applicable today as they ever were. Paradoxically, however—and this is our second point—one of the most crucial of those broad elements is an emphasis on individual differences. In one sense Locke, with his world of gentry and tutors, may appear to be far removed from the educational concerns of the twentieth century—the provision of mass schooling in a technologically based society. But his stress on the personal relationships in education, on the importance of the parental role, and on the need to treat children as individuals, may be seen as useful correctives to the supposed universal panacea of ever more efficient national schooling. In concluding the *Thoughts*, he emphasized again that: 'Each man's mind has some peculiarity, as well as his face, that distinguishes him from all others; and there are possibly scarce two children, who can be conducted by exactly the same method' (*Thoughts*, s. 216).

This emphasis accords well with the textual analysis of the *Thoughts* by M. G. Mason who has concluded that Locke's final additions to them probably represented the most sophisticated and developed parts of his educational theory. Mason's analysis reveals these to have been: (a) the vital importance of individual temperament; (b) the need to make education more attractive, or at least not so repressive; (c) the stress on reasoning and practice; and (d) the role of habit in the non-intellectual aspects of education (Mason, 1961, p. 290).

Third, it is clear that, in spite of the fact that *Some thoughts concerning education*, as its title indicates, was never intended to be a comprehensive educational treatise, but originated rather as a collection of separate pieces of advice, the book soon became widely known. During the eighteenth century the *Thoughts* appeared in more than twenty editions in English (excluding collections of Locke's works), as well as in French (the first French edition appeared as early as 1695), Dutch, German, Italian and Swedish (Axtell, 1968, p. 17).

Finally, it is important to recognize Locke's place in the history not only of educational thought, but of thought itself. He lived in turbulent times and his major writings (including the *Essay* and the *Thoughts*) were published in the final decade of a century that had seen great strife: constitutional, religious, economic and intellectual. Locke was invariably on the radical rather than the traditional side in such struggles, but his radicalism was constructive and characterized by circumspection, humanity and common sense. In consequence, he was eminently qualified to distil and to transmit the new knowledge and values of his day to succeeding generations. As Aaron (1971, p. 302) noted: 'His writings secured for posterity the advances which had been made by the most radical and progressive elements of society in the seventeenth century [...] Locke's works dominated the English mind in the first half of the eighteenth century and his influence was almost as great in America and France.'

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