The wide gulf separating Locke from his predecessor Milton is evident at the first glance. Milton describes an education conducted in boarding schools at which boys would live together for years in "troops" of a hundred or more. Locke describes an emphatically private moral education, in the bosom of the private home, under the loving and painstaking supervision of the parents, and with the assistance of a carefully selected and well-paid private tutor. In effect, this means that Locke's treatise, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, is immediately directed toward that small minority of the population constituted by the gentry and the nobility. Nonetheless, as Pierre Coste, Locke's French translator, stresses, the actual substance of Locke's educational prescriptions is "universal" in scope, applying to "all sorts of children." Locke aims his message at the upper class partly because he sees no prospect in the foreseeable future of families in a lower station possessing the leisure and financial resources required to carry out the time-consuming, difficult, and complex labor that Locke conceives to be necessary for a truly sound and effective moral education. But Locke makes it clear that he hopes and expects that a reform, under his auspices, of upper-class education, character, and outlook will have an indirect but profound long-run impact on the way of life of the whole nation. As Locke says in the epistle dedicatory to the treatise:

The well Educating of their Children is so much the Duty and Concern of Parents, and the Welfare and Prosperity of the Nation so much depends on it, that I would have every one lay it seriously to Heart; and after having well examined and distinguished what Fancy, Custom or Reason advises in the Case, set his Helping Hand to promote every where that Way of training up Youth, with regard to their several Conditions, which is the easiest, shortest, and likeliest to produce vertuous, useful, and able Men in their distinct Callings: Though that most to be taken Care of, is the Gentle-
man's Calling. For if those of that Rank are by their Education once set right, they will quickly bring all the rest into Order.²

Locke's Attack on Schooling in the Name of Education

In the passage just quoted, as in his numerous references to education in the Two Treatises of Government, Locke reveals his paradoxical and radically unclassical view: although education is of supreme importance to the nation and therefore to the government, it is not a responsibility or a "duty" of government, but rather, "the duty and concern of parents."³ For education is above all moral education, which in turn is inseparable from some sort of religious education or at the least some distinct posture toward religion; and, as we have seen, morality and religion are according to Locke not the legitimate business of coercive governmental authority.

Locke is not dogmatically opposed to state schools; in the case of the very poor, he advocates state intervention and support with a view to providing the minimal moral and religious discipline required for guiding destitute young people to gainful employment and hence survival.⁴ But the basic thrust of his conception of the political community is toward individual, familial, and private responsibility for the essential moral formation of the souls of the young.

It is not merely Locke's concern with liberating individual souls from the coercive hand of governmental authority that leads him to recommend private education at home, for he is as severely critical of private schools as he is of public ones. Schools, Locke argues, are not the proper place to carry on effective childhood education.⁵ On the negative side, Locke draws attention to the pernicious influence crowds of boys have upon one another's character development, and he deduces the advantages that might accrue from an educational reform that would assimilate the education of boys to that traditionally bestowed on girls.

He that considers how diametrically opposite the Skill of living well, and managing, as a Man should do, his Affairs in the World, is to that malapertness, tricking, or violence learnt amongst Schoolboys, will think the Faults of a Privater Education infinitely to be preferr'd to such Improvements; and will take care to preserve his Child's Innocence and Modesty at home. . . . Nor does any one find, or so much as suspect, that that Retirement and Bashfulness, which their Daughters are brought up in, makes them less knowing or less able Women. Conversation, when they come into the World, soon gives them a becoming assurance; and whatsoever, beyond that, there is of rough and boisterous, may in Men be very well spared too. . . .
Vertue is harder to be got, than a Knowledge of the World; and if lost in a Young Man is seldom recovered. Sheepishness and ignorance of the World, the faults imputed to a private Education, are neither the necessary Consequences of being bred at home, nor if they were, are they incurable Evils....

... Boys will unavoidably be taught assurance by Conversation with Men, when they are brought into it; and that is time enough.

... But how any one's being put into a mixed Herd of unruly Boys... fits him for civil Conversation, or Business, I do not see. And what Qualities are ordinarily to be got from such a Troop of Play-fellows as Schools usually assemble together from Parents of all kinds, that a Father should so much covet, is hard to divine....

... Gentlemen's Houses are seldom without Variety of Company: They should use their Sons to all the Strange Faces that come there, and ingage them in Conversation with Men of Parts and breeding, as soon as they are capable of it. (Some Thoughts Concerning Education, sec. 70)

Locke is keenly aware that the company of the servants who inhabit an upper-class home may be at least as dangerous as the influence of schoolboys, and therefore he stresses that by an education in the home he means an education in which the children are “kept as much as may be in the Company of their Parents, and those to whose care they are committed” (sec. 69). The selection of the latter, and especially of the tutor, Locke regards as a matter of the gravest moment. For, and here we come to the positive side of his argument against schools, Locke insists on the need for the most sensitive attention to the individual development, needs, and circumstances of each child being educated, and furthermore, he insists on the need for a constant regard to the sort of model being set for the young person under one's charge. It is the practical impossibility of such individually tailored education in schools that forms Locke's most serious reason for rejecting schooling, despite its admitted virtues.

Being abroad, 'tis true, will make him bolder, and better able to bustle and shift amongst Boys of his own age; and the emulation of Schoolfellows, often puts Life and Industry into young Lads. But till you can find a School, wherein it is possible for the Master to look after the Manners of his Scholars, and can shew as great Effects of his Care of forming their Minds to Virtue, and their Carriage to good Breeding, as of forming their Tongues to the learned Languages; you must confess that you have a strange value for words....

... For let the Master's Industry and Skill be never so great, it is impossible he should have 50. or 100. Scholars under his Eye, any longer than
they are in the School together: Nor can it be expected, that he should instruct them Successfully in any thing, but their Books: The forming of their Minds and Manners requiring a constant Attention, and particular Application to every single Boy, which is impossible in a numerous Flock; And would be wholly in vain (could he have time to Study and Correct every one's particular Defects, and wrong Inclinations) when the Lad was to be left to himself, or the prevailing Infection of his Fellows, the greatest part of the Four and twenty Hours. . . .

... In all the whole Business of Education, there is nothing like to be less hearken'd to, or harder to be well observed, than what I am now going to say; and that is, that Children should from their first beginning to talk, have some Discrete, Sober, nay, Wise Person about, whose Care it should be to Fashion them aright, and keep them from all ill, especially the infection of bad Company. I think this province requires great Sobriety, Temperance, Tenderness, Diligence, and Discretion; Qualities hardly to be found united in Persons, that are to be had for ordinary Salaries; nor easily to be found any where. (secs. 70, 90)

The Contrast with Classical Communal Education

To form a just estimate of the import, the strength, and the difficulties of Locke's famous attack on schooling in the name of education, it is helpful to draw out a bit the contrast with classical republican educational theory. At first sight, it seems obvious that a version of precisely the sort of "herd" education that Locke deplores lies at the very heart of the rather militaristic classical educational ideal. As Plato's Athenian Stranger puts it near the conclusion of the most elaborate classical proposal for a system of public education:

The most important thing is that no one, male or female, should ever be without a ruler, and that no one's soul should acquire the habit of doing something on its own and alone, either seriously or in play; at all times, in war and in peace, it should live constantly looking to and following the ruler, governed by that man in even the briefest matters—such as standing when someone gives the order, and walking and exercising in the nude and washing and eating and getting up at night to guard and carry messages, and in dangers, not pursuing someone or retiring before another without an indication from the rulers. In a word, one should teach one's soul by habits not to know, and not to know how to carry out, any action at all apart from the others; as much as possible everyone should in every respect live always in a group, together, and in common—for there is not nor will
there ever be anything stronger, better, and more artful than this for producing security and victory in war. This ought to be practiced during peacetime, from earliest childhood: ruling the rest and being ruled by others.  

As Locke notes, the classical authors are far from scorning the crucial role played by family and especially parents in the education of the young. But the classical educational theorists are impressed by the fragility and weakness of even the most determined parental education in the face of the overwhelming strength of the customs and models created by the specific, reigning political "regime" or "culture" (politeia), under whose coercive legal and moral authority the family always finds itself. Besides, weighing at least equally heavily against the family as custodian of moral education are the oft-repeated classical animadversions on the family as the most deeply rooted source of private interest—including both private property or acquisitiveness and private emotional attachment. Plato goes so far as to have Socrates experiment with the abolition of the private family and of parenthood (in anything other than the biological sense), and there is in all classical educational writing a deep wariness of the family's capacity and tendency to draw men away from the public and common to the private and personal.

Yet because of the ultimately profound reservation the classical philosophers harbor against all life that is limited to the horizon of politics or the city, there is also in the classical texts an unobtrusive but in the final analysis telling reservation against the platoonlike character of civic education. Near the outset of the same Laws in which he develops so regimented a civic educational scheme, Plato has the Athenian Stranger say of the regimentation in education practiced by Sparta and Crete: "You keep your young in a flock, like a bunch of colts grazing in a herd. None of you takes his own youngster apart, drawing him, all wild and complaining, away from his fellow grazers. None of you gives him a private groom and educates him by currying and soothing him, giving him all that is appropriate for child rearing." The Athenian Stranger thus indicates his knowledge of a superior, private education which presupposes the public and herdlike education but which requires—at the age of adolescence—an enforced separation of the youngster from the herd.

Here is yet another facet of the fundamental paradox that runs throughout classical republican educational thought. The human being is that animal who is the political animal, but the human being is also that animal whose nature, rooted in and springing out of politics or the city, has the potential radically to transcend politics. Civic education must therefore be distinguished from a higher, philosophic education. The latter is necessarily private and informal and is indeed preoccupied with the diversity and individuality of students. But only
for rare human beings and only under rare circumstances will such meticulous attention to individuality and transcendence of civic life result in virtue and fulfillment. Furthermore, the nature of such human beings and their potential to be affected by a personal, philosophic, or proto-philosophic educative experience emerge only in adolescence and are at best dimly foreshadowed in the earlier years of childhood. Accordingly, while the classical philosophers admit the importance of private education of very young children within the home, they say relatively little about it, though they try to give some constructive advice and guidance to heads of families and cities. Moreover, they do not expect heads of households to devote much attention to the education of the potential philosophers. The existence of a distinct class of philosophers is to be recognized and its interests attended to, but in the interstices or even at the margins of organized educational institutions. The Socratic philosophers reveal their most serious educational concern only in a somewhat reserved way, by expressing their aspiration to educate “gentlemen”: men who rise above ordinary citizenship through a partially independent moral seriousness and an attendant capacity for mature reflection that enables them to be open to at least the more superficial charms of philosophy.

Locke, in striking contrast, says practically nothing about the dichotomy between philosophic and subphilosophic education. He elevates to the center of educational attention the individuality of human beings in general and puts the focus from the outset on the education of the vast majority of people who are less than supremely gifted. His treatise on education, with its painstaking attention to the character of young children, certainly has no equivalent in the classical literature. This new and, from the classical perspective, meticulous concern with human infancy is grounded in Locke’s new conception of human nature. Locke’s famous denial of all innate moral ideas, and his equally famous and correlative doctrine of the state of nature, entail the notion that man is endowed with practically no mental or spiritual natural inclinations which may serve as moral guidelines. Mankind by nature exhibits no steady positive goal, no reliable conscience, no universal principles of social organization. If, and only if, we accept this denuded conception of human nature, we become open to the recognition that man is a being with hitherto undiscovered potential malleability and even perfectibility. Human beings are by nature almost pure potential. Because humanity is so little defined by nature, humanity can largely define itself—once we acknowledge the absence of essential or natural or predestined character and recognize the molding power of education.

According to Locke, human nature is directed neither toward citizenship nor toward philosophy; but, being potentially rational, or capable of making reason the mighty tool of the passions, mankind can direct itself toward cooperative labor, protection, and comfort. By accepting humanity’s diversity and lack of nat-
ural organization or directedness, thinking humans can set to work reshaping their existence by working on the passions and thus—especially if the very young are gotten hold of in the right way—may create societies that are "natural" in the peculiar sense of being rational responses to the poverty and disharmony of our given natural condition.

Locke's philosophy of education thus carries to new heights that extraordinarily ambitious and public-spirited Baconian enterprise, in which philosophy does not simply contemplate the truth, nor manipulate and exploit it, but instead, from the truth, generates or procreates a humane life. In the richly metaphorical words of Francis Bacon,

The greatest error of all the rest is the mistaking or misplacing of the last or furthest end of knowledge. . . . as if there were sought in knowledge a couch whereupon to rest a searching and restless spirit; or a terrace for a wandering and variable mind to walk up and down with a fair prospect; or a tower of state for a proud mind to rest itself upon; or a fort or commanding ground for strife and contention; or a shop for profit or sale; and not a rich storehouse for the glory of the Creator and the relief of man's estate. . . . Neither is my meaning, as was spoken of Socrates, to call philosophy down from heaven to converse upon the earth; that is, to leave natural philosophy aside, and to apply knowledge only to manners and policy. But as both heaven and earth do conspire and contribute to the use and benefit of man; so the end ought to be, from both philosophies to separate and reject vain speculations, and whatsoever is empty and void, and to preserve and augment whatsoever is solid and fruitful: that knowledge may not be as a courtesan, for pleasure and vanity only, or as a bondwoman, to acquire and gain to her master's use; but as a spouse, for generation, fruit, and comfort.11

To appreciate the radicalism of Locke's treatise on education, it will be illuminating to contrast it, as we proceed, not only with Milton, but also with two other influential educational treatises that had appeared in English in the previous couple of generations and that continued to be read by Americans in the eighteenth century. The first of these is Obadiah Walker's Of Education, Especially of Young Gentlemen. Though Walker was a Roman Catholic, his treatise was calculated to have a universal appeal to English gentlemen, and it certainly spoke to their typical domestic situation in the late seventeenth century much more aptly than anything Milton had written. The success of Walker's Of Education is indicated by the fact that it went through six editions in the seventeen years after its first publication in 1673. But equally or more revealing is the fact that after 1700 Walker was not again reprinted: Locke's treatise swept the field
(though Walker's "excellent Treatise" is still cited twice by Benjamin Franklin in his *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania*). Our second comparative benchmark will be the influential discussion of early childhood education in the "Letters on Education" of the Presbyterian teacher and divine John Witherspoon. Witherspoon's work is deeply indebted, sometimes to the point of paraphrase, to Locke; all the more striking and illuminating are those respects in which Witherspoon departs from Locke, in the name of Christianity and the conscience.

### Education as the Mastery of Nature

The goal of Lockean education is an enlightened self-interest grounded in rational self-control; the self-control is buttressed and the self-interest enlarged by a sense of dignity rooted in the recognition bestowed by similarly rational fellow citizens. In Nathan Tarcov's felicitous formulation:

> The gentleman's education Locke advocates is supportive of the politics he taught. It forms men of business and affairs. They are physically fit and courageous, able to be soldiers if necessary. But, much more important, they are willing and able to concern themselves with their estates, perhaps even with trade, and to be active and informed in public affairs... They are well formed to further the public interest by attending to private property while being at the same time vigilant observers of government, awake to the danger of tyranny while being no source of such danger themselves, and plausible representatives of the people should the need arise.

With a view to this goal, the principal task of moral education, in Locke's estimation, is instilling in children a capacity to master their natural inclinations—"their natural wrong Inclinations" (sec. 90). As we have already remarked, for Locke the human being naturally needs the inner rule of reason to escape from a kind of chaotic sociability, but the human animal does not automatically possess or even naturally develop such rule. As a consequence, the human being is by nature, or originally and spontaneously, a dangerous creature both for itself and for others.

I told you before that Children love Liberty;... I now tell you, they love something more; and that is Dominion: And this is the first Original of most vicious Habits, that are ordinary and natural. This love of Power and Dominion shews it self very early...

We see Children as soon almost as they are born (I am sure long before they can speak) cry, grow peevish, sullen, and out of humour, for nothing
but to have their Wills. They would have their Desires submitted to by others; they contend for a ready compliance from all about them. (secs. 103-4)

Or as Locke says in the rather more brutal Essay Concerning Human Understanding: “Robberies, Murders, Rapes, are the Sports of Men set at Liberty from Punishments and Censure. . . . Principles of Actions indeed there are lodged in Men’s Appetites, but these are so far from being innate Moral Principles, that if they were left to their full swing, they would carry Men to the over-turning of all Morality.”

These drastic defects or disorders of the mind to which education must respond Locke does not ascribe to sin or to the Fall; accordingly, he never suggests that the remedy for them is to be found in fear of God or supplication for divine grace and redemption. For Locke’s first readers, the contrast in this fundamental respect with Obadiah Walker as well as John Milton would have been vivid. Walker speaks repeatedly of the need for divine grace, while urging constant prayer for this grace on the part of children, tutors, and especially parents. Walker stresses piety and daily religious worship as the first “calling” or “duty” of a gentleman; what is more, the Roman Catholic Walker anticipates the Puritan Cotton Mather in recommending frequent reminders to children of death, judgment day, and the awesome alternatives of either everlasting punishment or everlasting bliss in the afterlife.

It is also in this respect that Witherspoon takes his greatest distance from Locke. Witherspoon opens his first letter on education by emphasizing that education is to be regarded as the “duty” of a “Christian” as well as a “citizen.” As he reminds his addressee, “You and I have chiefly in view the religious education of children.” This means primarily, Witherspoon goes on to say, that one “desires to educate his children in the fear of God.” “The end I consider as most important,” Witherspoon declares in the third letter, “is, the glory of God in the eternal happiness and salvation of children.”

Locke’s stark departure from the well-beaten track concerning the role of religion in family life and education needs to be stressed, given contemporary scholars’ misunderstanding of this central aspect of his educational philosophy and influence. For example, Lawrence Cremin has somehow come away from his perusal of Locke’s text with the impression that it is “a devotional manual in the tradition of [Lewis Bayly’s] The Practise of Pitie” and has depended on this gross error in his attempt to understand the impact of Locke’s treatise on the educational ideas of Americans in the eighteenth century. Cremin makes the astounding claim that Locke advises parents, in his treatise on education, to “ensure that the Bible itself is systematically studied as the foundation of all morality.” Since Cremin provides no specific citations to the text of Locke, it is impossible to ascertain what passages led him to such a misreading.
The fact is that Locke expresses grave reservations about children's reading, let alone studying, the Bible; the Fables of Aesop, Locke says, is "the only Book almost that I know fit for Children" (sec. 189). Locke was as good as his word: He arranged to have a new edition of Aesop published, and recent research has discovered both the previous edition by Hoole and the pattern in the changes that Locke introduced into his own. According to Robert Horwitz and Judith Finn, Locke "eliminated two fables that portrayed reliance upon religion as a wise or advantageous policy, as well as several fables portraying women in an unfavourable light. Perhaps the most noteworthy change made by Locke and Grigg in their rendition of the Hoole fables is that classical references were somewhat diminished, while appeals to the authority of the classics were largely omitted." As a replacement for the Bible, Locke recommends substituting a brief catechism of "moral rules scattered up and down in the Bible" (sec. 159), and "a good History of the Bible, for young people to read: wherein if every thing, that is fit to be put into it, were laid down in its due Order of Time, and several things omitted, which are suited only to riper Age, that Confusion, which is usually produced by promiscuous reading of the Scripture, as it lies now bound up in our Bibles would be avoided" (sec. 190, italics added).

Locke indeed insists that "there ought very early to be imprinted on [the child's] Mind a true Notion of God, as of the independent Supreme Being, Author and Maker of all Things, from whom we receive all our Good, who loves us, and gives us all Things." To this "true" God, children are to pray morning and evening in "some plain and short Form of Prayer." But this unitarian God of Nature, who "made and governs all things, hears and sees every Thing, and does all manner of Good to those that love and obey him," is the sum and substance of divinity. There is no mention here of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Second Coming, sin, grace, redemption, the resurrection of the body—or, for that matter, any miracle of any sort, any reference to the soul, heaven and hell, or divine punishment of any kind. Locke in fact repeatedly exhorts parents to make every effort to keep their children from associating fear, including fear of punishment, with God. Locke boldly adds, "I think it would be better if Men generally rested in such an Idea of God" (sec. 136); and he has the audacity to sum up his educational teaching using Juvenal's counsel against prayer as something either superfluous or mischievous: "Nullum numen abest si sit prudentia [No divine spirit is absent where there is prudence]" (sec. 200).

The disorder of the human personality is, according to Locke, natural. The proper remedy is consequently a contra-natural, artificial implantation, beginning at an early age, of habits of self-control resting initially on fear of parents and eventually on a reconstruction of the natural lust for power and a modulation of the natural desires for liberty and pleasure. "Reward and Punishment," Locke insists, "are the only Motives to a rational Creature: these are the Spur
and Reins, whereby all Mankind are set on work, and guided, and therefore they are to be made use of to Children too" (sec. 54). The specific reward and punishment that give virtue its strength in the human heart are "Esteem and Disgrace," which "are, of all others, the most powerful Incentives to the Mind, when once it is brought to relish them" (sec. 56). 21

The mind can be brought to such a point because the natural desire for power can easily be linked to prestige, whose conventional character allows it to be shaped by praise and blame. In a rational Lockean environment, praise and blame will always be closely correlated with the display or lack of display of reasonableness. Children

love to be treated as Rational Creatures sooner than is imagined. 'Tis a Pride should be cherished in them, and as much as can be, made the greatest instrument to turn them by.

But when I talk of Reasoning, I do not intend any other, but such as is suited to the Child's Capacity and Apprehension. No Body can think a Boy of Three, or Seven Years old, should be argued with, as a grown Man. . . . there is no Vertue they should be excited to, nor Fault they should be kept from, which I do not think they may be convinced of; but it must be by such Reasons as their Age and Understanding are capable of. (sec. 81)

The appeal to "reason," then, is in fact a benevolently duplicitous appeal to the childish appearance of being reasonable or to the childish pleasure of being reputed to be reasonable, and this appearance or reputation is exhibited through behavior that is grounded at least as much in habituation as in deliberation: "habits working more constantly, and with greater Facility than Reason: Which, when we have most need of it, is seldom fairly consulted, and more rarely obey'd" (sec. 110). One may appropriately contrast here Witherspoon's words in his fifth letter on education: "Let not human reasonings be put in the balance with divine wisdom. . . . It is not the native beauty of virtue, or the outward credit of it, or the inward satisfaction that arises from it, or even all these combined together, that will be sufficient to change our natures and govern our conduct; but a deep conviction, that unless we are reconciled to God, we shall without doubt perish everlastingly." 22

Locke's focus on the grounding of virtue in habits instilled in early childhood echoes Aristotle's teaching in book 2 of the Nicomachean Ethics, but Locke sharply disagrees with Aristotle over the natural basis and hence the actual substance of the virtuous habituation. Locke rejects the notion, handed down from the Greco-Roman classics but also from the biblical tradition, that virtue conceived as noble or sublime (and not merely as useful, pleasant, or prestigious)
has an intrinsic attraction to and rootedness in human nature, as part of an essential human longing for self-transcendence and self-overcoming for the sake of higher sources of meaning and devotion. The artificial sense of shame, Locke avers, “is the only true Restraint belonging to Virtue” (sec. 78). Nowhere in Locke’s education are children oriented toward heroism, self-sacrifice, or sublime asceticism. There is no hint of a call to imitate the sufferings and labors of Christ, and very little if any reference to the great classical civic educational themes of patriotism, military heroism, and passionate friendship or love. The inspiration of poetry and the other fine arts occupies at best a subordinate place in Locke’s educational doctrine; and Locke does not suggest that an attachment to specific heroes or heroic models, in history or literature, ought to figure prominently in moral education.

The contrast with both Obadiah Walker and John Witherspoon, as well as John Milton, is again sharp. Walker speaks repeatedly of the need to appeal to the child’s sense of honor and conscience as something above and beyond a sense of shame or a desire for repute and fame: When teaching the child “to carry himself decently, tell him, not that the people will think better of him, that he shall be more accepted in conversation; but tell him that he ought to carry himself as the noblest and sublimest of God’s creatures.” Awe for the sublime, yearning for heroism, and reverence, not merely respect, for one’s self and soul are to be cultivated through the call and the experience of self-sacrifice; Christ’s sufferings are to be held up as exemplars of the sufferings, including disgrace and shame, that the child should be prepared to endure in adult life. Of course, only a handful can be saints or heroes, but those few are relevant models for everyone, and the preparation for the call to heroism must be unceasing. Every child should strive for a life of “more leisure for devotion, more severity towards our selves, more, and more heroicall, acts of virtues, which approach nearest to the life of our Lord.”

It is worth recalling here the classic statement of the pre-Lockean view as found in the oft-cited essay “On the Education of Children,” attributed to Plutarch. After recommending the examples of Socrates, Plato, and Archytas in their mastery of anger and moral indignation, the author says:

But someone will say these things are hard, and difficult to imitate. I too know that. But one must try as much as possible, using these as models, to rein in the greater part of unrestrained and raging anger; for in other respects as well we are not really comparable to those men, in experience or in gentlemanliness. But since we too are, no less than they, priests, as it were, of divine mysteries, and torchbearers for Wisdom, we attempt, as much as is in our capacity, to imitate and come within hailing distance in these respects.
Witherspoon, in letter 3, observes, “You cannot easily believe the weight that it gives to family authority, when it appears visibly to proceed from a sense of duty, and to be itself, an act of obedience to God.” Locke explicitly criticizes moral upbringing that devotes great energy to the attempt to instill in children a sense of duty or an adherence to rules. As much as possible, parents should induce in the child a desire to do what ought to be done; the appeal should be not only to the child’s primitive “reasoning” about what is good or pleasant for him but also to the natural delight all humans feel in freedom from constraint or rule.

None of the Things they are to learn should ever be made a Burthen to them, or imposed on them as a Task. Whatever is so proposed presently becomes irksome. . . . Is it not so with grown Men? What they do cheerfully of themselves, do they not presently grow sick of, and can no more endure, as soon as they find it is expected of them, as a Duty? Children have as much a Mind to shew that they are free, that their own good Actions come from themselves, that they are absolute and independent, as any of the proudest of you grown Men, think of them as you please. (sec 73)

Locke recognizes pitfalls in this advice, but he insists that with great care they are avoidable. He does not mean that children should be indulged or allowed to do just as they wish at every moment. They should be led by habit, praise, and example to learn to enjoy exercising the mental self-control that enables one to shift from one occupation or train of thought to another that is less immediately enjoyable or inviting, but recognized as advantageous. Even turning away from what one enjoys can become a matter of enjoyment, if the education is well managed: “You cannot imagine of what Force Custom is” (sec. 14). The most powerful lever of custom is example, especially the example set by the parents in every moment of their lives. Many have said this, or something similar, but no one before Locke went so far in reducing the natural inclinations of man toward zero, thereby transforming human beings, especially in childhood, into moral and spiritual chameleons.

Children (nay, and Men too) do most by Example. We are all a sort of Chameleons, that still take a Tincture from things near us.

. . . He that will have his Son have a Respect for him, and his Orders, must himself have a great Reverence for his Son. Maxima debetur puérīs reverentia [Boys are owed the greatest reverence—Juvenal, Satires 14]. You must do nothing before him, which you would not have him imitate. . . . if you assume to your self the liberty you have taken, as a Privilege belonging to riper Years, to which a Child must not aspire, you do but add new force to
your Example, and recommend the Action the more powerfully to him. For you must always remember, that Children affect to be Men earlier than is thought. (secs. 67, 71)

Through example, rough-and-tumble play, and well-gauged praise and blame, children may be habituated to considerable pain and discomfort: "They should be harden'd against all Sufferings, especially of the Body, and have no Tenderness but what rises from an ingenuous Shame, and a quick Sence of Reputation" (sec. 113). In this way, though "true fortitude" is something "so few Men attain to, that we are not to expect it from Children," children may nevertheless take the first steps toward "noble and manly Steadiness," especially if one is careful "to keep Children from Frights of all kinds" and "by gentle degrees, to accustom Children to those things, they are too much afraid of"—bearing in mind that "the only thing, we naturally are afraid of, is Pain, or loss of Pleasure" (sec. 115).

But, just as there is no particular place in Locke's political theory for the right to keep and bear arms, so there is no place in Locke's moral education for the practice of hunting. In the classical republican tradition, hunting with weapons had been a crowning feature of adolescent education. In Locke's scheme, what replaces the promotion of hunting is a strong endorsement of kindness to pets and all animals, while the celebration of military virtue is replaced by the sober praise of "humanity" and "preservation."

Children should from the beginning be bred up in an Abhorrence of killing, or tormenting any living Creature; and be taught not to spoil or destroy any thing, unless it be for the Preservation or Advantage of some other, that is Nobler. And truly, if the Preservation of all Mankind, as much as in him lies, were every one's Persuasion, as indeed it is every one's Duty, and the true Principle to regulate our Religion, Politicks and Morality by, the World would be much quieter, and better natur'd than it is. (sec. 116)

Given the marked deemphasis on training the youngster in either weaponry or politics and public speaking, and given the domestic character of the education and the private life of family and business for which the education prepares the youth, it is much easier for Locke than it was for Xenophon, Plato, and Milton to suggest that his educational proposals ought to be applied, with small variation, to daughters as well as sons. In opposition to the prevailing custom of the time, especially in the upper classes, Locke writes concerning girls that "the nearer they come to the Hardships of their Brothers in their Education, the
greater Advantage will they receive from it all the remaining Part of their Lives” (sec. 9).²⁷

It is appropriate to add here that Locke’s political philosophy, as presented in the Two Treatises of Government, may be said to represent one long theoretical polemic against patriarchy and all forms of authority, both familial and extrafamilial, rooted in or derived from patriarchy. Locke attacks the traditional authority of fathers not simply in the name of maternal authority but, more radically, in the name of the liberty and equality of all human beings, even in their relations as parents and offspring. Locke is of course well aware that children “are not born in this full state of Equality, though they are born to it”; initially, parents must have an awesome and fearful sway over children, for the sake of the children’s incipient and future education. But Locke therefore insists that this authority is “but a temporary one. The Bonds of this Subjection are like the Swadling Cloths they are wrapt up in, and supported by, in the weakness of their Infancy. Age and Reason as they grow up, loosen them till at length they drop quite off, and leave a Man at his own free Disposal.”²⁸

It is hard to imagine a political or educational thesis more deeply opposed to Locke’s in spirit than that of the early eighteenth-century Englishman Lord Kames. Kames praises the “absolute dependence” of children on their parents, because such dependence “produces a habit of submission to authority, a fine preparation for the social life. The authority of the magistrate succeeds to that of the parent; and the submission paid to the latter is readily transferred to the former.” In this as in several other fundamental respects, Thomas Jefferson and other Founders unequivocally reject Lord Kames’s patriarchal educational and civic views in the name of Lockean principles. This repudiation needs to be stressed, given the misleading and exaggerated claims advanced by scholars in the past generation about the influence of Lord Kames on Jefferson or about the purported congruity between the views of Jefferson and Kames. Thus, for example, Wilson Smith, apparently bedazzled momentarily by the prevailing scholarly fad, excerpts precisely the passage on authority just quoted in a brief reading entitled “Lord Kames’s Educated Man Anticipates the Jeffersonian View.”²⁹

Education in the Social Virtues

Lockean education culminates in the inculcation of the social virtues, which represent the rational, constructed antidote to the naturally vicious proclivities of human sociability.

Children who live together often strive for Mastery, whose Wills shall carry it over the rest: Whoever begins the Contest, should be sure to be crossed in
it. But not only that, but they should be taught to have all the Deference, Complaisance and Civility for one another imaginable. This, when they see it procures them respect, Love and Esteem, and that they lose no Superiority by it, they will take more Pleasure in, than in insolent Domineering; for so plainly is the other. (sec. 109)

Justice in the strict sense depends on the respect for private property, and since children can, strictly speaking, own no property, they can know no justice. However, they can be guided toward a sense of justice by being taught generosity, or the evil of covetousness. The appeal to love or to sacrifice is not, in Locke's opinion, the proper method to instill this virtue. One succeeds in making children reliably generous by showing them that they will eventually profit and acquire more if they are first generous: "Let them find by Experience, that the most Liberal has always most plenty, with Esteem and Commendation to boot, and they will quickly learn to practise it. . . . This should be encouraged by great Commendation and Credit, and constantly taking care, that he loses nothing by his Liberality. Let all the Instances he gives of such Freeness, be always repaid, and with Interest" (sec. 110).

The keystone of the social virtues is what Locke calls "civility"—a word to which he gives a new and unprecedentedly elevated significance. Before Locke we may identify two major clusters of meaning for this crucial term in the history of educational thought. "Civility" comes from the Latin term civilitas, which stems from the Latin word for city, understood as the equivalent of the Greek polis. As the Oxford English Dictionary remarks (sv. "civility"), the Latin civilitas is analogous to the Greek politike: It denotes the political art, or statesmanship, understood as the craft of ruling and being ruled in a small classical republic like early Rome or Athens.

The first cluster of meanings of civility in English, now mostly obsolete, stems from this classical republican signification. So conceived, the term is central to such works as Thomas Elyot's Boke Named the Governour (1531) which, as Lawrence Cremin remarks, "set the tone for an immense literature devoted to the education of those who would qualify for positions of leadership in Tudor and Stuart England." The stress in these works was on education to the calling of politics or public service in the classical mold, and Cremin has argued that Locke's treatise on education is "a civility manual in the tradition of The Governor." Viewed in this deceptive light, Locke's educational teaching appears to be the crucial bridge between the classical republican tradition and the American Founding generation. But here again Cremin's characterization is wide of the mark and contributes to a misunderstanding of the fundamentally unclassical thrust of Lockean educational theory and its impact on the colonists.
Locke's use of the term is in fact rooted in a different, though not totally unrelated, cluster of meanings.

From a very early period, civility had another connotation, deriving from the classical notion that life in the polis or the republican city was the distinguishing mark of a humane as opposed to a barbaric existence. By the late medieval period and the Renaissance, this meaning of civility, understood as opposed to barbarism, had been broadened and diluted through educational works such as Baldeser Castiglione's Book of the Courtier, which applied it to monarchical political systems. As a result, in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English the word "civility," in this second sense, became nearly the equivalent of the French word politesse, with connotations, not of republican virtue, but of courtly polish or politeness, gentility and social grace, "breeding." To be sure, the word could at the same time refer, as it does in Obadiah Walker, to the inner sense of humanity, the respect for one's fellowmen, that dictates or ought to dictate the outward expression of politeness. It is this meaning of civility that Locke picks up and enlarges in significance.

Civility, as Locke uses the term, does not refer to political leadership, statecraft, or even citizenship: it is a social rather than a civic or political virtue. But at the same time, Locke departs from Walker in dissociating civility and courtiership, for Locke's civility embodies a more egalitarian sentiment of humanity. And, of course, Locke makes the desire for recognition from others, rather than piety or pride or a sense of one's inner nobility, the motive underlying the virtue. Accordingly, the difference between Walker's notion of civility and Locke's is most marked in Walker's insistence that the first rule of civility governs behavior before God, in church. John Witherspoon characteristically remains closer to Walker than to Locke when, in his fourth letter, he emphasizes the intimate connection between civility and piety: "I cannot help thinking that true religion is not only consistent with, but necessary to the perfection of true politeness. . . . politeness can scarcely be attained in any other way."33

Although Lockean civility is observant of conventional distinctions of rank and station, this social virtue may be understood to replace the Christian virtues of humility and charity in the lists as the opponent of the vice of vain-glory—and also the vice (the Aristotelian virtue) of pride.

We ought not to think so well of our selves, as to stand upon our own Value; and assume to ourselves a Preference before others, because of any Advantage, we may imagine, we have over them; but modestly to take what is offered, when it is our due.

. . . Civility of the Mind . . . is that general Good will and Regard for all People, which makes any one have a care not to shew, in his Carriage, any contempt, disrespect, or neglect of them. (secs. 142-43)
Learning as the Least Important Part of Education

Locke's education is predominantly a moral education, and the erudition that usually bulks so large in thoughts or writing about education is treated almost dismissively by Locke:

You will wonder, perhaps, that I put Learning last, especially if I tell you I think it the least part. This may seem strange in the mouth of a bookish Man, and this making usually the chief, if not the only bustle and stir about Children; this being almost that alone, which is thought on, when People talk of Education, makes it the greater Paradox.

... Reading, and Writing, and Learning, I allow to be necessary, but yet not the chief Business. (sec. 147)

Nevertheless, Locke bends his amazing mind to the discovery of wonderfully clever and in fact deeply insightful methods for the teaching of linguistic and scientific skills, and he does not cease before he has sketched the outlines of a capacious and humane learning. Throughout this discussion, Locke's eye is on what will be truly useful to the young in adult life. He therefore stresses competence in one's native tongue above all. Latin remains essential for a gentleman, but Locke doubts whether it is not a waste of time for youngsters who are destined for trades and farming. Greek can be dispensed with, for all except those who (like Locke himself) intend to be scholars or "bookish." Nowhere in the treatise on education does Locke suggest the superiority of his own philosophic or contemplative life, or make any attempt to lead the young to revere that way of life from afar. Locke does add, with an apology and as a kind of afterthought, "the Thoughts of a Judicious Author," "for the sake of those who are designed to be Scholars," or for "all who desire to be truly Learned" (as is Locke himself):

The Study, says he, of the original text can never be sufficiently recommended. 'Tis the shortest, surest, and most agreeable way to all sorts of Learning. Draw from the spring head, and take not things at second hand. Let the Writings of the great Masters be never laid aside, dwell upon them, settle them in your Mind, and cite them upon occasion; make it your Business thoroughly to understand them in their full Extent, and all their Circumstances: Acquaint yourself fully with the principles of Original Authors; bring them to a consistency. ... and then do not you rest till you bring your self to the same. (sec. 195)

Locke was extraordinarily reticent about his own life as a philosopher, but he was always too much a philosopher ever wholly to overlook the existence among his readership of readers akin to himself.
As for the life of the poet—classically the great competitor of the philosophic life for the garland of wisdom, bliss, and favor from God—Locke reflects that if a child "have a Poetick Vein, 'tis to me the strangest thing in the World, that the Father should desire, or suffer it to be cherished, or improved. Methinks the Parents should labour to have it stifled, and suppressed, as much as may be. . . . and there are very few Instances of those, who have added to their Patrimony by any thing they have reaped from thence" (sec. 174). In contrast, we find Walker asserting that, "when Poetry is despised, other Sciences are also on the wane."

Geography, arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, and chronology form an ascending path of study that culminates in history, political science, and law. But much of what passes for history is in Locke's view worse than useless: "All the Entertainment and talk of History is of nothing almost but Fighting and Killing. . . . by these Steps unnatural Cruelty is planted in us" (sec. 116). The study of history ought to be guided and controlled by the political theory that teaches "the natural Rights of Men, and the original and Foundations of Society, and the Duties resulting from thence. This general Part of Civil-law and History, are Studies which a Gentleman should not barely touch at, but constantly dwell upon, and never have done with" (sec. 186). Locke's treatise on education leads to the threshold of the Two Treatises of Government and the new conception of legitimate republican government there elaborated.