LOCKE'S EDUCATION FOR LIBERTY

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CONTENTS

Preface
vii

Introduction
1

ONE
Natural Freedom and Patriarchal Politics
9

TWO
Authority and Liberty
77

THREE
The Lockean Virtues
129

FOUR
The Completion of Education
184

Conclusion
209

Notes
213

Selected Bibliography
261

Index
265
To my mother
and to the memory of my father
This work is an effort to broaden and deepen our views of both Locke and liberalism by taking Some Thoughts Concerning Education seriously as more than a practical handbook for parents. I try to read it as the richest source for Locke’s vision of human nature and moral virtue. I try to read it in the context of the place of the family and education in Locke’s liberal politics.

I first became seriously aware of the importance of the themes of education and the family in political theory and of how comprehensive a vision of human life a book may communicate when I was an undergraduate at Cornell University. There I had the privilege of taking seminars from Allan Bloom on those rare total or synoptic books, Plato’s Republic and Rousseau’s Emile, which he has taught, translated, and interpreted so as to make their themes and visions alive and compelling. I first seriously studied Locke’s Thoughts when, as a graduate student at Harvard University, I did a paper for the seminar on the Enlightenment taught by Judith Shklar. This work owes much to her specific suggestions and general encouragement. Her sympathy for Lockean liberalism helped me to move from an initial reading heavily influenced by Rousseau’s reaction against the Thoughts to a more appreciative understanding. Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., served as my dissertation adviser with his characteristic brilliance and generosity. His own interpretation and defense of the spirit of liberalism helped to inspirit my work.

A traveling fellowship from Harvard enabled me to spend 1972–73 in England, where I was able to work at the Bodleian Library and the Reading Room of the British Museum. At Harvard I also enjoyed the privilege of using Houghton Library. A Research Fellowship for Recent Recipients of the Ph.D. from the American Council of Learned Societies in 1977 enabled me to reconsider my work and explore related problems. Students at Harvard and the University of Chicago in my courses on Locke and on Politics and Education probably taught me more than either they or I was aware of. Later revisions benefited from the careful and constructive criticism and encouragement liberally provided by Robert Dawidoff and the comments of the readers for the University of
Chicago Press. My research assistants at Chicago, especially John Dister and Victoria Farrington, helped me correct many errors. I am responsible for those that remain. Dwight Allman prepared the index, with assistance from Jeff Bond. My wife Susan listened patiently for too many years to all the reflections and complaints involved in producing this work and helped me in more ways than either of us can remember. The dedication expresses my greatest debts.
INTRODUCTION

Despite historical change and historical revisionism, there remains a very real sense in which Americans can say that Locke is our political philosopher. The document by virtue of which we Americans are an independent people, occupying our special station among the powers of the earth, derives its principles and even some of its language from the political philosophy of John Locke. Practically speaking, we can recognize in his work something like our separation of powers, our belief in representative government, our hostility to all forms of tyranny, our insistence on the rule of law, our faith in toleration, our demand for limited government, and our confidence that the common good is ultimately served by the regulated private acquisition and control of property as well as by the free development and application of science. As for fundamental political principles, it can be safely assumed that every one of us, before we ever heard of Locke, had heard that all men are created equal, that they are endowed with certain inalienable rights, that among them are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it. It is true that since these principles were first proclaimed, Nature and Nature’s God, and with them the natural character of these rights, have not fared well at the hands of skepticism and positivism; yet these fundamental political principles of freedom and equality, of individual rights and government by consent, and of the right of the people to revolution certainly have not perished from the earth.

Locke occupies a canonical place not only in the history of political philosophy but in the history of educational theory, as standard texts in that field reveal. In itself this coincidence should occasion no surprise, for Locke plays a part in the history of many other fields as well, including, above all, philosophy proper but also economics, theology, medicine, the popularization of science, colonial administration, and library science. Locke also is far from alone in this double honor; philosophers
INTRODUCTION

have been able to stand out in the realms of both educational theory and political theory ever since the two fields of thought first flowed from their common fountainhead, the Republic of Plato.

There is, however, something properly surprising here. Locke’s thought in these two fields is found in two separate works, the Two Treatises of Government and Some Thoughts Concerning Education. It is perhaps only to be expected that the two works do not refer to each other explicitly, since the political work was published strictly anonymously and the pedagogical work, beginning with the third edition, appeared with Locke’s name, if not yet on the title page, at least owning the dedication. What is surprising is that there is so little reference in either book to the subject matter of the other. According to tradition, when one of the early Greek philosophers, Xenophilus the Pythagorean, was asked how one’s son should be best educated, he replied “if he should be born in a city with good laws.” More reliably, we know that Plato thought that to describe how political life should be properly ordered it is necessary to describe what education would be requisite to this end; indeed, his Socrates says that the guarding of the proper education is “the one great—or, rather than great, sufficient—thing” for the best political regime. Similarly according to Plato, for the best education to be possible, the best regime had to be described. For Plato, education serves also as the critical ingredient of political obligation. Both politics and education were supposed to serve ultimately the same end, the formation of good men. Nor is this intimate connection peculiar to the utopian Plato; as Sir Ernest Barker has commented, for Aristotle the state is “by its very nature an educational institution,” and his “theory of education is thus an integral and essential part of his theory of the polis.” Nor is this connection confined to the philosophers of the ancient Greek polis; Locke’s great English contemporary Thomas Hobbes viewed university reform as the most necessary step toward the proper political order, and he regarded instruction and law-making as the two chief duties of the sovereign.

But Locke’s politics are liberal politics after all; they entail a limited government, and it is limited above all by being freed from the effort of trying to make men good except insofar as that is required to render secure their lives, liberty, and property. At any rate, in the Two Treatises education plays nothing like the role it does in the Republic or even in the Leviathan. This too squares with American tradition; for our other great political document, that which constitutes our polity, makes no mention of education at all, at least pending any antibusing or school-prayer amendments.

We are faced then with the fact that the Two Treatises make little mention of education, as if the proper institutions were sufficient, whatever kind of men were formed by the education found in a common-
wealth, just as the *Thoughts* makes no explicit requirements for prior political reform. In part the explanation may simply be that, for Locke, contemporary Englishmen were already of the proper character to effectuate his political principles and that the English political order, at least after the Revolution of 1688 (which he wrote to promote and published to justify), was an appropriate home for the education he recommended. In part the explanation lies in the liberal character of his thought: not only in his radical separation of private and public, and his defense of private from public, but in his understanding government as subordinate to liberty, as having “nothing to do with moral virtues and vices,” as making men not necessarily good but only free and secure, guaranteeing them not happiness but, as our Declaration was to say, the pursuit of happiness. These two explanations, satisfaction with particular conditions and liberalism, placed in conjunction raise the serious question of whether those liberal politics depend on fortuitous coincidence for their effectiveness, so that their universal terms conceal a limiting particularity. The fate of some attempts to transplant Lockean institutions shows that they do not easily flourish in other soils. But that would not be the most serious result if liberal politics had nothing to do with education; one would have to wonder not only whether Lockean politics are universally transferable but whether they are self-sustaining. If the character of a people changes, then liberal institutions may no longer suit them; and since liberal institutions are not primarily character-forming, they seem to provide no guarantee against this eventuality or remedy for it if it does occur.

Locke's political teaching proper puts no emphasis on education, but he does present an educational theory, albeit a separate one. Unlike Hobbes's education project, which was to take effect through the sovereign's reform of the universities, Locke's reform was to make its way on its own—over the heads or behind the backs of the government and the universities alike—by influencing the reading public of parents of young children. It was not aimed at all parents, to be sure, for Locke sought to influence only the gentry and, of them, only those “so irregularly bold,” as he says at the end of the *Thoughts*, “that they dare venture to consult their own Reason, in the Education of their Children, rather than wholly to rely upon Old Custom.” That Locke directly appeals to parents, rather than to the government, as Hobbes does, parallels the difference in their politics, where Locke also appeals to the people (or, in practice, to the reading gentry and nobility), urging them to the occasional supreme political initiative of revolution and to a continual political vigilance and concern. For Locke, they, not the government, are the sovereign. Hobbes, on the contrary, appeals to the people only for obedience; his positive appeal is to the sovereign to sanction and establish Hobbes's doctrines in the universities.
Locke not only appealed to parents rather than to government; he appealed to parents to educate their children at home rather than at schools. This domestication of education seems wholly consonant with his liberal politics. It may be surprising, however, when we consider that his politics are also antipatriarchal.

Once we have gotten over our first impression of the *Two Treatises*—that they are silent on education compared to Plato or Hobbes (or Rousseau or Dewey)—we must be struck by the importance in them of the relation between parents and children. The *Two Treatises* present themselves as an attack on, and an alternative to, Sir Robert Filmer's patriarchalism, a doctrine of politics explicitly based on an understanding of the relation between parents and children. Filmer claimed that by nature and by Scripture fathers have absolute and permanent power over their children. He argues not merely that paternal power is the archetype, the origin, or the analogy of political power but that it simply is political power. The *Second Treatise* does not simply set forth Locke's own positive doctrine, independently of his tedious refutation of Filmer in the now rarely read *First Treatise*. On the contrary, many of the crucial subjects of the *Second Treatise* and the approaches Locke takes to them are necessary parts of his refutation of Filmer.

One of the topics in the *Second Treatise* that is most clearly connected to Locke's polemic against Filmer is the relation between parents and children. Locke argues that adult children owe their parents not obedience as such but only honor, and even that only in proportion to the care and education bestowed by the parents. Any obedience beyond that is granted only on the basis of consent, though consent may be induced by the prospect of inheritance. Even children who are not yet adult turn out not to owe obedience, though they are, to be sure, under their parents' power. For, strictly speaking, not yet having attained the age of reason, they cannot owe any obligations. Parental power is a matter not of children's duties or even of parents' rights but rather of parents' duties. Even in the state of nature parental power as such is not permanent or absolute, and it most especially does not reach to the power of life and death, which distinguishes political power.

It is paradoxical, therefore, that Locke, who devotes a good portion of his political work to freeing political power from any patriarchal claims and to minimizing the extent of paternal power, should, when it comes to education, be so insistent on entrusting it completely to parents. This juxtaposition of Locke's educational and political works makes one aware of an aspect of the antipatriarchal argument in the *Two Treatises* that Locke himself does not emphasize. Filmer, in stating that the natural rights or duties of a father and a king are all one, had declared that
INTRODUCTION

As the Father over one family, so the King, as Father over many families, extends his care to preserve, feed, clothe, instruct and defend the whole commonwealth.¹⁰

Locke, far from identifying fatherly care with political power, like Filmer, draws a strict distinction between them and grants instruction solely to parental power, not to civil government.¹¹ Education is exclusively entrusted by him to the authority that lacks the power of life and death.

Separate though it may be, the gentleman's education Locke advocated 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. To this end, they know their country's history and laws and the geography, chronology, and other matters required for that purpose. They speak well and write well. Morally, they are in temper neither slavish nor tyrannical but free men, independent and self-reliant. This freedom, however, is not a freedom from concern for the opinion of others. On the contrary, they are acutely sensitive to praise and blame, to the power of public opinion. 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.

This portrait of the Lockean citizen or gentleman, with its emphasis on concern for esteem, may be surprising, contrary as it is to the views of Lockean man as either a hedonistic seeker of property or a rational perceiver of the good. It suggests an understanding of the Two Treatises of Government quite different from those associated with such views of Lockean morality.

In one of Locke's minor educational writings he makes an important distinction: "Politics contains two parts very different the one from the other, the one containing the original of societies and the rise and extent of political power, the other, the art of governing men in society."¹² Locke then goes on to recommend the Two Treatises for the study of the first part of politics (the Second Treatise bears as its full title "An Essay concerning the True Original, Extent, and End of Civil Government"). This is the part of politics that teaches rights and the duties resulting from them;¹³ it is abstract and formal. The other part of politics—"very different," as Locke says in this minor essay—is an art, a matter of prudence, not a doctrine of rights and duties. He does not go on to recommend any books that directly teach this art of governing men; instead, he says that it is best learned from experience and history, and he accordingly recommends works of history and constitutional law, just
as he does in the *Thoughts*.\textsuperscript{14} Locke himself had experience in the art of politics. As Peter Laslett writes, he got "a whiff of Machiavelli's world" in 1665–66 in the course of a diplomatic mission to Cleves,\textsuperscript{15} and he spent much of the next fifteen years as Shaftesbury's confidant, secretary, and colleague at the very center of the first English political party, in the midst of elections, office-holding, and parliaments and, finally, plots and exile.\textsuperscript{16} After the culminating victory of Whiggism in 1688 Locke returned to England and served in government again, this time on the Board of Trade. Apart from this experience, Locke's reading, as revealed by Harrison and Laslett's edition of his library catalogue, shows a concern with at least one of the classic authors of the art of governing men. After noting Locke's apparent lack of interest in Aristotle's philosophy, Laslett remarks that he "evidently took much greater pains with authors either more congenial to him or of greater intellectual importance to his own work," and the example Laslett gives is Locke's assiduous collection of the works of Machiavelli. Laslett goes on to remark, however, that "no literary debt to Machiavelli shows upon the surface for all his pains to collect that author." Elsewhere Laslett argues nonetheless that Locke's political thinking has "a somewhat unexpected precedent . . . Machiavelli and the writers of political advice," so that Locke "could perhaps be looked upon as Machiavelli's philosopher."\textsuperscript{17} Locke's apparent interest in the side of Bacon represented by his *Essays* might also be noted in this context.\textsuperscript{18}

Regardless of his apparent interest in such teachers of the art of governing men in society, one is faced with the fact that Locke divided politics into two very different parts: the doctrine of foundations, rights, and duties on the one hand and the art of governing men on the other. And though he himself appears to have become familiar with the latter from history, from experience, and from study of teachers of that art, he seems to have written only in the former part, where he classified his *Two Treatises of Government*. From this fact it is not proper to infer that he believed that politics could be reduced to the first part, "that politics may be reduced to a science"—a task that Hume proposed and his many successors have attempted. For Locke did recommend that gentlemen study both parts of politics. One might wish to say that, even if the doctrine of foundations cannot be understood to be the whole of politics, it is still a whole in itself, it possesses a substantial degree of autonomy. One could say that Locke's procedure implies that it is possible to show men all this—that civil society is founded on consent, that rulers have the duty to protect the rights of subjects to life, liberty, and property, and that subjects have the duty to obey when those rights are protected and the right to revolt when they are not—without having to show the rulers precisely how to govern men in the various contingencies and emergencies of political life, let alone advise the subjects on how to
organize and conduct revolution. It is especially appropriate for liberal political doctrine, like liberal political rule itself, to be limited and legal in character. A doctrine of rights and duties is limited and legal in character even when it is a natural law to which those rights and duties belong. Such a doctrine, like liberal law, tells us of some things we must do or must not do and of others that we may do; but it does not tell us what it is wise or prudent or good for us to do, and it necessarily leaves open various realms of choice.19

But just as it is not possible to have a political doctrine without implications for education—for what kind of men are to be formed—even when that is not its direct object but only its indirect requirement,20 so we can doubt whether it is possible to have a political doctrine consisting only in a teaching of rights and duties, unaccompanied by some account of the art of governing men. Locke's doctrine is one of consent as the source of political duties; but for Locke, consent as the source of political duties must be rational; it must be to such conditions as a free and rational creature would consent to. Where such conditions do not exist, no apparent formal or empirical consent is valid as constituting obligations. Where such conditions do exist, consent can be presumed. Locke's doctrine is in this respect less legalistic than it may sound. Even more fundamentally than it teaches rights and duties, it teaches what is reasonable. Locke's teaching on prerogative shows the importance of art rather than law, while his teaching on the exercise of the right of revolution, which serves to justify or at least defend his teaching on the right of revolution, is clearly a prudential as well as a jural one.21

Aside from such implications of the Two Treatises, I would like to put forward another suggestion: that in Locke's Some Thoughts Concerning Education one finds what is a presentation of the art of governing men on one level at least. As Locke says in the Second Treatise, parental power or education, though it "comes far short" of political power, is still a "natural government."22

Although one must be very careful in this regard, one can conclude that Locke's account of the art of governing children aids in the task of understanding what he might have written on the second part of politics. For example, Locke advocates that, instead of requiring children to do things under the threat of punishment or even as duties, it is better to allow them to do the desired things freely or even as a privilege, a tactic in child psychology our age is not unfamiliar with.23 According to Locke, this principle applies also to grown men:

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?24
INTRODUCTION

Liberty itself can be the most powerful instrument of government; a teaching of rights can do more good than a teaching of duties. In the *Thoughts Concerning Education* we learn of the basis for this in human nature: the fact that men want above all to be free or to be thought free.

Similarly, Locke's advocacy of reasoning, or seeming to reason, with children rests on their desire to be thought rational. The factual or prudential justification for liberty is not rationality but the pretension to rationality. There is a grave difficulty implicit in this insight because, according to Locke, this fundamental human desire for liberty is also primordially a desire for mastery, not only over oneself but also over others. Both are recognized as pride. The first aspect must be carefully separated, strengthened, and satisfied, while the second must be subjugated. Indeed, it is by accommodating the proud desire for liberty that the proud desire for mastery can best be controlled.
ONE

Natural Freedom and Patriarchal Politics

Locke founded liberal politics on the doctrine of natural freedom. He teaches that all men are naturally free and equal and therefore subject to political power only by their own consent. On that foundation he builds a liberal politics, teaching that "the end of Law is ... to preserve and enlarge Freedom ... from restraint and violence from others," in other words, that "Political Power" is to be used only for "the Regulating and Preserving of Property" and for defense from foreign injury, "only for the Publick Good," understood as "the good of every particular Member of that Society, as far as by common Rules, it can be provided for," understood in turn as the preservation of his property, "that is, his Life, Liberty and Estate." In the Two Treatises this centrality of liberty and this limitation of government to the protection of individual rights are used by Locke to oppose tyranny and arbitrary government generally and to stress their constitutionalist and revolutionary implications. In the Letter on Toleration he uses them to oppose religious persecution specifically, and he emphasizes that civil government is concerned only with the body—its life, liberty, health, freedom from pain, and external possessions—not with the soul or with teaching the truth of opinions. To maintain his hypothesis of natural freedom and the liberal politics he built on it, Locke argues against the alternative hypothesis of patriarchalism. Patriarchalism takes its bearings on human beings' original status as dependent children and so arrives at a government that treats grown men as children, and this, in its denial of their rationality and in the absence of parental affection, means in practice treating them as beasts.

Filmer: Patriarchal Politics as Providential Politics

Although John Locke wrote Two Treatises of Government, it is the Second Treatise for which he is celebrated. The title page declares that in the First Treatise "the False Principles and Foundation of Sir Robert Filmer, and His Followers are Detected and Overthrown," and Filmer's doctrines today seem irrelevant and absurd. Yet Locke devotes most of his Preface,
which is to both Treatises, to his opposition to Filmer, opposing his own “hypothesis” to Filmer’s “hypothesis.” Only once in the work does Locke explicitly argue against any other hypothesis. To save himself “from the Reproach of Writing against a dead Adversary,” Locke points out that “the Pulpit, of late Years, publickly owned his [Filmer’s] Doctrine, and made it the Currant Divinity of the Times” and that there are men who are “crying up his Books, and espousing his Doctrine.” These remarks suggest that Locke had to address Filmer’s doctrine solely to meet current conditions. However, Locke also claims in the Preface that “The King, and Body of the Nation, have since so thoroughly confuted his [Filmer’s] Hypothesis, that, I suppose, no Body hereafter will have either the Confidence to appear against our Common Safety, and be again an Advocate for Slavery; or [have] the Weakness to be deceived” by such doctrines. Locke thus seems to say that already in his time Filmer was for practical purposes as irrelevant as he seems today. Perhaps Locke was concerned with the possible effect of Filmer’s sort of argument not only currently but at “all times.” Perhaps the meaning of Locke’s hypothesis—the natural freedom and equality of men—emerges most clearly in opposition to Filmer’s sort of hypothesis. It is apparent already in the Preface to the Two Treatises that Locke’s great principles are consent of the people as the only title to lawful government and the natural rights of men, which they may justly revolt to preserve, both depending on the natural freedom of men. The natural freedom of men is as surely Locke’s great political principle as its denial is Filmer’s.

In the very first paragraph of the Second Treatise Locke presents his exposition of the true origin of civil government as a supplement to the First Treatise’s refutation of Filmer, or at least as a task made necessary only because of that refutation. Natural freedom is presented as a premise in the Second Treatise; it is presented as the conclusion of a long argument in the First. But the clearest reason for beginning a consideration of Locke’s educational thought, and particularly its relation to his politics, by considering Filmer and Locke’s critique of Filmer is that Locke’s great political work presents itself as an attack on the doctrine of patriarchal power, a doctrine of politics explicitly based on an understanding of the relation between parents and children. It is the requirements of Locke’s polemic against Filmer that led him to present an analysis of the family and the rights and duties of parents and children.

Filmer’s subtitle informs his reader that Patriarcha is “A Defense of the Natural Power of Kings against the Unnatural Liberty of the People.” It is a polemical or apologetic work designed to defend an old doctrine against a new one. It is organized not as a proof or deduction or even as an orderly exposition of the natural power of kings but very much as a defense of that power against various arguments brought to bear against it by defenders of the liberty of the people. Filmer attempts