

ABSTRACT

The Beginnings, Ends, and Aims of a Gentleman's Education: An Exegesis of Locke's
Some Thoughts Concerning Education

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In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, John Locke responds to the “early corruption of youth” and describes how the gentry should go about educating their children for the gentleman’s calling. This thesis considers the following questions about Locke’s text: what is the beginning, or original, condition of the student in the *Thoughts*, what is the student’s final condition or the aim of the education, what does Locke intend for education to accomplish, and what does Locke not intend for education to accomplish. To answer these questions, I try to look primarily to the text of the *Thoughts*, then to the view of liberal society and Christianity conveyed in Locke’s other works, and finally to the *Thoughts*’s historical context. I eventually show that Locke, in addition to his aims for the student, has a view to the transformation of English society.

The Beginnings, Ends, and Aims of a Gentleman's Education: An Exegesis of Locke's
Some Thoughts Concerning Education

by

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* is not one of the most studied works of his corpus. The *Thoughts* seems to fit in the middle of a spectrum of popularity, significantly less popular than *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* or *Two Treatises of Government* but certainly more popular than *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of Saint Paul* or his many short essays. Regardless of popularity, the *Thoughts* is an important work. Its implications provide insight into Locke's theology, politics, and social philosophy. Though it may seem to be just another work in the voluminous seventeenth-century tradition of courtesy literature, the education prescribed by the *Thoughts* is important even if only studied with regard to the form and content of education.¹ By considering the education of the *Thoughts*, we can deduce much about Locke's concern for human nature, his hopes for education, his view of the gentleman, and the roles of education and reason in his broader social philosophy.

The following project is largely exegetical, with the primary aims of Chapters Two and Three being the exegesis of the text for the purpose of discerning the beginnings and ends of the education presented in the *Thoughts*. While exegesis is arguably an act of interpretation in its own right, I move from exegesis to interpretation at the end of Chapter Three and continue interpretation in Chapter Four. Interpreting a text is a difficult task, especially when the text is philosophic or theological. The task is more

¹W.M. Spellman says "*Some Thoughts concerning Education* was plainly conceived and written in the tradition of English courtesy literature." W.M. Spellman, *John Locke and the Problem of Depravity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 208.

difficult if the text is hundreds of years old and even more formidable when we learn that some of the text's philosophic or theological subject matter was highly controversial at the time of composition. The challenge is further complicated when the text is one of many written by a given author, and still further complicated when we find out that an author's philosophic or theological corpus was composed over the course of multiple decades. Yet, if we are interested in studying the text, understanding its author, or even understanding a particular era in the history of philosophy, we must interpret such challenging texts.

The exegete must take care when, through induction, he perceives unstated implications in a philosopher's text. If we conclude that an author's explicit statements imply an unstated idea, then we must consider whether the implication is intentional or unintentional and must interpret the meaning of the implication in relationship to the author's intentions for the text at hand. While many twentieth-century critics would argue against this view, specifically that the author's intention is relevant to interpretation, I generally agree with Quentin Skinner's arguments for the relevance of the author intention to our interpretation.² Thus, while I begin with exegesis, I will eventually consider the broader aims of the *Thoughts*.

Locke himself recognizes something similar to, if not the same as, this exegetical challenge. In *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* he points out two extreme approaches to reading and interpreting. The first is the reader who does not reflect on and draw conclusions from particulars, and the second is the reader who draws conclusions and axioms from every particular. He recognizes that a sound position exists somewhere

²For specific examples of such critics (Wimsatt, Beardsly, Foucault, Ricouer, Derrida, Fish) and an introduction to Skinner's arguments about intentions and interpretation, see Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics Vol. I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 90-102.

between these two and says, “Between these, those seem to do best who taking material and useful hints...carry them in their minds to be judged of by what they shall find in history to confirm or reverse these imperfect observations.”³ Careful exegesis of a text and this type of inductive thinking are essential to philosophy. When we argue the case of an historical philosopher, we use this type of syllogistic thinking to show the coherence and consistency of his philosophy. Similarly, when we argue against the views of a great philosopher in history, we use this type of syllogistic thinking to show that the philosopher’s text leads to an extreme that is either absurd or somehow inconsistent with other parts of his philosophic corpus. This discussion of the challenges of exegeting and interpreting a text represents much of my reason for concentrating on careful exegesis of Locke’s text.

The work of careful exegesis of a particular text is essential to interpreting the text, the philosopher, or the history. Because of the scope and size of this project, there is surely much more that could be interpreted from my exegesis, but I leave that for another project and another set of questions. For now, I am considering the following questions: what is the beginning, or original, condition of the student in the *Thoughts*, what is the student’s final condition or the aim of the education, what does Locke intend for education to accomplish, and what does Locke not intend for education to accomplish.

In Chapter Two, I take up the issue of the beginning condition of the student. I note the variety of terms that Locke uses to refer to this condition, and show that the original condition is the condition of the infant or small child. This leads to the consideration of the original moral condition of the student. Locke is not systematically

³John Locke, *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, ed. Ruth W. Grant and Nathan Tarcov (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), 188.

clear about his view of this condition, and I argue that his use of analogy offers the most insight into his view. I then present three systematic positions on the original condition that were available to Locke. The view that humans are born with a moral *tabula rasa* seems to be the view that is most readily attributed to him, and I show that while Locke has a *tabula rasa* view of ideas, he does not present such a view of our moral condition. In the case of the *Thoughts*, Locke makes statements that indicate a *tabula rasa*, but also says things suggesting that some people are born with corrupt moral dispositions, that some are born with good moral dispositions, and that some are born without any moral bias at all. Looking back at Locke's lack of clarity and reliance on analogy, I conclude that for Locke, the original condition of the student is less important than how the student is cultivated and shaped.

In Chapter Three, I examine the aims of the *Thoughts* for the purposes of clarifying Locke's overall aim and describing the final condition of the student. The overall aim, I argue, is cultivating an English gentleman who will bring the lower classes into order and promote Locke's vision for liberal society. I then examine the many ends that Locke explicitly attributes to education in the *Thoughts*, first looking at the end most explicitly emphasized, the student's consulting reason and ruling himself by it. I show that he is supposed to use reason to exercise control over both his mind and body, and that he is to be conditioned to deny himself his desires when reason prompts him to choose different thoughts or actions. After reason, I examine virtue as an end, which serves, in part, social purposes. Further, I show how reason is the arbiter of virtue, even when virtue is understood as obedience to God. Having discussed virtue, I consider the ends of wisdom, breeding, and learning. In my analysis, all three of these ends seem to

be oriented towards the broader practical and social ends of the gentleman's calling. In wisdom, I show that Locke has practical wisdom in mind, as opposed to philosophic or biblical wisdom. I show that breeding, or civility, is concerned with the gentleman's personal interactions. In the discussion of learning, I argue that even learning serves a social end in the *Thoughts* and use Locke's treatment of Latin as an example. Locke frequently criticizes Latin, but prescribes that it be learned because custom has made it necessary to the gentleman. Then I return to the gentleman's calling, and show that the education of the *Thoughts*, because it is concerned to create a rational gentleman, is an education for citizenship. After a brief discussion of Locke's larger program for liberal society, I argue that Locke's education serves these ends by cultivating a modern gentleman-citizen who approaches his social calling with reason, rather than tradition, as his guide.

In Chapter Four, I consider first the accomplishment that the *Thoughts* designs for the student. Though it may prepare the student with the reason necessary to pursue religion, education's accomplishment for the student is social and civic, and should be viewed in civic rather than religious terms. After this, I consider the accomplishment that the *Thoughts* designs for society. Returning to the garden analogy, I show that Locke's education aims to bring the lower classes into order by leading the gentleman to "garden" society in the same way that his parents and educators "garden" him. Then I consider what designs the *Thoughts* does not aim to accomplish. I show that the *Thoughts* does not intend to be a Christian education in the traditional sense. I argue this by first looking to a broad, historical definition of Christian education. Then I look to Milton's "Of Education" as an example of an overtly Christian education from seventeenth-century

England. I show that the primary aims of the *Thoughts* are not the same as either of these, and finally, I show that the *Thoughts* does not aim to cultivate the beliefs that Locke himself claims are essential to Christianity in the *The Reasonableness of Christianity* and *A Second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity*. Lastly, I analyze Locke's liberalism to show what, if not religious designs, is driving the *Thoughts*. I consider Locke's distinction between civil society and religious society in *A Letter Concerning Toleration* to show that the nature of Locke's civic education is such that the student's religious beliefs are not a primary concern. The *Thoughts*, then, is consistent with Locke's political philosophy insofar as the distinction between the civil and the religious is maintained for the sake of liberal civil society.

Having given a road map for this project, we can now look closely at the *Thoughts* and begin an exegesis of the beginnings and ends of the education it proposes.

CHAPTER TWO

The Beginning State and Original Condition of the Student

I will now address the state of the student at the beginning of his education. To discern the student's original condition, I will consider what Locke says about infancy and early childhood. The *Thoughts* begins with recommendations for caring for an infant. An infant does not receive education in the common, strict sense of the term. For Locke, however, education begins at infancy. While the literal "beginning" is infancy, I will also consider the young child in Locke's statements about the foundations of education that are found throughout the *Thoughts*. This chapter is not simply a restatement or summary of what Locke says because Locke does not explicitly or systematically articulate his view on the beginning state or original condition of the student. While he says many things that indicate his having a certain view on this issue, these are not directly intended to answer the question before us. Locke does not give us his view directly; we must determine it from what he says about other topics.

Locke uses a range of terminology that indicates that he is discussing this beginning state. He refers to the child's "principles of nature,"¹ "natural disposition,"²

¹"Thus parents, by humoring and cockering them when *little*, corrupt the principles of nature in their children." John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. Ruth W. Grant and Nathan Tarcov (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), 26.

²In discussing "faults of their age" Locke says that misapplied correction "fails to overpower the natural disposition of their childhood" (Ibid., 39).

“natural genius and constitution,”³ the “temper and particular constitution” of the child’s mind,⁴ the “natural make” of the student’s mind,⁵ the child’s “predominant passions and prevailing inclinations,”⁶ and the child’s “native propensities” or “prevalencies of constitution.”⁷ Though some of this language is vague, I take Locke’s statements on such concepts like natural disposition to be the most systematic descriptions of his view of the natural moral condition of humans or the original condition at birth, the time at which Lockean education begins. Locke rarely speaks of the state of the child at birth, and when he does he does not offer the reader a comprehensive statement saying anything along the lines of “this is a feature of the original state of humans at birth.” Despite this, if we want to give a description of the original condition of the student, we should take statements that seem to point to a normative condition of young children and should attempt to discern whether they indicate an actual normative state. Such a normative condition, it seems, would lead us to a concept of an “original condition.” If one of Locke’s statements really conveys such a normative condition, then it is logical for it to be taken as indicative of an “original condition,” because the great variety of environments and circumstances that each child experiences will render fewer and fewer conditions normative. That is to say that if there is a normative condition that maintains

³In discussing habituation and practice Locke says “By this method we shall see whether what is required of him be adapted to his capacity and anyway suited to the child’s natural genius and constitution” (Ibid., 41).

⁴“the next thing to be done is to consider his *temper* and the particular constitution of his mind” (Ibid., 75). Italics in original. Unless otherwise noted, I will follow the original in citing texts.

⁵“it will be fit to consider which way the natural make of his *mind inclines* him.” (Ibid., 76).

⁶“See what are his *predominant passions* and *prevailing inclinations*” (Ibid., 76).

⁷These *native propensities*, these prevalencies of constitution, are not to be cured by rules or direct contest” (Ibid., 76).

for both child *a* and child *b*, then it will be less and less identifiable as the children age in different environments, especially if environment possesses the ability to influence that Locke attributes to it. The dispositions of child *a* may be nurtured in one direction, and the dispositions of child *b* may be nurtured in another direction, or they may not be nurtured at all. The most normative of conditions in Locke's text seems to be found in the mere fact that Locke suggests that dispositions or inclinations are naturally common in humans, despite the complexity and diversity of these inclinations.

Discerning a systematic articulation of Locke's view of the original condition would make discussion about his position easy; however, his view of the condition into which humans are born is most clearly seen in his use of metaphors and analogies when speaking about children. I have already used the term "original condition" to signify the Lockean position that I am trying to discern. This term is intended to be a broad category. I believe that many of Locke's varying articulations of the child's condition fall in this category, and my intention is to show that these articulations are insufficient for determining Locke's view of the original condition of the student. While there are many features of the infant I could consider, I will concentrate on the original moral condition of the student, as it is one of the most difficult to discern in Locke's work. Furthermore, it is one of the most significant features of the human condition at birth. The fact that infants are physically helpless and rationally undeveloped can be taken for granted. There is not much at stake in debating the meaning of these features of infancy. The moral condition, however, is debatable and has far reaching implications for one's overall view of humanity as well as one's view of education and its goals. As I proceed, I will discuss first Locke's most insightful analogy, that the student is like a garden. Then

I will discuss another analogy, that the student can be fashioned like white paper or a lump of wax. While also insightful, this analogy suggests that the student is a *tabula rasa* and is easily misinterpreted. Finally, in order to clarify this analogy and Locke's overall position, I will discuss the possible systematic positions available in Locke's theological and philosophic setting. I will also show how these positions are too rigid to give an adequate description of Locke's view.

To gain further insight into Locke's view of our original condition, we should consider an analogy that Locke employs throughout the *Thoughts*. In numerous places, Locke compares the student to a garden. He speaks of weeding out faults and planting habits⁸ and also speaks about weeding out "seeds of vice."⁹ The metaphor of seeds is used throughout the text. Locke's most vivid description comes in a discussion about dealing with the faults of a child. He writes,

But we letting their faults (by indulging and humoring our little ones) grow up till they are sturdy and numerous and the deformity of them makes us ashamed and uneasy, we are fain to come to the plough and the harrow, the spade and the pickax must go deep to come at the roots, and all the force, skill, and diligence we can use is scarce enough to cleanse the vitiated seed plot overgrown with weeds and restore us the hopes of fruits to reward our pains in its season.¹⁰

In this description, we see the educator characterized as the gardener. The plants seem to be the fruits or outgrowth of the child's disposition, and the soil seems to represent the child's original condition or nature. Thus, the best description of the beginning state and original condition of the student in the *Thoughts*, rather than a systematized account, seems to be the analogy of the garden. On the one hand, the soil of a new garden

⁸Ibid., 40.

⁹Ibid., 75.

¹⁰Ibid., 60.

generally has a natural disposition. Some soil might have certain features conducive to growing some plants and not conducive to growing others. In other words, some soil may naturally grow certain plants and some may not. More broadly, some soil is good, and some is bad. That is not to say that the gardener cannot work with the soil in attempting to cultivate certain types of plants. However, even when the soil is good or has been cultivated in a way that supports plant growth, the gardener still has much work to do. He must attempt to create the ideal conditions for the garden, which he does when he waters during dry seasons, but he ultimately must also cultivate these conditions amidst a dynamic environment in which the plant life may be affected by innumerable conditions during its growth. Its environment may not hinder the growth of the plant, but it is most likely that environmental features, such as the habitation of insects or pests, present some of the greatest challenges to the aims of the gardener. Ultimately, plants grow by innate design, though often aided by the pruning of the gardener. While having a specific systematic articulation of Locke's position would be more convenient for understanding exactly what the educator is dealing with, this analogy from Locke's text itself provides a description that is consistent with the text as a whole.

I will now discuss some of the possible positions that Locke could have taken, including that of *tabula rasa*, to give a systematic description of the original condition of the student. The purpose of this discussion is not to attempt to fit Locke into one of these positions. Rather, we can better understand Locke by examining his position in light of others available to him. I also introduce these positions in order to show how Locke's text avoids fitting into any one of these broad categories. Without mentioning the innumerable middle ground positions, three extremes seem available to Locke on the

issue of the moral condition of humans at birth: (1) that humans are born morally upright with a predisposition towards moral goodness; (2) that humans are born morally corrupted with a predisposition to immorality; and (3) that humans are born morally neutral without any significant predispositions towards moral goodness or immorality.

In contrast to the garden analogy that presents humans as having a variety of original conditions, many familiar with Locke are likely to suggest that he takes a *tabula rasa* position on morality, and many of his statements admittedly point in that direction. Beyond the garden analogy, Locke's overall position in the *Thoughts* is not entirely clear and does not allow one to ascribe to him any of the systematic extremes available. To ascribe the *tabula rasa* position to Locke's conception of morality or a student's original condition is to say that Locke views humans as being born morally neutral or without innate moral qualities or dispositions. Speaking more broadly than just the moral condition, one of Locke's statements on this topic seems very clear. In his conclusion Locke directly says "a gentleman's son, who being very little, I considered only as white paper or wax to be molded and fashioned as one pleases."¹¹ In light of other related utterances in the *Thoughts*, this insightful statement can also be deceptive. It is insightful because it explains Locke's view well but deceptive because the reader is not likely to perceive exactly what the statement conveys upon an initial reading, seeing it instead as Locke's profession of a moral *tabula rasa*. Further, some may perceive it to convey a position on the original condition of the student more than a position on our ability to transform the student's condition. To understand how the statement explains Locke's view, we must reflect upon the process of fashioning white paper or wax. It initially seems as if Locke believes the gentleman's son to be in such a condition that he can be

¹¹Ibid., 161.

fashioned exactly as the parents like. The caveat to Locke's statement, the whole of the *Thoughts* that precedes it, is that this fashioning can happen only if the parents proceed with all of the correct steps, many of which are particular to the child at hand. So while such fashioning is possible, it is very difficult. To spell this out using Locke's analogy, literal white paper and wax do not necessarily fashion as one pleases. With the exception of the accomplished artist, when one envisions a portrait or a bust and attempts to fashion it on white paper or out of wax, he or she will likely end up with a poor representation of the envisioned portrait or bust or even something that does not resemble it at all. Speaking personally, if someone gives me a lump of wax and suggests that I fashion a noble looking face, we will end up with something that is the same size and relative shape of a face, but it will certainly not be of the sort that any human would desire atop his own shoulders. That is all to say that a white piece of paper or wax are not easily transformed into other more noble things, but like a garden, they are transformed through careful labor. I should note that the analogy of the garden reveals more of the original condition of the student, whereas the analogy of the white paper reveals more about the malleability and transformation of the student. This understanding of what it means to be like white paper or a lump of wax is the most consistent with the way in which the natural condition of the child is presented throughout the *Thoughts*.

Moral Neutrality and the tabula rasa

Many transpose Locke's epistemological *tabula rasa* onto his understanding of moral nature. Because of this I will primarily address the view that humans are born to some kind of moral neutrality and will show that Locke does not take this view, though I will still consider the other two views that I mentioned above. One reason for attributing

the *tabula rasa* to Locke's view of morality is that the idea of humans having an epistemological *tabula rasa* seems to undermine the existence of natural law and natural moral sense. Locke's primary epistemological work and the locus of his *tabula rasa* discussion is his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Locke's purpose in writing the *Essay* was to disprove the view that humans are equipped with innate ideas. One of his most well known *tabula rasa* statements is found at the beginning of Book Two of the *Essay* where he writes "Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any *ideas*."¹² Though morality is discussed, the chief concerns of the essay are ideas and their relationship to knowledge.

Locke includes moral ideas in the general discussion of ideas. Such discussion has implications on one's overall view of moral philosophy and one's view of the original condition of humans. The *Essay* argues that all ideas, even ideas of the soul, are the product of sensation or reflection. Locke denies that there are moral rules naturally imprinted on the human mind by God. In arguing this, he offers numerous examples of immoral practices in non-European cultures and societies, such as infanticide, patricide, and cannibalism, along with examples of immoral practices in European cultures, dueling for honor, that he believes advance his view that conscience is not universal and innate.

Working from his examples, Locke ultimately says that

it is impossible to conceive that a whole nation of men should all publicly reject and renounce what every one of them certainly and infallibly knew to be a law; for so they must who have it naturally imprinted on their minds.¹³

¹²John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894) II.i.2, 121.

¹³*Ibid.*, I.ii.11, 74.

Locke's argument says it is not possible for a natural law that is universally known and imprinted on human minds to be rejected universally by an entire culture or society. Taking Aquinas as the best representative of the traditional Christian doctrine of natural law, Locke's discussion and the above quotation seem to suggest a denial of the traditional Christian doctrine. Aquinas describes the natural law as "nothing else than the rational creature's participation of the eternal law" and says that "it is evident that all things partake somewhat of the eternal law, in so far as, namely, from its being imprinted on them, they derive their respective inclinations to their proper acts and ends."¹⁴ Here, Aquinas says that the eternal law, or some degree of it, is imprinted on rational creatures and is the source of human inclination. There are other features of Aquinas's view, and it is not within the scope of the present discussion to argue Locke's overall position on natural law or his relationship to Aquinas. However, even if Locke's statement above is a denial of the existence of natural law, this does not necessarily require him to take a *tabula rasa* position on the original condition. It is important to distinguish between Locke's arguments about innate ideas and the possibility of humans having innate dispositions, habits, or natural tendencies. Locke confirms this distinction in the *Essay* saying "I deny not that there are natural tendencies imprinted on the minds of men."¹⁵

Returning to the *Thoughts* though, another reason that one may transpose a *tabula rasa* position onto Locke's overall understanding of the original moral condition is that he makes many statements in the *Thoughts*, beyond the white paper analogy, that initially seem to point towards the view that humans are born morally neutral. Locke sees

¹⁴Thomas Aquinas, St., *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (*New Advent Online*; available from <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/2091.htm#2>; Internet; accessed 26 May 2007) I-II, Q. 91, art. 2.

¹⁵*Essay*, I.ii.3, 67.

children often being corrupted through their environments. Children imitate both their parents and others, servants in the worst of cases, who do not properly consult reason and live immodestly and immorally. To give one example, Locke says that “parents, by humoring 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.”¹⁶ According to Locke, most of the vices of children are acquired from their environment. Further, if the *Thoughts* is a response and proposed solution to the early corruption of youth, the environmental nature of corruption would suggest that the corruption is in no way innate but acquired instead. All that this and many of Locke’s other “environmentalist” statements say, *prima facie*, is that the “early corruption of youth” and the goodness or evil of men that results “of their education”¹⁷ are largely the result of the influence of the child’s environment. These statements do not actually say much specific, if anything, about the original moral condition other than that it is corruptible, whatever that original condition may be. This emphasis on corruptibility supports the garden analogy, as a garden that is not properly cared for will become corrupted with pests and weed growth, regardless of the quality of the soil.

Let us look to another place in the *Thoughts* that leads away from attributing the view to the text that humans are born morally neutral. After a discussion of childishness, rules, and habits in which he prescribes that careful attention should be given to the natural disposition of the child, Locke discusses the method of “teaching children by a

¹⁶*Thoughts*, 26.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 10.

repeated practice.” He continues with concern for the capacity of the “child’s natural genius and constitution” and explains this consideration by saying that

We must not hope wholly to change their original tempers nor make the gay pensive and grave, nor the melancholy sportive, without spoiling them. God has stamped certain characters upon men’s minds, which, like their shapes, may perhaps be a little mended but can hardly be totally altered and transformed into the contrary.¹⁸

Initially, this statement could seem to contradict Locke’s teaching on innate ideas in its specific reference to “men’s minds.” However, to maintain the distinction I made above, if it is understood to be specifically concerned with a temperament (pensiveness, for example) instead of ideas, then we do not have to view it as conflicting with Locke’s epistemology. While Locke’s examples are not moral qualities, the fact that he says that individuals have certain dispositions and character traits implies that some elements of morality are innate, as these characteristics are often at the foundation of one’s actions. Clearly Locke is stating that the dispositions of the human are predisposed and not a *tabula rasa*. Even if we are not able to make value judgments on dispositions or character traits, their existence suggests that individual humans are born bent towards certain temperaments if not moral traits. Locke’s succeeding paragraph confirms this, where he says that

in many cases, all that we can do or should aim at is to make the best of what nature has given, to prevent the vices and faults to which such a constitution is most inclined, and give it all the advantages it is capable of. Everyone’s natural genius should be carried as far as it could, but to attempt the putting another upon him will be but labor in vain.¹⁹

Here, Locke specifically points out the possibility of the child being naturally inclined towards vices and faults. This is not to say that Locke veers towards a view that humans

¹⁸Ibid., 41.

¹⁹Ibid., 41.

are born morally corrupted. It is clear that he does not conceive of the child in that sense. It does show, however, that it can be difficult to fashion the white paper and wax because of characteristics or qualities that are inherent to each specific piece of paper or lump of wax.

Later, Locke discusses natural inclinations under the heading of “temper,” showing further the complexity of the original state of the student and its proximity to immorality. He speaks of the way in which “the natural make of his mind inclines him” and lists characteristics that some men possess “by the unalterable frame of their constitutions,” saying that there is as much variety in these tempers as there is in men’s faces.²⁰ The discussion of tempers, “predominant passions,” “prevailing inclinations,” “native propensities,” and “prevalencies of constitutions” culminates in Locke actually listing some of the inclinations. He says that “Some men by the unalterable frame of their constitutions are *stout*, others *timorous*, some *confident*, others *modest*, *tractable* or *obstinate*, *curious* or *careless*, *quick* or *slow*.”²¹ He also lists “fierce or mild, bold or bashful, compassionate or cruel, open or reserved,” as “*predominant passions* and *prevailing inclinations*,” and after this list he says that “the bias [of the propensities] will always hang on that side that nature first placed it.”²² I list all of these to show that Locke frequently describes the student as existing in an original state that is not acquired but is a part of his nature. Interestingly, if Locke is understood to have an Aristotelian “finding the mean” understanding of moral life, then his listing of extremes suggests that

²⁰Ibid., 76.

²¹Ibid., 76.

²²Ibid., 76.

our natural inclinations direct us away from virtue.²³ However, some of the first list includes dispositions, such as curiosity, that Locke commends, thus suggesting they are not undesirable extremes.²⁴ Thus, if Locke is not understood to be this type of Aristotelian, then his lists include dispositions that would seem to lead to moral virtue (compassionate),²⁵ to moral vice (cruel), and that are morally neutral (being open or reserved, for example, is not necessarily good or bad). Shortly after these sections, Locke actually speaks about the infant saying that children “as soon almost as they are born” cry out of desirousness for nothing but their wills.²⁶ He further confirms such a view, sounding reminiscent of Augustine’s *Confessions*,²⁷ when he says, “their *crying* is very often a striving for mastery and an open declaration of their insolence or obstinacy.”²⁸

It should be noted, and should be clear to the reader of the *Thoughts*, that the sections of the work where Locke seems to lean towards the view that humans have some kind of natural moral corruption are closer to exceptions in Locke’s overall discussion than they are to the norm. Locke emphasizes the fact that the general corruption of children comes about through poor examples and poor education. Locke’s position, as I have shown, is difficult to nail down. In fact, his saying that “few of Adam’s children are

²³“Bold and bashful,” for example, could seem to be the two extremes surrounding true courage.

²⁴Locke writes, “*Curiosity* should be as carefully *cherished* in children as other appetites suppressed” (Ibid., 79).

²⁵ Though compassion, and possibly even the other dispositions I include, may only be considered a virtue in Christian and other religious societies, I mention it as a disposition that leads to virtue because seventeenth-century England was largely a Christian society.

²⁶Ibid., 76.

²⁷Augustine, *Confessions*, see 1.6.8 and 1.7.11.

²⁸*Thoughts*, 83.

so happy as to not be born with some bias in their natural temper”²⁹ seems in line with the range of possibly moral, immoral, and neutral inclinations listed above. This statement is worth further consideration. It suggests that some children, though they are rare, are born morally neutral while all others have some type of bias, whether good or bad. Other statements of Locke, as we have seen, contrast this suggestion that humans are born with a great variety of inclinations. We have also seen that Locke often attributes most of our moral corruption to our environment. While I gave a particular example above showing that this is not necessarily incompatible with the view that humans are born morally corrupted, the number of statements in the *Thoughts* that emphasize the importance of environment seem to suggest that the environmental view is worth countenancing. We have also seen, though, Locke expressing the view that some humans are born to some type of moral corruption. This view is most clear when Locke says “we are all, even from our cradles, vain and proud creatures.”³⁰

Having examined some of what Locke says *prima facie* on the subject of the original condition of the student, it should be clear that Locke’s view does not fit within a systematic category. If we hold the *Thoughts* to such categories, Locke appears unclear and perhaps even inconsistent on the subject. What are we to make of Locke’s lack of systematic clarity then? He writes a range of statements that seem to point to each of the three extremes; however, he never commits to a single position. Because of the nature of the three extremes, one is not compatible with either of the other two. While there are a few places where Locke appears to be veering towards a view that humans are born with a disposition towards immorality, a view that had many adherents in seventeenth-century

²⁹Ibid., 105.

³⁰Ibid., 93.

England, he generally leaves open the possibility that the natural constitution could be bent towards a wide range of noble and ignoble dispositions. Furthermore, writing in an era that had a vocabulary specific to the discussion of the original condition of humans, Locke uses a variety of terms and phrases that point to a normative original condition without actually using the typical vocabulary. Not only would the Christian vocabulary of original sin have been convenient for Locke to clarify a systematic position, but it also could have helped him, had he agreed with the consensus view, avoid persecution and the attacks directed at his theological views. In any event, he does not endorse the conservative consensus view whole-heartedly.

Locke's text contains statements that attribute corruption to environment. I have pointed out that, while frequent, these often do not necessarily say anything about the condition of the human before the corruption, except that the human was corruptible. This, along with the above discussion of the text, should show that Locke does not take the position that humans are born morally neutral or the position that humans are born morally upright. As for the possibility that Locke holds to one of the many middle ground positions, the *Thoughts* does not give us a reason to say that Locke takes a particular position. Further, it does not even seem to imply a specific position. The *Thoughts*'s theological silence and its often-ambiguous terminology seem to suggest that Locke's position is either hidden or that he just does not take one. The latter is to say that there is not one normative human disposition presented in the *Thoughts* that can be classified systematically. We have grounds to say that, according to the *Thoughts*, some are born with an inclination to vice, some are born with an inclination to virtue, and that

others are equipped with dispositions that only have moral significance when they are brought to bear on specific circumstances in specific environments.

I have not answered the question I posed about what we make of Locke's lack of clarity. If we are going to give Locke credit as a seventeenth-century intellectual, it seems that we should credit him with awareness of the implications of these various passages for no other reason than the fact that his theological views were frequently attacked, thus making him aware of the manner in which some in his era acted upon the theological implications of a text. Suggesting that Locke was aware of the possible implications, three positions on the relationship of these implications to his intent are available to us. He either believed that they necessarily followed explicit statements, did not believe that they followed, or wanted to leave them unanswered. It seems most plausible that Locke did not see his discussion in the *Thoughts* implying a particular position on the issue of the original condition of the human. In other words, though aware of the potential apparent implications, Locke did not see these implications as necessarily relevant to or stemming from his pedagogical text. That is to say that the lack of systematic clarity and the reliance on analogy suggests that the original condition of the student is not central to the *Thoughts*. The original condition, then, is less important than how the student is cultivated and shaped.

While I have examined the original moral condition of the student in this chapter, the garden-like nature of the student's dispositions and the white paper fashionability are not the only features of the beginning state of the student in Locke's *Thoughts*. Locke also shows more explicitly that in the original condition the student lacks reason, is ignorant, and, for good or bad, is very impressionable and prone to habituation. The

original condition is, as I have shown, one of the least clear and least obvious features of the student. As we look at the final condition of the student in the next chapter, we should keep this analogy in mind, as the gardener can condition his plants to certain behaviors. Further, his strongest plants, trees, are not as fragile as other plants, and the gardener can hope that they will reach a point in age in which they will require very little care. What is important until that point of self-reliance, is the manner in which the gardener cares for them.

CHAPTER THREE

The Aim of the *Thoughts* and the Final Condition of the Student

In this chapter, I will examine the ends that Locke attributes to education in the *Thoughts* and will paint in broad strokes a picture of the final condition of the student. As with the previous chapter, the answer to the present inquiry is not systematically and immediately clear from Locke's text. Throughout the *Thoughts*, Locke identifies many ends of education and alludes to the end of education in a number of places, all the while giving multiple and varying answers. The purpose of the *Thoughts* is to show how to educate a gentleman for adult life in England. Without a clear understanding of Locke's vision of what a gentleman is and ought to be, the mere suggestion that the guiding aim is to cultivate a gentleman is vague. To leave the description of the end at this would be little more than to say that the purpose of education is to cultivate humans, a loaded statement that does not take on concrete meaning until it becomes clear what it means to be human. The final condition is easier to discern than the original condition of the student. However, the manner in which Locke states his intentions and hopes for the student in the *Thoughts* makes it difficult to discern one clear end. To gain a better idea of what Locke means for the gentleman to be, we will have to consider the various ends that Locke attributes to education in the *Thoughts*.

In a discussion of how much to pay a governor, Locke lists a variety of educational achievements that he believes to be worth any price. He begins, "He that at any rate procures his child a good mind, well principled, tempered to virtue and

usefulness, and adorned with civility and good breeding . . . ”¹ Elsewhere, Locke more concisely lists a few aims of education saying “that which every gentleman...desires for his son . . . is contained . . . in these four things: *virtue, wisdom, breeding, and learning*.”² This list seems to capture much of what Locke intends for the student. A large portion of the text is devoted to these four aims, and Locke generally treats them in this order. In this chapter I will discuss the various ends of the education presented in the *Thoughts*, beginning with the goal of cultivating a rational creature who rules himself by reason and then taking up the four ends in this list. Through Locke’s discussion of reason and this list, many ends seem to stand out: first, conditioning the gentleman to become a man who consults reason and rules himself by it; second, conditioning the gentleman to pursue and achieve virtue; and third, equipping the gentleman for life in English society through wisdom, breeding, and learning. By the end of this chapter we will have identified and described the aims that Locke attributes to education in the *Thoughts*, discerned the relationship between these aims, and discussed the guiding aim of the “gentleman’s calling” in accordance with the *Thoughts* and some of Locke’s other works. Ultimately we will see that the ends of education in the *Thoughts* are the cultivation of a gentleman-citizen who makes reason his and society’s rule.

The Student of the Thoughts

Though I have mentioned that *Thoughts* aims to cultivate gentlemen, I should emphasize that Locke has a particular class of students in mind. He notes this throughout the course of the *Thoughts*. Though his comments on education are often very broad,

¹*Thoughts*, 63.

²*Ibid.*, 102.

Locke explicitly states that the *Thoughts* is the consideration of the education of the gentleman as opposed, for example, to the education of a scholar.³ While Locke expresses the hope that society as a whole will “fall in order” as a result of a well-educated gentry, he explicitly says that the *Thoughts* touches upon that which he “judged necessary for the breeding of a young gentlemen of his condition in general.”⁴ We must keep this feature of the *Thoughts* in mind when evaluating the various aims of the gentleman's education. The overall aim of the *Thoughts*, under which all the other ends reside, is to educate the young man for his calling as a gentleman. Locke writes, “a gentleman’s calling” is “to have the knowledge of a man of business, a carriage suitable to his rank, and to be eminent and useful in his country according to his station.”⁵ While this statement gives us insight into what Locke has in mind when he speaks of the gentleman, we will eventually consider the specific aims of education presented alongside Locke’s general social philosophy in order to achieve a more clear and comprehensive idea of Locke’s intention for the gentleman and the *Thoughts*. This is to say that much of the present chapter’s discussion of the ends of education in the *Thoughts* should give us an idea of what Locke has in mind when he speaks of a gentleman, or at least an idea of his aim and ideal. Locke uses the term gentleman with a social rank in mind, referring also to “our English gentry” and “those of that rank.”⁶ While Locke speaks of the gentleman as having purposes beyond a mere social station, we will see that much of the education prescribed in the *Thoughts* is concerned with the student’s role and

³Ibid., 147.

⁴Ibid., 161.

⁵Ibid., 69-70.

⁶Ibid., 8.

position in society. For now I will discuss the specific ends that Locke attributes to education in the *Thoughts* and then will return to the issue of the society and the gentleman's calling.

Teaching the Student to Consult Reason and to Rule Himself by It

According to Locke, one of the principal aims of education is for the student to become a man who consults reason and maintains it as his rule. In fact, the failure of English education to achieve this is behind the very problem of the corruption of youth that motivates Locke's writing the *Thoughts*. He says that the parents' failure to make the child's mind "pliant to reason" early enough is their "great mistake"⁷ and also says that the fault of youth or maturity is not having the desires "subject to the rules and restraints of reason."⁸ If the failure to make the child's mind pliant to reason is the great mistake of parents, then doing the opposite would be a great, if not *the great*, achievement of parents in Locke's eyes. Locke emphasizes that reason is the most important faculty of the mind and shows the use of reason to be one of the highest aims of both the *Thoughts* and human life in general. He writes,

For when all is done, this, as the highest and most important faculty of our minds, deserves the greatest care and attention in cultivating it: the right improvement and exercise of our reason being the highest perfection that a man can attain to in this life.⁹

Insofar as the ordering of Locke's prescriptions in the *Thoughts* goes, parents are to begin conditioning the child's body from birth. The discussion of the body comprises the first twenty-five pages of the *Thoughts* and is thoroughly connected to the aim of

⁷Ibid., 25.

⁸Ibid., 27.

⁹Ibid., 95.

fostering the rational creature's ability to rule himself by reason. To be more specific, the purpose of conditioning the body before the child possesses rationality is to prepare the child for the use of his rationality, as the rational creature controls his body with his reasoning mind.¹⁰ This conditioning of the body is achieved through habituating the student to an uncomfortable physical environment, which is intended to give the body a hardiness that allows the gentleman to comply more easily and painlessly with reason, even when the inconveniences of nature make it difficult. Locke implies that the body, and perhaps even the mind, is a source of misdirection, the impulses of which the gentleman must be able to resist. The body seems to be the source of bad desires, inclinations, and appetites that draw the gentleman away from what is reasonable. As a result, a major component of the gentleman's submission to reason involves his developing the ability to deny himself his desires. Locke writes that "the great principle and foundation of all virtue and worth is placed in this, that a man is able to *deny himself* his own desire, cross his own inclinations, and purely follow what reason directs as best though the appetite lean the other way."¹¹

The rational creature is also supposed to have mastery over his mind. Locke instructs parents to "teach the mind to get the mastery over itself, and to be able upon choice to take itself off from the hot pursuit of one thing and set itself upon another with facility and delight."¹² With mastery over his mind and body, as indicated above, the

¹⁰Locke writes, "Due care being had to keep the body in strength and vigor 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 consent to nothing but what may be suitable to the dignity and excellency of a rational creature" (Ibid., 25).

¹¹Ibid., 25.

¹²Ibid., 53.

rational creature governs and brings into submission his desires, passions, and appetites. He governs inclinations even against present pleasures or pains. He also consults reason before he gives allowance to his inclinations.¹³ Finally, Locke also mentions that the rational creature is motivated by reward and punishment.¹⁴ These characteristics of how the gentleman follows the rule of reason seem to suggest that the gentleman who is ruling himself by reason is self-governing. That reason and self-government are aligned, if not synonymous, fits with Locke's discussion of freedom in the *Thoughts*. The desire for freedom is inherent in us, and Locke seems to see rational self-government as the proper means to attaining this freedom: "we would be thought rational creatures and have our freedom."¹⁵ Teaching the student to consult reason and to govern himself according to its dictates are some of the most challenging and most important parts of the education. Locke emphasizes this further saying, "teach him to get a mastery over his inclination and *submit his appetite to reason*. This being obtained, and by constant practice settled into habit, the hardest part of the task is over."¹⁶

¹³ The rational creature has his "the power to govern and deny" himself in his desires and appetites (Ibid., 36). In contrast to the rational creature, Locke speaks of him who "has not a mastery over his inclinations, he that knows not how to *resist* the importunity of *present pleasure or pain* for the sake of what reason tells him is fit to be done, wants the true principle of virtue and industry and is in danger never to be good for anything" (Ibid., 32). Locke also intends for students to be taught to "master their inclinations" because "By this means they will be brought to learn the art of stifling their desires as soon as they rise up in them." (Ibid., 78). Further, he suggests that gentlemen "should therefore be accustomed betimes to consult and make use of their reason before they give allowance to their inclinations" (Ibid., 78).

¹⁴ "I grant that good and evil, *reward* and *punishment* are the only motives to a rational creature" (Ibid., 35).

¹⁵ Ibid., 31.

¹⁶ Ibid., 152.

Virtue

Of the list of endowments that belong to the gentlemen, “*virtue, wisdom, breeding, and learning,*” Locke says that virtue is the “first and most necessary” of these endowments.¹⁷ He also says that “tis virtue then, direct virtue, which is the hard and valuable part to be aimed at in education . . . All other considerations and accomplishment should give way and be postponed to this.”¹⁸ It is clear that virtue, like reason, is one of the chief aims of the gentleman’s education in the *Thoughts*. Unfortunately though, Locke does not give one explicit definition of virtue, and it is difficult to see what definition might suit Locke’s various references to and descriptions of virtue in the *Thoughts*.

According to Locke’s section with the margin title “Ethics,” knowledge of the principles and precepts of virtue can be learned from the discourses of morality in the Bible and from Cicero’s *De Officiis*.¹⁹ Mentioning only two texts from which numerous views of morality can be derived can only give a general idea of what moral principles should be learned. For Locke though, learning the principles of virtue is less important than developing good habits, which come from one’s company and environment. Speaking more specifically about the young gentleman’s relationship to virtue, Locke says that the gentleman should relish virtue and place “his strength, his glory, and his pleasure in it.”²⁰ This emphasis on virtue suggests that it is an end in itself. In contrast, however, Locke speaks of reputation and virtue saying

¹⁷Ibid., 102.

¹⁸Ibid., 49.

¹⁹Ibid., 139.

²⁰Ibid., 49.

if...you can come once to shame them out of their faults...and make them in love with the pleasure of being well thought on, you may turn them as you please and they will be in love with all the ways of virtue.²¹

Here, Locke implies that the gentleman should be in love with virtue, though it is unclear whether the gentleman will actually love virtue or whether he will really be in love with reputation. While Locke's suggestion that reputation is the motivation for virtue could be taken to be an example of a way to make virtue attractive to the young gentleman, it nonetheless seems that he is suggesting that virtue is not an end in itself. If this is the case, then virtue, in a sense, has a social end. It is not pursued for itself, the pleasure of God, or the happiness of the individual. Instead, it is pursued for something, "being well thought on," that can only exist when the student is in the company and society of others.

Elsewhere Locke ties virtue to God and again attaches other ends to the pursuit of it, making it even less clear whether virtue is actually an end itself. Locke says that virtue is founded "in a true notion of a God such as the Creed wisely teaches,"²² and later says that the principle of virtue is related to God as creator and reward giver. He writes that the "true principle and measure" of virtue is "knowledge of a man's duty and the satisfaction it is to obey his Maker in following the dictates of that light God has given him with the hopes of acceptation and reward."²³ In contrast to the emphasis he places on obedience to God, Locke also says that the "principle" of virtue is a principle of self-denial. He writes, "the principle of all virtue and excellency lies in a power of denying

²¹Ibid., 37.

²²Ibid., 105.

²³Ibid., 38.

ourselves the satisfaction of our own desires where reason does not authorize them.”²⁴ Elsewhere he further emphasizes the relationship between virtue and self-denial.²⁵ If we are attempting to discern a clear picture of what Locke means by virtue, it is important to discern whether these statements, which seem to present virtue as having two different foundations, can be reconciled.

These two statements seem to be in opposition, as one says that the “principle” of virtue is one thing, and the other says that it is something else. On the one hand, Locke says that the “principle” of virtue is denying our desires. On the other hand, sounding much more theological, Locke says that the “true principle” is obedience to God in accordance with the light given. These statements, however, can be reconciled in such a way that will give us insight into the relationship between virtue and reason. While the “hopes of acceptation and reward” are a part of the more theological sounding “principle,” that principle, which includes knowledge of duty, the satisfaction of obedience, and the hope for acceptation and reward, is in accord with the “light God has given.” The “light” can refer to the “light of reason,” the “light of revelation,” or both. Locke distinguishes between the light of reason and light of revelation, in the *Essay*. In his distinction though, he concludes that “it still belongs to *reason*, to judge of the truth of its being a revelation, and of the signification of the words, wherein it is delivered.”²⁶ Reason then, and not the church or tradition, is the arbiter of revelation. Because the light of revelation is interpreted by the light of reason, the two, in theory, should be in

²⁴Ibid., 29.

²⁵“the great principle and foundation of all virtue and worth is placed in this, that a man is able to *deny himself* his own desire, cross his own inclinations, and purely follow what reason directs as best though the appetite lean the other way” (Ibid., 25).

²⁶*Essay*, (IV, xviii, 8), 327.

agreement. That is to say, the person who is interpreting whether something is revelation or who is actually interpreting a revelation by judging “of the signification” of its words should arrive at an interpretation that he himself deems reasonable. The person cannot arrive at an interpretation that he deems unreasonable and cannot settle on an interpretation if its rationality is not clear to him. This is not to say that reason and revelation are pitted against each other for Locke.²⁷ In his view “reason gives its suffrage...to the truths revelation has discovered.”²⁸ For Locke, the revelation of the Bible is reasonable. According to Locke, therefore, it is rational for man “to obey his Maker in following the dictates of the light God has given.” In the previous section I showed that the gentleman rules his inclinations by reason and that this reason often works against the body or mind in a manner of self-denial. In this section, we have seen the role of reason in obedience to God. Thus, virtue as self-denial and virtue as obedience to God are both virtue with regards to the rule of reason. Both of these descriptions of the principle of virtue are reconciled because they rest on the light of reason. This reconciliation does not say anything about Locke’s view of how reason actually interprets the dictates of revelation or the relationship of the consultation of reason, virtue, and social life. I have demonstrated that reason consulting and virtue, though laid forth in a seemingly conflicting way, do not necessarily conflict for Locke.

²⁷ In *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, Locke writes, “Whatsoever should thus be universally useful as a standard to which men should conform their manners, must have its authority either from reason or revelation.” He continues saying “He, that anyone would pretend to set up in this kind and have his rules pass for authentic directions, must show that either he builds his doctrine upon principles of reason, self-evident in themselves, and that he deduces all the parts of it from thence, by clear and evident demonstration, or must show his commission from heaven, that he comes with authority from God to deliver his will and commands to the world” (174). Locke writes this in the context of arguing that the world and “wise heathens before our Savior’s time” were in great need of the morality delivered by Jesus. John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Gateway Inc., 1965).

²⁸ Ibid., 178.

I have not actually articulated a detailed picture of the principle of virtue or a specific set of virtues that Locke hopes to inculcate in the gentleman.²⁹ I have shown that the heart of virtue, for Locke - whether it be in self-denial, obedience to God, or both - involves the consultation of reason. Virtue is directed by reason when the student denies his desires and inclinations and follows the dictates of reason. It is also directed by reason when he interprets the moral discourses of the Bible. Locke does not give a clear and complete system of virtue in the *Thoughts*. Instead, he directs us merely to the sources and principles of virtue, as Nathan Tarcov notes, “Locke’s discussion of virtue is necessarily incomplete, not only because it is confined to first foundations but also because it is ‘in general.’”³⁰

Wisdom, Breeding, and Learning

As with the previous ends discussed, Locke mentions wisdom at various places in the *Thoughts*. In the *Thoughts* “wisdom” is practical wisdom. In almost every instance in which Locke speaks of wisdom, he refers clearly to practical wisdom rather than philosophic wisdom or biblical wisdom.³¹ Locke’s references to the student and the aim of wisdom refer, often explicitly, to practical wisdom. His view of wisdom for the education presented in the *Thoughts* is clearest and in direct contrast to philosophic or theoretical wisdom when he says, “*Wisdom* I take . . . for a man’s managing his business

²⁹For a more detailed discussion of particular virtues mentioned in the *Thoughts*, see Nathan Tarcov, *Locke’s Education for Liberty* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 1999), 186-91.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 189.

³¹Tarcov notes this of philosophic wisdom as well, saying “Locke does not refer to any theoretical, contemplative, or otherworldly knowledge” (*Ibid.* 191). By “biblical wisdom,” I refer to the wisdom literature of the Bible in which fear of the Lord is a major theme. I will discuss the relationship between the *Thoughts* and biblical wisdom in more detail in the next chapter.

ably and with foresight in this world.”³² Locke clearly has in mind a particular type of wisdom for the gentleman, a wisdom that is practical and thus tailored to the specific social calling of the student. In the previous chapter we saw that the education of the infant or small child must be suited to the child’s environment along with his particular dispositions and tempers. Similarly here, the education provided to the young gentleman must be suited to particulars of his life such as the business that comes with his rank and estate.

Some might argue that the *Thoughts* directs the student towards philosophic wisdom. However, the text itself, aside from its explicit references to practical wisdom, does not emphasize philosophic wisdom.³³ There is a sense in which Locke wants the student to have a “view of mankind.”³⁴ Locke also connects wisdom to the pursuit of “true notions of things” and with raising the “mind to great and worthy thoughts.”³⁵ He concludes this reference to “great and worthy thoughts” saying that only the “preparation of a child for *wisdom*” can occur during childhood and that anything beyond this “is to be learned from time.” One other point at which philosophic wisdom could be in mind is when Locke says that wisdom is not the “product of some superficial thoughts or much

³²*Thoughts*, 105.

³³Locke writes, “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 learn’d 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” (Ibid., 106). Locke does not ignore philosophic wisdom altogether, he only seems to in the *Thoughts*; philosophic wisdom has a much greater presence in his *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, in which Locke recognizes that the practice of philosophy and the pursuit of truth are contingent upon the leisure one’s station in life affords.

³⁴Ibid., 70.

³⁵Ibid., 106.

reading, but the effect of experience and observation in a man who has lived in the world with his eyes open and conversed with men of all sort.”³⁶ Here, Locke is speaking about philosophic wisdom in a distinctly modern sense, in which wisdom is gained not by contemplation, reflection, submission to an authority, or a divine experience, but through experience of the world and the consultation of a range of possible explanations of the world. Locke’s section on wisdom ends with a tone of resignation, as the degree to which it can be achieved in childhood is limited. Locke says “all that can be done towards it during this unripe age is...to accustom them to truth and sincerity, to a submission to reason, and as much as may be to reflection on their own actions.”³⁷ As with virtue, submission to reason is of great importance in teaching the student wisdom. While Locke refers to philosophic wisdom in the *Thoughts*, his explicit interest in the “popular use” of the word along with the experiential element of wisdom shows that “wisdom” in the *Thoughts* is practical and social.

Locke’s discussion of wisdom is often interwoven with the discussion of “good breeding.” Locke’s practical wisdom seems to deal with affairs in the world in general, whereas breeding seems to deal with particular affairs and face-to-face, daily interactions. Through wisdom the young gentleman manages his business ably, but through good breeding the young gentleman manages his personal relationships well. Locke says that good breeding “has no other use or end but to make people easy and satisfied in their conversation with us.”³⁸ Good breeding seems to be the same as civility, a term used frequently in the *Thoughts*. Such terminology, derived from *civilitas*, highlights the

³⁶Ibid., 69.

³⁷Ibid., 106.

³⁸Ibid., 109.

social orientation of education. Breeding, which merely “sets a gloss upon all his other good qualities,”³⁹ is clearly not the ultimate end of education though. It is posited, however, as an end, and along with wisdom it points us to one of the most emphasized ends in the *Thoughts*. Locke’s discussion of wisdom as prudence and breeding as civility, along with much of Locke’s treatment of learning, show a larger social aim of the *Thoughts*, the gentleman’s life in English society.

The *Thoughts* aims to cultivate a gentleman who is active in the affairs of society and who is well received by those he meets. Locke expresses this in his discussion of the nature of the gentleman’s education when he complains that “our education fits us rather for the university than the world,” just after saying that the most pains should be taken to strengthen the student with that “which will be of most and frequentest use to him in the world.”⁴⁰ When Locke actually discusses “learning,” one of his strongest objections to seventeenth-century curriculum is the emphasis on Latin. Locke complains frequently about the tedious practice of learning Latin and the emphasis that English education had traditionally placed on Latin.⁴¹ Despite his complaints he maintains that it is “absolutely necessary” for the gentleman to know Latin because custom has made it so.⁴² He elaborates further saying that “a man can have no place amongst the learned in this part

³⁹Ibid., 65.

⁴⁰Ibid., 71.

⁴¹ Locke speaks against Latin, calling it furniture (64), for its getting in the way of learning virtues (46), for its greater degree of difficulty than learning French or Italian (61), for its inability to actually make a “fine gentleman” (64), for its not being a part of a gentleman’s calling (69), for the methods in which it is taught (112-113), for the teaching of it being a waste of money (121) for the likelihood of not using it later in life (121), for its lack of use and service (121), for how unpleasant of a business learning it is (129), and because it is foreign, “long since dead everywhere,” and does very little to improve English style (131).

⁴²Ibid., 121.

of the world who is a stranger” to Latin (and Greek).⁴³ While Latin was necessary to read many of the texts in the curriculum of the seventeenth-century gentleman, we see that Locke’s recommendations for the teaching of Latin are not given because of any good that Locke sees in the study of Latin itself. Instead, his prescription is primarily the result of social mores, as he laments saying, “indeed custom, which prevails over every thing, has made it so much a part of education.”⁴⁴ In contrast to Latin, Locke strongly emphasizes that the gentleman learn to dance saying that “it cannot be learned too early.”⁴⁵ So while Latin is necessary because of custom, dancing is necessary because it “give *graceful motions* all the life” and “tends to perfect *graceful carriage*.”⁴⁶ In these instances, Locke conveys the belief that education should prepare the gentleman for society. This is clear when we consider that an aptitude like Latin, which lacks “use and service”⁴⁷ for many, should be learned if society expects a gentleman to have it.

Locke’s emphasis on practicality and usefulness goes beyond his discussion of languages. He approaches the issue of choosing a tutor and a governor with a similar emphasis on equipping the gentleman for active life in the world. In this discussion, as with the discussion of the classical languages, Locke dresses his positive prescription with criticism of seventeenth-century English education. Speaking about textbook writers Locke says, “reason...would advise that their children’s time should be spent in acquiring what might be useful to them when they come to be men rather than to have

⁴³Ibid., 128.

⁴⁴Ibid., 121.

⁴⁵Ibid., 150.

⁴⁶Ibid., 150.

⁴⁷Ibid., 121.

their heads stuffed with a deal of trash.”⁴⁸ While many look for a tutor who can empty out into his pupil the furniture of Latin and logic, Locke believes that the gentleman should have a tutor who is well bred, skilled in the world, and principled in the grounds and foundations of true virtue and generosity.⁴⁹ A tutor who teaches logic may be teaching reasoning skills, but the gentleman’s learning to consult reason for use in the world is most important. Locke’s aim for learning seems to be, like his aims for wisdom and breeding, to equip the gentleman with what is useful for life in the society of English gentry. This brings us back to the broad aim of the *Thoughts*, preparing the student for the gentleman’s calling.

The Gentleman’s Calling

The earlier conclusion that one of the major ends of the education presented in the *Thoughts* is preparation for life in English society, life in the English gentry to be more specific, prompts us to explore Locke’s ultimate design for the class that he hopes will “bring the rest into order.” His design is for a gentleman-citizen who consults reason both for himself and for the society in which he lives. At the beginning of this chapter, I proposed that the discussion of the particular ends of education in the *Thoughts* would give us a better idea of what Locke has in mind when he speaks of the gentleman’s calling. I have discussed the goals of leading the young gentleman to consult reason and rule himself by it, engendering a type of virtue that is led by the light of reason to obedience to God and self-denial, and teaching the young gentleman what is necessary

⁴⁸Ibid., 71.

⁴⁹Ibid., 64-65.

for a life of “vigor, activity, and industry” in English society.⁵⁰ These ends and characteristics that Locke designs for the gentleman give us a good picture of the final condition of the student. However, we must consider what it means for the student to achieve these ends as a member of the gentry.

I have already pointed out that Locke refers to a specific social class when referring to the gentleman with the gentry and those of rank in mind. I have also shown that the education Locke prescribes in the *Thoughts* has a particular emphasis on the rule of reason along with what is practical and useful in the world. In equipping students with what is practical for a calling to a specific social rank, the education in the *Thoughts* is intended to educate young men for citizenship. Stated more simply, because members of a national (English) society (gentry) are citizens, and Locke’s education prepares students to live in this national society, the education is preparing students to be citizens. Locke is educating them not only to be citizens who reside in a society, but citizens who change a society by bringing the lower classes into order. Locke’s hope for the educated gentleman to change society implies that society needs to be changed. I noted earlier, the impetus for Locke’s writing the *Thoughts* is the complaint about early corruption of youth. When we understand the *Thoughts* with a view to the gentleman’s calling and citizenship, we see that Locke does not want merely to cure the specific corruptions, such as sauntering, obstinacy, or cravings, discussed in the early parts of the *Thoughts*, but that he wants to cure what he sees to be a larger corruption in society. To understand better what Locke has in mind for citizenship, we need to look briefly at his larger social philosophy and program for liberal society.

⁵⁰Locke includes giving the student “vigor, activity, and industry,” among other things, in a list of the “great work of a *governor*” (Ibid., 70).

According to Locke, God drove man into society,⁵¹ and this political society exists because of the many challenges to human preservation, freedom, and property. Though God may have initiated it, political society is constituted by the consent of individuals. In his initial description of the beginning of political society in the *Second Treatise*, Locke offers insight into not only the beginning, but also into the natural condition of man and the ends of political society. He writes

Men being, as has been said, by Nature, all free, equal and independent, no one can be put out of this Estate, and subjected to the Political Power of another, without his own *Consent*. The only way whereby any one devests himself of his Natural Liberty, and *puts on the bonds of Civil Society* is by agreeing with other Men to joyn and unite into a Community, for their comfortable, safe, and peaceable living one amongst another, in a secure Enjoyment of their Properties, and a greater Security against any that are not of it.⁵²

In this quotation we see that man's natural condition is one of liberty and that this liberty is only limited by his own consent. His reasons for limiting his liberty are security and peace. Even once this political society is constituted, the consent of the governed remains necessary. Locke argues this extensively in the *Second Treatise*, first saying “Tis true, that whatever Engagements or Promises any one has made for himself, he is under the Obligation of them, but *cannot* by any *Compact* whatsoever, bind *his children* or Posterity.”⁵³ Locke also discusses the dissolution of government later in the last part of the treatise. When the executive or legislative acts “contrary to their Trust”⁵⁴ the government is dissolved. That is to say that the consent of the governed remains

⁵¹ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (New York: Cambridge, 1988), 318.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 330-331.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 346.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 412.

necessary because the terms for their consent to be governed, according to Locke, must be upheld. For example, because the terms of the Trust include the protection of the individual's property, if the legislator attempts to destroy or reclaim this property, the consent is breached and the government, having entered into the state of war with the individuals who provided its original constitution, is no longer valid.

As may be visible from the above discussion, much of Locke's social and political philosophy is crafted in response to the social and political turmoil of his era. Leading into the seventeenth-century, both England and the rest of Europe had existed with political societies that were based upon ruling classes who persisted through generations primarily through the tradition of inheritance. The *Two Treatises* is a response to an argument for a society based on such tradition, a monarchy that is based on patriarchal succession. In a sense, tradition reigned not only in larger political society through the inheritance of offices and estates, but in other areas of society such as Roman Catholic theology, scholasticism's emphasis on *auctoritas*, and as Locke makes clear, in the curriculum of classical education. The modern era diminished the authority of tradition, and the development of a new science gave authority to reason and new scientific methods. Though tradition is not necessarily discarded, conclusions based on it are brought into question, and reason becomes the primary guide for inquiry. We see this attitude quite clearly in Locke's *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*. Locke describes how we come to true understanding, saying

In these two things, viz. an equal indifferency for all truth...and in the examination of our principles, and not receiving any for such nor building on them until we are fully convinced, as rational creatures, of their solidity, truth, and certainty, consists

that freedom of the understanding which is necessary to a rational creature, and without which it is not truly an understanding.⁵⁵

Though Locke recognizes that this pursuit of understanding is contingent upon leisure, he believes that those whose “condition allows them leisure” should be principled in this course.⁵⁶ He recommends that education should inculcate such a rational examination and pursuit of truth rather than a trust and faith in unexamined “notions and tenets” of teachers.⁵⁷

Having discussed Locke’s view of liberal political society, a view that is based on consent rather than tradition and inheritance, and having pointed out that Locke’s attitude towards inquiry and understanding is distinctly modern in terms of reason and tradition, we can return to the question concerning the type of gentleman-citizen that Locke has in mind in the *Thoughts*. The gentleman is a citizen whose condition presumably affords him the amount of leisure needed to rightly conduct his understanding in the pursuit of knowledge. As I have also already mentioned, his calling as a gentleman is a calling to social activity in which he is “to have the knowledge of a man of business, a carriage suitable to his rank, and to be eminent and useful in his country according to his station.”⁵⁸ His ruling himself by reason, being virtuous, and his wisdom, breeding, and learning equip him for this calling. Through being a man equipped with these “ends” and having attained them through an education which has shown him how to avoid being imbibed with “notions and tenets by an implicit faith,” the gentleman-citizen is a modern

⁵⁵*Of the Conduct*, 186.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 219.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 219.

⁵⁸*Thoughts*, 69-70.

citizen who approaches political society in light of the new science rather than tradition. To Locke, consulting reason in social thought clearly guides us to a liberal society. Reason makes things so clear that the gentleman who consults it will understand society in the same way as Locke. In such an approach to social life, Locke's citizen will understand that he is a citizen by virtue of consent. Like Locke though, this rational inquiry will lead him to see that consent is the basis not only for his citizenship, but for citizenship altogether and for the constitution of legitimate political society. Through this understanding, he will embody the virtue, wisdom, breeding, and learning that every gentleman desires for his son. Furthermore, though Locke does not explain exactly how the gentleman will bring the lower classes into order, he intends for the gentleman to be enabled to use his rank to transform traditional society into liberal society.

CHAPTER FOUR

Some Conclusions about the *Thoughts*

We now have an idea of the original condition and the final condition of the student in the *Thoughts*. Furthermore, we have a view to the larger aim of Locke's education. In this chapter, I will look back at what we have seen and will discuss the overall accomplishments that Locke has in mind for education. In other words, I will discuss what it means for the education of the *Thoughts* to take the young gentleman from his original condition to his final condition in relationship to the overall social aim that Locke has in mind. After this, I will consider what Locke's education does not aim to accomplish, specifically a Christian education in the traditional sense. I will offer a description of Christian education with particular consideration of the seventeenth century and Locke's statements about Christianity, and we will see that while the education of the *Thoughts* has some Christian concerns, its chief concerns are not distinctly Christian in any traditional sense. That is to say, these Christian concerns are not the overt Christian concerns of the pre-modern Christendom nor are they a central driving force for Locke. I will essentially argue against the view that Spellman implies when he writes,

Some Thoughts concerning Education would have been an unnecessary work for Locke, a waste of time better employed otherwise in the service of his Creator, had it not been for the fact that he believed all men to be, by their own choice, obnoxious to God - had he not, that is, been a believing Christian.¹

¹Spellman, 210.

I should iterate that I am not arguing against Spellman's final claim about the status of Locke's Christianity. This thesis is not interested in whether or not Locke was a believing Christian, an issue that is far beyond the scope of this project. Aside from his position on Locke's personal belief, Spellman implies that Locke's Christianity and his concern for humanity's orientation to God are the driving ambitions of the *Thoughts*. In contrast to Spellman, I will take a position that is informed by what I have said about Locke's broad aim for the gentleman-citizen. We have seen that the *Thoughts* is guided by Locke's convictions for liberal society. Looking further into these convictions, we will examine briefly Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration* to gain insight into how and why the gentleman's education is distinctly civic in a way that sets it apart from earlier Christian and civic pedagogies.

From Beginning to End, What Locke's Education Aims to Accomplish

The education presented in the *Thoughts*, as I have shown, looks to cultivate a gentleman-citizen. It begins with a member of the gentry, a man of rank, and despite the dispositions of his original moral condition, it leads him to rule himself by reason for the sake of his social calling. Though this intended accomplishment of Locke's education is already apparent, I will discuss it with more precision here. First, I will discuss the intended accomplishment of education for the individual student, and then I will discuss the intended accomplishment of education for society. Briefly looking back, I have shown that Locke does not rely on the systematic positions available for articulating the original condition of the infant and young child. While the final condition of the student is also not laid forth systematically, but as a number of ends with a unifying aim towards citizenship, it is easier to discern. While we have to use analogy to describe the original

condition of the student, we are able to deduce the final condition and ends of education more directly from the text and are able to articulate them in a more systematic fashion. By avoiding a clear systematic position and by relying on analogy in the discussion of the original position, Locke indicates that the original condition is less significant than the education itself and its overall aim of crafting a gentleman-citizen.

Much could be deduced from this conclusion depending on one's interpretation of Locke's understanding of the Fall. Locke's many writings provide the ground to argue both that he denies the traditional Christian view of the Fall altogether and that he maintains a biblical view of the Fall. I believe that Locke's *Homo ante et post lapsum* represents a clear departure from the view of the Bible and the tradition of Christian orthodoxy.² Regardless of Locke's view, the intended accomplishment of Locke's education for the individual should not be viewed in directly Christian, religious, or spiritual terms. Rather, because the intended accomplishment for the student is the cultivation of his use of reason for life in English society, it should be viewed in civic terms. This is not to say that Locke ignores the religious needs of the student. When we recall the relationship that Locke attributes to reason and revelation in the *Essay*, leading the student to consult reason allows him to pursue, though it does not instill, religion, as it allows him to discern what constitutes revelation and to interpret that revelation.

Having discussed the *Thoughts*'s intended accomplishment for the individual student, I will look at the *Thoughts*'s aims for society. As with the individual student, the corruption of society is less important for its transformation than for the means of transformation, the gentleman-citizen and reason, and the end of transformation, liberal

²John Locke, "Homo ante et post Lapsum," (Man before and after the Fall) in *John Locke: Political Essays*, ed. Mark Goldie, (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1997), 320-321. See Appendix p.61 for the text of this short essay.

society. In order to discuss this accomplishment, let us recall our garden analogy in Chapter Two. I concluded that the best description of the original condition of the student is the analogy of a garden. In this analogy we see that soil can be predisposed in various good or bad ways, and through much labor the gardener can cultivate a richer soil and healthy plants. While a good environment needs to be maintained and the plants need to be pruned, there is hope for some of the strongest plants, trees for example, to eventually grow on their own. In this analogy the student is the garden and his dispositions are the soil. His original moral condition is not necessarily corrupt, good, or a *tabula rasa*. Regardless of his original dispositions, he is still susceptible to the corruption of his environment. The plants in the garden are his gentlemanliness - reason, virtue, wisdom, breeding, and learning. The garden owners are the parents and the property on which the garden lies is, for the most part, the home. The parents do much of the work of preparing the soil and planting seeds, but they hire governors and tutors to maintain the garden as it grows. Through this system of education, the student becomes a gentleman rather than a man who was corrupted from youth, a flourishing plant rather than an unkempt weed. Furthermore, the gentleman, in his role as a citizen, brings the lower classes of society in order.

Returning to the intended accomplishment of the education in society, in bringing the lower classes into order, the gentleman-citizen becomes the gardener of civil society. Thus, the garden analogy also seems suited to describe the final social aim of the *Thoughts*. The gentleman-citizen is the garden owner and gardener, society is the garden, and to add to the analogy, the rule of reason is the gentleman's set of tools, his pruning shears, his fertilizer, his irrigation system, etc. The education, as should be clear by now,

deals with the early corruption of youth, moves from this accomplishment to the fashioning of a gentleman-citizen, and finally moves from a transformed gentry to a transformed society. We should note that in the transformation of society the other classes seem to play a passive role. Locke says that those of rank who are set right, “will bring the rest into order.” The lower classes, or the “rest,” do not achieve this order themselves, but are somehow brought into it by the gentlemen-citizens. Gentlemen-citizens, who use reason as their rule, are the actors in the task of gardening and cultivating order. Because the gardening is done on the basis of reason, it is liberal such that it is not principally performed through coercion or force. The liberal act creates a liberal society, a process begun with the education prescribed in the *Thoughts*.

What Locke’s Education Does Not Aim to Accomplish

As I have shown, Locke envisions the education of the gentleman affecting society through the gentleman’s use of reason and social position. His broadest call seems to be for the rational creature to live rationally. While the Bible plays a role in this call, Locke concentrates on reason in a way that does not seem to take account of humans being spiritual or religious creatures. Locke acknowledges human corruption, the “early corruption of youth,” but emphasizes the educational environment of the individual over the possibility that the corruption is inherent or innate. Locke sees corruption in English society, whether from birth or environment, and he hopes to bring the English society into order through a gentleman-citizen who, by consulting reason, reevaluates his society and sees that man is by nature free and lives in any particular political society only by consent. While I have shown that leading the student to rule himself by reason prepares the student for Christianity, which is reasonable according to Locke, it does not impart

Christian belief to him or cultivate it in him. This is to say that, despite Locke's inclusion of the Bible in the education of the gentleman, Locke's education does not emphasize traditional Christian aims but civic aims that set it apart from the tradition.

To demonstrate this, I need to answer the question, what is a traditional Christian education? There is not one concise answer to this question, and any answer, concise or not, will be subject to debate and likely contentious. However, I believe that we can clarify what role of Christianity played in education before Locke in such a way that suits the present enquiry. We can consider "Christian" education generally, in relationship to other pedagogical works of the seventeenth-century, and in terms that fit the concept of Christianity articulated by Locke in *The Reasonableness of Christianity*.

To begin to answer this question, it seems that education that is overtly Christian should have some kind of Christian concern that is not shared in the same way by pedagogies that do not propose to be Christian. For example, some might suggest that an education is Christian because it promotes an aim common to Christianity, such as living in accordance with the "golden rule."³ However, such an education is not necessarily Christian, as an education based upon another religion or philosophy, Confucianism for example, could promote the same end in virtually the same way. This is to say that for an education to be Christian, it must have something distinctly Christian in its aims. It seems that the Christian education, in the broadest sense, should have some primary concern for the student's understanding of and disposition towards what is essential to and distinct about Christianity. Two broadly stated approaches seem to capture what is essential and distinct, and both would likely end up looking similar in practice, despite the initial differences in how they are stated. One approach would be a type of education

³"In everything do to others as you would have them do to you" (Matt. 7:12, NRSV).

that is Christian because of an emphasis on the doctrine of the Trinity. Such an approach, based upon both the Apostle's Creed, would highlight the Trinity and our understanding of its nature and persons as the essential tenet of Christianity. A narrower approach would be concerned with salvation and faith as they are oriented around the Bible's revelation of Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity. While Locke incorporates the Bible into his pedagogy, he does not emphasize belief in or profession of essential doctrine with a view towards faith.⁴ Though engaging in a specific historical examination of Christian education, rather than a broad examination, Lawrence S. Cunningham points in the direction of this Christian tenet saying, "Christian education is, and has historically been, more than just an education of the intellect alone. It is instead an education of both the mind and heart, aiming to convert a person to a deeper existential grasp of faith."⁵ Though Cunningham only mentions faith and does not explicitly mention salvation or Jesus Christ, these are so interrelated that the latter are implicit in the reference to Christian faith. Almost anyone would agree that the "existential grasp of faith" is not Christian, as Cunningham intends it to be, unless the object of the faith is Jesus Christ and the result is salvation. Regardless of the relationship between these approaches, it is clear that the *Thoughts*, despite passing references to the Bible and "the Creed," does not make either of these its primary aim.

⁴Locke says "The Lord's Prayer, the Creeds, and Ten Commandments, 'tis necessary he should learn perfectly by heart" (*Thoughts*, 117). Mere memorization, however, is far from belief and profession. Based on what Locke says, the memorization of these could be social in aim, as it would be embarrassing for a gentleman to stumble through the recitation of these in a church service.

⁵Lawrence S. Cunningham, "Spiritual Direction as Christian Pedagogy," in *Educating People of Faith: Exploring the History of Jewish and Christian Communities*, ed. John Van Engen, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004), 330.

Let us continue to discuss the second narrower approach, as it seems to be the type of consideration made by other pedagogical texts of seventeenth-century England.

The previous paragraph gave a broad idea of the role Christianity historically played in “Christian” educations. We can better understand how the *Thoughts* does or does not attempt to achieve this standard by examining another well-known pedagogical treatise published in seventeenth-century England. Like the *Thoughts*, Milton’s “Of Education” was critical of and sought to improve the educational practices of society.⁶ Like Locke, some have also considered Milton heterodox.⁷ Unlike Locke, however, Milton states the end of education with utmost clarity. Though he uses the term “learning,” Milton does not make the sharp distinction between education and learning like Locke. Thus Milton posits the end of education saying,

The end then of Learning is to repair the ruines of our first Parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the neerest by possessing our souls of true vertue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith makes up the highest perfection.⁸

“Of Education” is significantly shorter than the *Thoughts*, and this can surely account for some of the differences. However, Milton states the “end of Learning” in his second paragraph, and thus gives his entire tract, even when he recommends the study of pagan works, a Christian orientation. Though he only mentions “God,” as opposed to the

⁶“Of Education” was published first in 1644 as a pamphlet and again with a collection of poems in 1673. John Milton, “Of Education,” in *The Riverside Milton*, ed. Roy Flannigan (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 980-986.

⁷See Stephen B. Dobranski and John P. Rumrich, “Heretical Milton” in *Milton and Heresy*, ed. Stephen B. Dobranski and John P. Rumrich (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1998) 1-20. See also John P. Rumrich, “Radical Heterodoxy and Heresy,” in *A Companion to Milton*, ed. Thomas N. Corns (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001) 141-156.

⁸“Of Education,” 980.

Trinity or Jesus Christ, his statement will prove to be distinctly Christian when we examine it carefully.

Milton's end of learning has three features that we should consider briefly: (1) "to repair the ruines," (2) "knowing God aright," and "to love him, to imitate him, to be like him...by possessing our souls of true vertue," and (3) "being united to the heavenly grace of faith" and "the highest perfection." The movement from the ruins to the highest perfection suggests that education has a salvific aim. The first part of Milton's end, "to repair the ruines of our first Parents," refers specifically to the biblical narrative of the Fall. Milton's account of the Fall in *Paradise Lost* is likely the most famous in the English language and is his *magnum opus*.⁹ Without going into a discussion of *Paradise Lost*, I should highlight some of the weight of Milton's reference. His reference to "our first Parents" invokes *Paradise Lost*, a work professing that all of creation has been confounded by Adam and Eve's sin and fall and that a redemptive history, in which the Son of God redeems, exists from this sin until a second eschatological coming of the Son. Moving from ruins to a right knowledge of God shows a reorientation of the soul that then allows for a reorientation of action in loving God, imitating him, being like him, and possessing true virtue. The third feature displays a completed picture of salvation, in which we see the ruined and fallen soul transformed in knowledge and action and united to the "heavenly grace of faith." By invoking "the heavenly grace of faith," Milton suggests that the perfection or completion of education relies both on man but also on God. Where Locke emphasizes the toil of the gardener, Milton emphasizes the toil but

⁹Though "Of Education" seems to have been written before *Paradise Lost*, Milton's first publication of "Of Education" in a book (1673) was after the initial publication of *Paradise Lost* (1666). This legitimates the reader's looking from "Of Education" to *Paradise Lost*.

also looks for God's provision of rain. Further, if perfection is understood in the sense of completion, then the height of perfection, its *telos*, is achieved when the fall is undone and all that was lost is regained. The notion of regaining what was lost invokes Milton's epic *Paradise Regained* in which the Son regains both "lost Paradise" and a heavenly "fairer Paradise."¹⁰ This analysis of "Of Education" is brief and the relationship between the *Thoughts* and "Of Education" is a project in itself. However, it should be clear that Milton's pedagogy, though similar in some respects, takes on a decidedly Christian trajectory and aim that is not at all evident in the *Thoughts*.

The education presented in the *Thoughts* does not have a Christian orientation when considered in light of the view of Christianity presented by Locke himself in his works that directly address Christianity.¹¹ In *The Reasonableness* Locke presents what he has received "by an attentive and unbiased search" of the "sole reading of the Scriptures...for the understanding of the Christian religion."¹² He undertook the search because of dissatisfaction with "most of the systems of divinity,"¹³ though his account is quite brief in respect to the systems of divinity that he read, such as those of Calvin and Francis Turretin.¹⁴ Locke spends much of the work attempting to prove that Jesus was the messiah, as he sees this as one of the few requisite beliefs of Christianity. However,

¹⁰John Milton, *Paradise Regain'd*, in *The Riverside Milton*, ed. Roy Flannigan (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1998), (4:607-17), 781.

¹¹This string of discourses includes *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, *A Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity*, and *A Second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity*.

¹²*Reasonableness*, xxvii.

¹³*Reasonableness*, xxvii.

¹⁴Locke writes to Philippus van Limborch "I went to Calvin, Turretini, and others, who I am compelled to admit, have treated that subject in such a way that I can by no means grasp what they say or what they mean." John Locke, "Locke to Philippus van Limborch, Oates, 10 May 1695," in *John Locke Selected Correspondence*, ed. Mark Goldie (Oxford: Oxford, 2002) 210.

what Locke believes to be the essential belief of Christianity is explicitly stated in *A Second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity*, where he writes

To conclude, what was sufficient to make a man a christian in our Saviour's time, is sufficient still, viz. the taking him for our King and Lord, ordained so by God. What was necessary to be believed by all christians in our Saviour's time, as an indispensable duty, which they owed to their lord and master, was the believing all divine revelation, as far as every one could understand it: and just so it is still, neither more nor less.¹⁵

The statement “as far as every one could understand it” shows, as I discussed in the previous chapter, reason to be the arbiter of revelation, as well as the arbiter of belief and faith. However, Locke does set down the requisite belief that Jesus is the savior and “our King and Lord, ordained so by God.” Anything beyond this is only required insofar as one understands it. If we take this standard, which accords with *The Reasonableness*, as conveying what is essential to and distinct about Christianity, then it is even more clear that the primary aims of *Thoughts* are not distinctly Christian. While the education looks to increase the student's capacities of understanding, the education of the gentleman-citizen presented in the *Thoughts* is not aimed at any requisite belief. Further, while Locke includes the learning and memorization of Christian beliefs such as “the Lord's Prayer, the Creeds, and ten Commandments,”¹⁶ the student is not confronted with the full meaning of these professions as Locke discourages “the promiscuous reading” of the Bible and limits what selections of the Bible are read.¹⁷ The *Thoughts* does not seek in any explicit way, as Milton's “Of Education” does, to cultivate Christian belief, even in such a basic tenet as the one presented above from the *Second Vindication*.

¹⁵John Locke, *A Second Vindication of The Reasonableness of Christianity* (Liberty Fund, 2005) 111, http://oll.libertyfund.org/EBooks/Locke_0812.pdf.

¹⁶*Thoughts*, 117.

¹⁷*Ibid.* 118.

What then is Guiding Locke?

Having shown that *Thoughts*'s education of the gentleman-citizen is not distinctly or overtly Christian, it remains to show what guides Locke in his pedagogy. I have already shown how Locke's education is guided broadly by his convictions concerning liberal society. However, such aims do not necessarily preclude a more traditional Christian approach. Now, in contrast to a view like Spellman's, which sees Locke's Christianity as motivating the *Thoughts*, let us consider more narrowly how the *Thoughts*'s aim for citizenship is guided by Locke's view to liberal society. This will explain the exclusion of essential Christian aims from the *Thoughts*. To better understand the relationship between citizenship, education, and Christianity, let us look briefly to Locke's *A Letter Concerning Toleration*. First, I should point out that referring to the education of the *Thoughts* as a civic education is another way to say that it is an education for citizenship. With the notion that it is a civic education in mind, we see the etymological relationship of this civic education to "civil society."¹⁸ Locke's primary concern in the *Letter* is "to distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion."¹⁹ Just after the statement of this aim, Locke says "The commonwealth seems to me to be a society of men constituted only for the procuring, preserving, and advancing their own civil interests." He then defines civil interests as "life, liberty,

¹⁸ "Civic" is derived from the Latin *civicus*, "belonging to citizens," and "civil" is derived from the Latin *civilis*, "of or pertaining to citizens." "Civic." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. <http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50040545?query_type=word&queryword=civil&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&search_id=ao8T-g95o6r-7889&result_place=1> (accessed June 3, 2007). "Civil." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50040551?query_type=word&queryword=civil&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=ao8T-g95o6r-7889&hilite=50040551 (accessed June 3, 2007).

¹⁹ John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1950) 17.

health, and indolency of body; and the possession of outward things.”²⁰ Locke defines the “church” saying,

A church, then, I take to be a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord in order to the public worshipping of God in such manner as they judge acceptable to Him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls.²¹

These definitions of civil society and the church clarify what a civic education is to Locke but also what it is not. They also reinforce my argument that Locke’s education is not a Christian one in the traditional sense of Christendom but a civic one that sets it apart from those before it. In the medieval era, there was not a sharp distinction between civil society and church society; the two were one. Similarly, in the era before Locke distinguished civil society from the church, a civic education would have had overtly religious aims, insofar as citizenship in a pre-modern European city of man was understood to be citizenship in the city of God. In contrast to this, an education for citizenship in a city where Locke’s distinction is respected is not necessarily an education for citizenship in the city of God. The education of the gentleman-citizen, with its aim toward citizenship in English society, is an education that equips the gentleman for his role in civil society, a role that is distinct from whatever role he may choose to take in a religious society. Further, without explicit designs for the student’s salvation or the salvation of society, the *Thoughts* is not looking to create citizens for the city of God. In this way it brings the lower classes in order in a civil sense rather than in a religious sense.

As the title, suggests, toleration is a central concern of the *Letter*. After demarcating the realms of civil society and the church, Locke discusses how toleration is

²⁰Ibid., 17.

²¹Ibid. 20.

practiced and how far toleration extends in each realm. In the case of the church, “stubborn and obstinate persons” can only be cast out of the society; the sword cannot be used.²² While the sword is available to the civil society, Locke presents a view of toleration in which the civil magistrate does not “forbid the preaching or professing of any speculative opinions.” The civil magistrate tolerates Roman Catholics, Jews, heathens who “doubt of both Testaments,” “Mahometans,” and pagans because their beliefs “have no manner of relation to the civil rights of the subjects.”²³ The only people that the civil magistrate does not tolerate on the basis of religious professsion are atheists, though this is not because of a religious concern of the magistrate but a civil one, because the “bonds of human society” require belief in “the being of a God.”²⁴ Locke’s convictions about the role of religious toleration in liberal society help us to understand why essential Christian belief is not the focus of the *Thoughts*’s civic education. If Locke hopes for civil society to be transformed into a society in which a plurality of religious beliefs is tolerated, then he must ultimately accept the possibility that the gentleman may not be an orthodox Christian, or even a Christian at all. For, in Locke’s liberal society, the gentleman does not inherit the religious beliefs or faith of his parents. Instead, he keeps his mind “in a perfect indifferency, not inclining to either side, any farther than evidence settles it by knowledge, or the overbalance of probability give it the turn of assent and belief.”²⁵ He lends his beliefs to what is reasonable and conforms to his

²²Ibid. 23.

²³Ibid. 45, 56.

²⁴Ibid. 52.

²⁵ *Of the Conduct*, 220.

understanding. While Locke believes that Christianity is reasonable, Christian belief is not required in the liberal society he envisions, even in the case of the gentleman and even though the study of theology is “every man’s duty.”²⁶ The notion of education transforming society is contingent upon whether or not society can be transformed and what roadblocks lie in the way of transformation. In the case of the *Thoughts*, as we have seen, the transformation relies on a gentleman who maintains reason as his rule and is prepared for social life in his virtue, practical wisdom, good breeding, and learning.

A Final Conclusion

The *Thoughts* offers an education that crafts the student into a gentleman-citizen who rules himself by reason and is cultivated for social life in the gentry but also for a social life of “gardening” and transforming English society. I have looked closely at the text of the *Thoughts* and have articulated its accomplishments. While the explicit scope of the *Thoughts* is narrow, I have shown that its aims direct us towards Locke’s larger social and political philosophy. The *Thoughts* then, presents an education for the citizenship of a modern gentleman that is not religious but is consistent with Locke’s other works, as its accomplishments and aims are the cultivation of the modern gentleman and a liberal society.

²⁶In *Of the Conduct*, Locke speaks of theology as the queen of the sciences saying that “This is that noble study which is every man’s duty, and everyone that can be called a rational creature is capable of” (195). I should point out though that he only says that it is duty to study theology, not to hold and profess a particular belief. At this end of his discussion he adds “it is undoubtedly a wrong use of my understanding to make it [the science of theology] the rule and measure of another man’s; a use which it is neither fit for nor capable of” (196).

APPENDIX

John Locke, "Homo ante et post lapsum," (1692)¹

Man was made mortal, [and] put into a possession of the whole world, where, in the full use of the creatures, there was scarce room for any irregular desires, but instinct and reason carried him the same way, and being neither capable of covetousness or ambition, when he had already the free use of all things, he could scarce sin. God therefore gave him a probationary law whereby he was restrained from one only fruit, good, wholesome and tempting in itself. The punishment annexed to this law was a natural death. For though he was made mortal, yet the tree of life should, after [his] having observed this probationary law, to a sufficient testimony of his obedience, have clothed him with immortality without dying. But he sinned, and the sentence of death was immediately executed, for he was thrust out from the tree of life (Gen. 3:22). And so being excluded from that which could cure any distemper [which] could come to free a use of the creatures, and renew his age, he began to die from that time, being separated from this source of life. So that now he, and in him all his posterity, were under a necessity of dying, and thus sin entered into the world and death by sin. But here again God puts him under a new covenant of grace and thereby into a state of eternal life, but not without dying. This was the punishment of that first sin to Adam and Eve, viz. death and the consequence, but not punishment of it to all their posterity, for they, never having any hopes or expectations given them of immortality, to be born mortal, as man now [is] made, cannot be called a punishment. By this sin Adam and Eve came to know good and

¹ John Locke, "*Homo ante et post Lapsum*," (Man before and after the Fall) in *Political Essays*, ed. Mark Goldie, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.320-321.

evil, i.e. the difference between good and evil, for without sin man should not have known evil. Upon their offence they were afraid of God: this gave them frightful ideas and apprehensions of him and that lessened their love, which turned their minds to that nature, for this root of all evil in them made impressions and so infected their children, and when private possessions and labour, which now the curse on the earth made necessary, by degrees made a distinction of conditions, it gave room for covetousness, pride, and ambition, which by fashion and example spread the corruption which has so prevailed over mankind. JL

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