



Some Thoughts Concerning Education

John Locke

Introduction

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

Discipline and Strength of Mind

31. 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.

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

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

34. The great mistake I have observed in people's breeding their children, has been, that this has not been taken care enough of in its due season: that the mind has not been made obedient to discipline, and pliant to reason, when at first it was most tender, most easy to be bowed. Parents being wisely ordained by nature to love their children, are very apt, if reason watch not that natural affection very warily, are apt, I say, to let it run into fondness. They love their little ones and it is their duty; but they often, with them, cherish their faults too. They must not be crossed, forsooth; they must be permitted to have their wills in all things; and they being in

their infancies not capable of great vices, their parents think they may safe enough indulge their irregularities, and make themselves sport with that pretty perverseness which they think well enough becomes that innocent age. But to a fond parent, that would not have his child corrected for a perverse trick, but excused it, saying it was a small matter, Solon very well replied, aye, but custom is a great one.

35. The fondling must be taught to strike and call names, must have what he cries for, and do what he pleases. Thus parents, by 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. For when their children are grown up, and these ill habits with them; when they are now too big to be dandled, and their parents can no longer make use of them as play-things, then they complain that the brats are untoward and perverse; then they are offended to see them willful, and are troubled with those ill humors which they themselves infused and fomented in them; and then, perhaps too late, would be glad to get out those weeds which their own hands have planted, and which now have taken too deep root to be easily extirpated. For he that hath been used to have his will in every thing, as long as he was in coats, why should we think it strange, that he should desire it, and contend for it still, when he is in breeches? Indeed, as he grows more towards a man, age shows his faults the more; so that there be few parents then so blind as not to see them, few so insensible as not to feel the ill effects of their own indulgence. He had the will of his maid before he could speak or go; he had the mastery of his parents ever since he could prattle; and why, now he is grown up, is stronger and wiser than he was then, why now of a sudden must he be restrained and curbed? Why must he at seven, fourteen, or twenty years old, lose the privilege, which the parents' indulgence 'till then so largely allowed him? Try it in a dog or an horse or any other creature, and see whether the ill and resty tricks they have learned when young, are easily to be mended when they are knit; and yet none of those creatures are half so willful and proud, or half so desirous to be masters of themselves and others, as man.

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

Spoiling Children

37. These are oversights usually committed by those who seem to take the greatest care of their children's education. But if we look into the common management of children, we shall have reason to wonder, in the great dissoluteness of manners which the world complains of, that there are any footsteps at all left of virtue. I desire to know what vice can be named, which parents, and those about children, do not season them with, and drop into them the seeds of, as soon as they are capable to receive them? I do not mean by the examples they give, and the patterns they set before them, which is encouragement enough; but that which I would take notice of here is, the downright teaching them vice, and actual putting them out of the way of virtue. Before they can go, they principle them with violence, revenge, and cruelty. Give me a blow, that I may beat him, is a lesson which most children every day hear; and it is thought nothing, because their hands have not strength to do any mischief. But I ask, does not this corrupt their mind? Is not this

the way of force and violence, that they are set in? And if they have been taught when little, to strike and hurt others by proxy, and encouraged to rejoice in the harm they have brought upon them, and see them suffer, are they not prepared to do it when they are strong enough to be felt themselves, and can strike to some purpose?

The coverings of our bodies which are for modesty, warmth and defense, are by the folly or vice of parents recommended to their children for other uses. They are made matters of vanity and emulation. A child is set a-longing after a new suit, for the finery of it; and when the little girl is tricked up in her new gown and commode, how can her mother do less than teach her to admire herself, by calling her, her little queen and her princess? Thus the little ones are taught to be proud of their clothes before they can put them on. And why should they not continue to value themselves for their outside fashionableness of the tailor or tirewoman's making, when their parents have so early instructed them to do so?...

Those of the meaner sort are hindered, by the straightness of their fortunes, from encouraging intemperance in their children by the temptation of their diet, or invitations to eat or drink more than enough; but their own ill examples, whenever plenty comes in their way, show, that 'tis not the dislike of drunkenness or gluttony, that keeps them from excess, but want of materials. But if we look into the houses of those who are a little warmer in their fortunes, their eating and drinking are made so much the great business and happiness of life, that children are thought neglected, if they have not their share of it. Sauces and ragouts, and food disguised by all the arts of cookery, must tempt their palates, when their bellies are full; and then, for fear the stomach should be overcharged, a pretence is found for the other glass of wine to help digestion, though' it only serves to increase the surfeit.

Is my young master a little out of order, the first question is, What will my dear eat? What shall I get for thee? Eating and drinking are instantly pressed; and every body's invention is set on work, to find out something luscious and delicate enough to prevail over that want of appetite, which nature has wisely ordered in the beginning of distempers, as a defense against their increase; that being freed from the ordinary labor of digesting any new load in the stomach, she may be at leisure to correct and master the peccant humors....

I shall not dwell any longer on this subject, much less run over all the particulars that would show what pains are used to corrupt children, and instill principles of vice into them: but I desire parents soberly to consider, what irregularity or vice there is which children are not visibly taught, and whether it be not their duty and wisdom to provide them other instructions.

Self-Control

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

39. I say not this, as if children were not to be indulged in anything, or that I expected they should in hanging-sleeves have the reason and conduct of counselors. I consider them as children, who must be tenderly used, who must play, and have play-things. That which I mean, is, that whenever they craved what was not fit for them to have or do, they should not be permitted it because they were little, and desired it: nay, whatever they were importunate for, they should be sure, for that very reason, to be denied. I have seen children at a table, who,

whatever was there, never asked for anything, but contentedly took what was given them; and at another place, I have seen others cry for everything they saw; must be served out of every dish, and that first too. What made this vast difference but this? that one was accustomed to have what they called or cried for, the other to go without it. The younger they are, the less I think are their unruly and disorderly appetites to be complied with; and the less reason they have of their own, the more are they to be under the absolute power and restraint of those in whose hands they are. From which I confess it will follow, that none but discreet people should be about them. If the world commonly does otherwise, I cannot help that. I am saying what I think should be; which if it were already in fashion, I should not need to trouble the world with a discourse on this subject. But yet I doubt not, but when it is considered, there will be others of opinion with me, that the sooner this way is begun with children, the easier it will be for them and their governors too; and that this ought to be observed as an inviolable maxim, that whatever once is denied them, they are certainly not to obtain by crying or importunity, unless one has a mind to teach them to be impatient and troublesome, by rewarding them for it when they are so.

Parental Authority

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

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

42. Thus much for the settling your authority over your children in general. Fear and awe ought to give you the first power over their minds, and love and friendship in riper years to hold it: for the time must come, when they will be past the rod and correction; and then, if the love of you make them not obedient and dutiful, if the love of virtue and reputation keep them not in laudable courses, I ask, what hold will you have upon them to turn them to it? Indeed, fear of having a scanty portion if they displease you, may make them slaves to your estate, but they will be nevertheless ill and wicked in private; and that restraint will not last always. Every man must some time or other be trusted to himself and his own conduct; and he that is a good, a virtuous,

and able man, must be made so within. And therefore what he is to receive from education, what is to sway and influence his life, must be something put into him betimes; habits woven into the very principles of his nature, and not a counterfeit carriage, and dissembled outside, put on by fear, only to avoid the present anger of a father who perhaps may disinherit him.

Punishment and Beatings

43. This being laid down in general, as the course that ought to be taken, it is fit we now come to consider the parts of the discipline to be used, a little more particularly. I have spoken so much of carrying a strict hand over children, that perhaps I shall be suspected of not considering enough, what is due to their tender age and constitutions. But that opinion will vanish, when you have heard me a little farther: for I am very apt to think, that great severity of punishment does but very little good, nay, great harm in education; and I believe it will be found that...those children who have been most chastised, seldom make the best men. All that I have hitherto contended for, is, that whatsoever rigor is necessary, it is more to be used, the younger children are; and having by a due application wrought its effect, it is to be relaxed, and changed into a milder sort of government.

44. A compliance and suppleness of their wills, being by a steady hand introduced by parents, before children have memories to retain the beginnings of it, will seem natural to them, and work afterwards in them as if it were so, preventing all occasions of struggling or repining. The only care is, that it be begun early, and inflexibly kept to until awe and respect be grown familiar, and there appears not the least reluctance in the submission, and ready obedience of their minds. When this reverence is once thus established, (which it must be early, or else it will cost pains and blows to recover it, and the more the longer it is deferred) it is by it, still mixed with as much indulgence as they make not an ill use of, and not by beating, chiding, or other servile punishments, they are for the future to be governed as they grow up to more understanding.

45. That this is so, will be easily allowed, when it is but considered, what is to be aimed at in an ingenuous education; and upon what it turns.

(1) He that 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. This temper therefore, so contrary to unguided nature, is to be got betimes; and this habit, as the true foundation of future ability and happiness, is to be wrought into the mind as early as may be, even from the first dawning of knowledge or apprehension in children, and so to be confirmed in them, by all the care and ways imaginable, by those who have the oversight of their education.

46. (2) On the other side, if the mind be curbed, and humbled too much in children; if their spirits be abased and broken much, by too strict an hand over them, they lose all their vigor and industry, and are in a worse state than the former. For extravagant young fellows, that have liveliness and spirit, come sometimes to be set right, and so make able and great men; but dejected minds, timorous and tame, and low spirits, are hardly ever to be raised, and very seldom attain to any thing. To avoid the danger that is on either hand, is the great art; and he that has found a way how to keep up a child's spirit easy, active, and free, and yet at the same time to restrain him from many things he has a mind to, and to draw him to things that are uneasy to him; he, I say, that knows how to reconcile these seeming contradictions, has, in my opinion, got the true secret of education.

47. The usual lazy and short way by chastisement and the rod, which is the only instrument of government that tutors generally know, or ever think of, is the most unfit of any to be used in education, because it tends to both those mischiefs; which, as we have shown, are the Scylla and Charybdis, which on the one hand or the other ruin all that miscarry.

48. (1) This kind of punishment contributes not at all to the mastery of our natural propensity to indulge corporal and present pleasure, and to avoid pain at any rate, but rather encourages it, and thereby strengthens that in us, which is the root from whence spring all vicious actions, and

the irregularities of life. For what other motive, but of sensual pleasure and pain, does a child act by, who drudges at his book against his inclination, or abstains from eating unwholesome fruit, that he takes pleasure in, only out of fear of whipping? He in this only prefers the greater corporal pleasure, or avoids the greater corporal pain. And what is it, to govern his actions, and direct his conduct by such motives as these? What is it, I say, but to cherish that principle in him, which it is our business to root out and destroy? And therefore I cannot think any correction useful to a child, where the shame of suffering for having done amiss, does not work more upon him than the pain.

49. (2) This sort of correction naturally breeds an aversion to that which it is the tutor's business to create a liking to. How obvious is it to observe, that children come to hate things which were at first acceptable to them, when they find themselves whipped, and chide, and teased about them? And it is not to be wondered at in them, when grown men would not be able to be reconciled to any thing by such ways. Who is there that would not be disgusted with any innocent recreation, in itself indifferent to him, if he should with blows or ill language be hale to it, when he had no mind? Or be constantly so treated, for some circumstances in his application to it? This is natural to be so. Offensive circumstances ordinarily infect innocent things which they are joined with; and the very sight of a cup wherein any one uses to take nauseous physic, turns his stomach, so that nothing will relish well out of it, though' the cup be never so clean and well-shaped, and of the richest materials.

50. (3) Such a sort of slavish discipline makes a slavish temper. The child submits, and dissembles obedience, whilst the fear of the rod hangs over him; but when that is removed, and by being out of sight, he can promise himself impunity, he gives the greater scope to his natural inclination; which by this way is not at all altered, but, on the contrary, heightened and increased in him; and after such restraint, breaks out usually with the more violence; or,

51. (4) If severity carried to the highest pitch does prevail, and works a cure upon the present unruly distemper, it often brings in the room of it a worse and more dangerous disease, by breaking the mind; and then, in the place of a disorderly young fellow, you have a low spirited... creature, who, however with his unnatural sobriety he may please silly people, who commend tame inactive children, because they make no noise, nor give them any trouble; yet at last, will probably prove as uncomfortable a thing to his friends, as he will be all his life an useless thing to himself and others.

Rewards

52. Beating them, and all other sorts of slavish and corporal punishments, are not the discipline fit to be used in the education of those we would have wise, good, and ingenuous men; and therefore very rarely to be applied, and that only in great occasions, and cases of extremity. On the other side, to flatter children by rewards of things that are pleasant to them, is as carefully to be avoided. He that will give to his son apples or sugar-plumbs, or what else of this kind he is most delighted with, to make him learn his book, does but authorize his love of pleasure, and cocker up that dangerous propensity, which he ought by all means to subdue and stifle in him. You can never hope to teach him to master it, whilst you compound for the check you gave his inclination in one place, by the satisfaction you propose to it in another. To make a good, a wise, and a virtuous man, it is fit he should learn to cross his appetite, and deny his inclination to riches, finery, or pleasing his palate, etc., whenever his reason advises the contrary, and his duty requires it. But when you draw him to do any thing that is fit by the offer of money, or reward the pains of learning his book by the pleasure of a luscious morsel; when you promise him a lace-cravat or a fine new suit, upon performance of some of his little tasks; what do you by proposing these as rewards, but allow them to be the good things he should aim at, and thereby encourage his longing for them, and accustom him to place his happiness in them? Thus people, to prevail with children to be industrious about their grammar, dancing, or some other such matter, of no great moment to the happiness or usefulness of their lives, by misapplied rewards and punishments, sacrifice their virtue, invert the order of their education, and teach them

luxury, pride, or covetousness, &c. For in this way, flattering those wrong inclinations which they should restrain and suppress, they lay the foundations of those future vices, which cannot be avoided but by curbing our desires and accustoming them early to submit to reason.

53. I say not this, that I would have children kept from the conveniences or pleasures of life, that are not injurious to their health or virtue. On the contrary, I would have their lives made as pleasant and as agreeable to them as may be, in a plentiful enjoyment of whatsoever might innocently delight them; provided it be with this caution, that they have those enjoyments, only as the consequences of the state of esteem and acceptance they are in with their parents and governors; but they should never be offered or bestowed on them, as the rewards of this or that particular performance, that they show an aversion to, or to which they would not have applied themselves without that temptation.

54. But if you take away the rod on one hand, and these little encouragements which they are taken with, on the other, how then (will you say) shall children be governed? Remove hope and fear, and there is an end of all discipline. I grant that good and evil, reward and punishment, 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. For I advise their parents and governors always to carry this in their minds, that children are to be treated as rational creatures.

55. Rewards, I grant, and punishments must be proposed to children, if we intend to work upon them. The mistake I imagine is, that those that are generally made use of, are ill chosen. The pains and pleasures of the body are, I think, of ill consequence, when made the rewards and punishments whereby men would prevail on their children; for, as I said before, they serve but to increase and strengthen those inclinations, which 'tis our business to subdue and master. What principle of virtue do you lay in a child, if you will redeem his desires of one pleasure, by the proposal of another? This is but to enlarge his appetite, and instruct it to wander. If a child cries for an unwholesome and dangerous fruit, you purchase his quiet by giving him a less hurtful sweet-meat. This perhaps may preserve his health, but spoils his mind, and sets that farther out of order. For here you only change the object, but flatter still his appetite, and allow that must be satisfied, wherein, as I have showed, lies the root of the mischief; and till you bring him to be able to bear a denial of that satisfaction, the child may at present be quiet and orderly, but the disease is not cured. By this way of proceeding, you foment and cherish in him that which is the spring from whence all the evil flows, which will be sure on the next occasion to break out again with more violence, give him stronger longings, and you more trouble.

Praise and Censure

56. The rewards and punishments then, whereby we should keep children in order, are quite of another kind, and of that force, that when we can get them once to work, the business, I think, is done, and the difficulty is over. Esteem and disgrace are, of all others, the most powerful incentives to the mind, when once it is brought to relish them. If you can once get into children a love of credit, and an apprehension of shame and disgrace, you have put into them the true principle, which will constantly work and incline them to the right. But it will be asked, How shall this be done?

I confess it does not at first appearance want some difficulty; but yet I think it worth our while to seek the ways (and practice them when found) to attain this, which I look on as the great secret of education.

57. First, children (earlier perhaps than we think) are very sensible of praise and commendation. They find a pleasure in being esteemed and valued, especially by their parents and those whom they depend on. If therefore the father caress and commend them when they do well, show a cold and neglectful countenance to them upon doing ill, and this accompanied by a like carriage of the mother and all others that are about them, it will, in a little time, make them sensible of the difference; and this, if constantly observed, I doubt not but will of itself

work more than threats or blows, which lose their force when once grown common, and are of no use when shame does not attend them; and therefore are to be forborne, and never to be used, but in the case hereafter-mentioned, when it is brought to extremity.

58. But secondly, to make the sense of esteem or disgrace sink the deeper, and be of the more weight, other agreeable or disagreeable things should constantly accompany these different states; not as particular rewards and punishments of this or that particular action, but as necessarily belonging to, and constantly attending one, who by his carriage has brought himself into a state of disgrace or commendation. By which way of treating them, children may as much as possible be brought to conceive, that those that are commended, and in esteem for doing well, will necessarily be beloved and cherished by every body, and have all other good things as a consequence of it; and on the other side, when any one by miscarriage falls into disesteem, and cares not to preserve his credit, he will unavoidably fall under neglect and contempt; and in that state, the want of whatever might satisfy or delight him will follow. In this way the objects of their desires are made assisting to virtue, when a settled experience from the beginning teaches children that the things they delight in, belong to, and are to be enjoyed by those only who are in a state of reputation. If by these means you can come once to shame them out of their faults, (for besides that, I would willingly have no punishment) 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.

59. The great difficulty here is, I imagine, from the folly and perverseness of servants, who are hardly to be hindered from crossing herein the design of the father and mother. Children discountenanced by their parents for any fault, find usually a refuge and relief in the caresses of those foolish flatterers, who thereby undo whatever the parents endeavor to establish. When the father or mother looks sower on the child, everybody else should put on the same coldness to him, and nobody give him countenance, until forgiveness asked, and a reformation of his fault has set him right again, and restored him to his former credit. If this were constantly observed, I guess there would be little need of blows or chiding: their own ease and satisfaction would quickly teach children to court commendation, and avoid doing that which they found everybody condemned and they were sure to suffer for, without being chid or beaten. This would teach them modesty and shame; and they would quickly come to have a natural abhorrence for that which they found made them slighted and neglected by every body. But how this inconvenience from servants is to be remedied, I must leave to parents' care and consideration. Only I think it of great importance; and that they are very happy who can get discreet people about their children.

Shame

60. Frequent beating or chiding is therefore carefully to be avoided: because this sort of correction never produces any good, farther than it serves to raise shame and abhorrence of the miscarriage that brought it on them. And if the greatest part of the trouble be not the sense that they have done amiss, and the apprehension that they have drawn on themselves the just displeasure of their best friends, the pain of whipping will work but an imperfect cure. It only patches up for the present, and skins it over, but reaches not to the bottom of the sore; ingenuous shame, and the apprehensions of displeasure, are the only true restraint. These alone ought to hold the reins, and keep the child in order. But corporal punishments must necessarily lose that effect, and wear out the sense of shame, where they frequently return. Shame in children has the same place that modesty has in women, which cannot be kept and often transgressed against. And as to the apprehension of displeasure in the parents, that will come to be very insignificant, if the marks of that displeasure quickly cease, and a few blows fully expiate. Parents should well consider what faults in their children are weighty enough to deserve the declaration of their

anger: but when their displeasure is once declared to a degree that carries any punishment with it, they ought not presently to lay by the severity of their brows, but to restore their children to their former grace with some difficulty, and delay a full reconciliation, 'till their conformity and more than ordinary merit, make good their amendment. If this be not so ordered, punishment will, by familiarity, become a mere thing of course, and lose all its influence; offending, being chastised, and then forgiven, will be thought as natural and necessary, as noon, night, and morning following one another.

61. Concerning reputation, I shall only remark this one thing more of it, that though it be not the true principle and measure of virtue, (for that is the 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 acceptance and reward) yet it is that which comes nearest to it: and being the testimony and applause that other people's reason, as it were by a common consent, gives to virtuous and well-ordered actions, it is the proper guide and encouragement of children, 'till they grow able to judge for themselves, and to find what is right by their own reason.

62. This consideration may direct parents how to manage themselves in reproving and commending their children. The rebukes and chiding, which their faults will sometimes make hardly to be avoided, should not only be in sober, grave, and unpassionate words, but also alone and in private: but the commendations children deserve, they should receive before others. This doubles the reward, by spreading their praise; but the backwardness parents show in divulging their faults, will make them set a greater value on their credit themselves, and teach them to be the more careful to preserve the good opinion of others, whilst they think they have it: but when being exposed to shame by publishing their miscarriages, they give it up for lost, that check upon them is taken off, and they will be the less careful to preserve others' good thoughts of them, the more they suspect that their reputation with them is already blemished.

Childishness

63. But if a right course be taken with children, there will not be so much need of the application of the common rewards and punishments as we imagine, and as the general practice has established. For all their innocent folly, playing and childish actions, are to be left perfectly free and unrestrained, as far as they can consist with the respect due to those that are present; and that with the greatest allowance. If these faults of their age, rather than of the children themselves, were, as they should be, left only to time and imitation and riper years to cure, children would escape a great deal of misapplied and useless correction, which either fails to overpower the natural disposition of their childhood, and so by an ineffectual familiarity, makes correction in other necessary cases of less use; or else if it be of force to restrain the natural gaiety of that age, it serves only to spoil the temper both of body and mind. If the noise and bustle of their play prove at any time inconvenient, or unsuitable to the place or company they are in, (which can only be where their parents are) a look or a word from the father or mother, if they have established the authority they should, will be enough either to remove or quiet them for that time. But this gamesome humor, which is wisely adapted by nature to their age and temper, should rather be encouraged to keep up their spirits, and improve their strength and health, than curbed and restrained; and the chief art is to make all that they have to do, sport and play too.

Rules

64. And here give me leave to take notice of one thing I think a fault in the ordinary method of education; and that is, the charging of children's memories, upon all occasions, with rules and precepts, which they often do not understand, and constantly as soon forget as given. It be some action you would have done, or done otherwise, whenever they forget, or do it awkwardly, make them do it over and over again, until they are perfect, whereby you will get these two advantages. First, to see whether it be an action they can do, or is fit to be expected of them: for

sometimes children are bid to do things which upon trial they are found not able to do, and had need be taught and exercised in before they are required to do them. But it is much easier for a tutor to command than to teach. Secondly, another thing got by it will be this, that by repeating the same action 'till it be grown habitual in them, the performance will not depend on memory or reflection, the concomitant of prudence and age, and not of childhood, but will be natural in them. Thus bowing to a gentleman, when he salutes him, and looking in his face, when he speaks to him, is by constant use as natural to a well-bred man, as breathing; it requires no thought, no reflection. Having this way cured in your child any fault, it is cured for ever: and thus one by one you may weed them out all, and plant what habits you please.

65. I have seen parents so heap rules on their children, that it was impossible for the poor little ones to remember a tenth part of them, much less to observe them. However, they were either by words or blows corrected for the breach of those multiplied and often very impertinent precepts. Whence it naturally followed that the children minded not what was said to them, when it was evident to them that no attention they were capable of was sufficient to preserve them from transgression, and the rebukes which followed it.

Let therefore your rules to your son be as few as possible, and rather fewer than more than seem absolutely necessary. For if you burden him with many rules, one of these two things must necessarily follow; that either he must be very often punished, which will be of ill consequence, by making punishment too frequent and familiar; or else you must let the transgressions of some of your rules go unpunished, whereby they will of course grow contemptible, and your authority become cheap to him. Make but few laws, but see they be well observed when once made. Few years require but few laws, and as his age increases, when one rule is by practice well established, you may add another.

66. But pray remember, children are not to be taught by rules which will be always slipping out of their memories. What you think necessary for them to do, settle in them by an indispensable practice, as often as the occasion returns; and if it be possible, make occasions. This will beget habits in them which being once established, operate of themselves easily and naturally, without the assistance of the memory. But here let me give two cautions. (1) The one is, that you keep them to the practice of what you would have grow into a habit in them, by kind words, and gentle admonitions, rather as minding them of what they forget, than by harsh rebukes and chiding, as if they were willfully guilty. (2) Another thing you are to take care of, is, not to endeavor to settle too many habits at once, lest by variety you confound them, and so perfect none. When constant custom has made any one thing easy and natural to them, and they practice it without reflection, you may then go on to another.

This method of teaching children by a repeated practice, and the same action done over and over again, under the eye and direction of the tutor, 'till they have got the habit of doing it well, and not by relying on rules trusted to their memories, has so many advantages, which way so ever we consider it, that I cannot but wonder (if ill customs could be wondered at in any thing) how it could possibly be so much neglected. I shall name one more that comes now in my way. By this method we shall see whether what is required of him be adapted to his capacity, and any way suited to the child's natural genius and constitution; for that too much be considered in a right education. 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.

He therefore that is about children should well study their natures and aptitudes, and see by often trials what turn they easily take, and what becomes them; observe what their native stock is, how it may be improved, and what it is fit for: he should consider what they want, whether they be capable of having it wrought into them by industry, and incorporated there by practice; and whether it be worth while to endeavor it. For 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. Every one'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; and what is so plastered on, will at best sit but untowardly, and have always hanging to it the ungracefulness of constraint and affectation.....

Example

71. Having under consideration how great the influence of company is, and how prone we are all, especially children, to imitation, I must here take the liberty to mind parents of this one thing, viz. That 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 pueris reverentia*. You must do nothing before him, which you would not have him imitate. If any thing escape you, which you would have pass for a fault in him, he will be sure to shelter himself under your example, and shelter himself so as that it will not be easy to come at him, to correct it in him the right way. If you punish him for what he sees you practice yourself, he will not think that severity to proceed from kindness in you, careful to amend a fault in him; but will be apt to interpret it the peevishness and arbitrary imperiousness of a father, who, without any ground for it, would deny his son the liberty and pleasures he takes himself. Or if you assume to yourself 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; and they love breeches, not for their cut or ease, but because the having them is a mark or step towards manhood. What I say of the father's carriage before his children, must extend itself to all those who have any authority over them, or for whom he would have them have any respect....

Reasoning

81. It will perhaps be wondered, that I mention reasoning with children; and yet I cannot but think that the true way of dealing with them. They understand it as early as they do language; and, if I misobserve not, they love to be treated as rational creatures, sooner than is imagined. It is 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 or three of seven years old should be argued with as a grown man. Long discourses, and philosophical reasoning, at best, amaze and confound, but do not instruct children. When I say, therefore, that they must be treated as rational creatures, I mean that you should make them sensible, by the mildness of your carriage, and the composure even in your correction of them, that what you do is reasonable in you, and useful and necessary for them; and that it is not out of caprichio, passion or fancy, that you command or forbid them any thing. This they are capable of understanding; and there is no virtue 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 understandings are capable of, and those proposed always in very few and plain words. The foundations on which several duties are built, and the fountains of right and wrong from which they spring, are not perhaps easily to be let into the minds of grown men, not used to abstract their thoughts from common received opinions. Much less are children capable of reasoning from remote principles. They cannot conceive the force of long deductions. The reasons that move them must be obvious, and level to their thoughts, and such as may (if I may so say) be felt and touched. But yet, if their age, temper, and inclination be considered, there will never want such motives as may be sufficient to convince them. If there be no other more particular, yet these will always be intelligible, and of force, to deter them from any fault fit to be taken notice of in them, (*viz.*) That it will be a discredit and disgrace to them, and displease you.

82. But of all the ways whereby children are to be instructed, and their manners formed, the plainest, easiest, and most efficacious, is, to set before their eyes the examples of those things you would have them do, or avoid; which, when they are pointed out to them, in the practice of

persons within their knowledge, with some reflections on their beauty and unbecomingness, are of more force to draw or deter their imitation, than any discourses which can be made to them. Virtues and vices can by no words be so plainly set before their understandings as the actions of other men will show them, when you direct their observation, and bid them view this or that good or bad quality in their practice. And the beauty or uncomeliness of many things, in good and ill breeding, will be better learnt, and make deeper impressions on them, in the examples of others, than from any rules or instructions can be given about them.

This is a method to be used, not only whilst they are young, but to be continued even as long as they shall be under another's tuition or conduct; nay, I know not whether it be not the best way to be used by a father, as long as he shall think fit, on any occasion, to reform any thing he wishes mended in his son; nothing sinking so gently, and so deep, into men's minds, as example. And what ill they either overlook or indulge in themselves, they cannot but dislike and be ashamed of, when it is set before them in another.

Curiosity

118. Curiosity in children (which I had occasion just to mention Section 108) is but an appetite after knowledge; and therefore ought to be encouraged in them, not only as a good sign, but as the great instrument nature has provided to remove that ignorance they were born with; and which, without this busy inquisitiveness, will make them dull and useless creatures. The ways to encourage it, and keep it active and busy, are, I suppose, these following:

(1) Not to check or discountenance any enquiries he shall make, nor suffer them to be laughed at; but to answer all his questions, and explain the matter he desires to know, so as to make them as much intelligible to him as suits the capacity of his age and knowledge. But confound not his understanding with explications or notions that are above it; or with the variety or number of things that are not to his present purpose. Mark what it is that his mind aims at in the question, and not what words he expresses it in: and when you have informed and satisfied him in that, you shall see how his thoughts will enlarge themselves, and how by fit answers he may be led on farther than perhaps you could imagine. For knowledge is grateful to the understanding, as light to the eyes: children are pleased and delighted with it exceedingly, especially if they see that their enquiries are regarded, and that their desire of knowing is encouraged and commended. And I doubt not but one great reason why many children abandon themselves wholly to silly sports, and trifle away all their time insipidly, is, because they have found their curiosity baulked, and their enquiries neglected. But had they been treated with more kindness and respect, and their questions answered, as they should, to their satisfaction; I doubt not but they would have taken more pleasure in learning, and improving their knowledge, wherein there would be still newness and variety, which is what they are delighted with, than in returning over and over to the same play and play-things.

119. (2) To this serious answering their questions, and informing their understandings, in what they desire, as if it were a matter that needed it, should be added some peculiar ways of commendation. Let others whom they esteem, be told before their faces of the knowledge they have in such and such things; and since we are all, even from our cradles, vain and proud creatures, let their vanity be flattered with things that will do them good; and let their pride set them on work on something which may turn to their advantage. Upon this ground you shall find, that there cannot be a greater spur to the attaining what you would have the eldest learn, and know himself, than to set him upon teaching it his younger brothers and sisters.

120. (3) As children's enquiries are not to be slighted; so also great care is to be taken, that they never receive deceitful and eluding answers. They easily perceive when they are slighted or deceived; and quickly learn the trick of neglect, dissimulation and falsehood, which they observe others to make use of. We are not to entrench upon truth in any conversation, but least of all with children; since if we play false with them, we not only deceive their expectation, and hinder their knowledge, but corrupt their innocence, and teach them the worst of vices. They are travelers newly arrived in a strange country, of which they know nothing; we should

therefore make conscience not to mislead them. And though their questions seem sometimes not very material, yet they should be seriously answered; for however they may appear to us (to whom they are long since known) enquiries not worth the making; they are of moment to those who are wholly ignorant. Children are strangers to all we are acquainted with; and all the things they meet with, are at first unknown to them, as they once were to us: and happy are they who meet with civil people, that will comply with their ignorance, and help them to get out of it.

If you or I now should be set down in Japan, with all our prudence and knowledge about us, a conceit whereof makes us, perhaps, so apt to slight the thoughts and enquiries of children; should we, I say, be set down in Japan, we should, no doubt (if we would inform our selves of what is there to be known) ask a thousand questions, which, to a supercilious or inconsiderate Japaner, would seem very idle and impertinent; though to us they would be very material and of importance to be resolved; and we should be glad to find a man so complaisant and courteous, as to satisfy our demands, and instruct our ignorance.

When any new thing comes in their way, children usually ask the common question of a stranger: What is it? Whereby they ordinarily mean nothing but the name; and therefore to tell them how it is called, is usually the proper answer to that demand. And the next question usually is, What is it for? And to this it should be answered truly and directly. The use of the thing should be told, and the way explained, how it serves to such a purpose, as far as their capacities can comprehend it. And so of any other circumstances they shall ask about it; not turning them going, till you have given them all the satisfaction they are capable of; and so leading them by your answers into farther questions. And perhaps to a grown man, such conversation will not be altogether so idle and insignificant as we are apt to imagine. The native and untaught suggestions of inquisitive children do often offer things, that may set a considering man's thoughts on work. And I think there is frequently more to be learned from the unexpected questions of a child, than the discourses of men, who talk in a road, according to the notions they have borrowed, and the prejudices of their education.

John Locke. "Some Thoughts Concerning Education." *The Works of John Locke*. Vol. 8. London: Rivington, 1824.

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