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The Educational Writings of John Locke

John Locke (1632–1704) is widely regarded as one of the most influential of the Enlightenment philosophers. This volume, edited by J. W. Adamson and published as a second edition in 1922, contains two of John Locke's essays concerning education; *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) and *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* (1706). *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* expands on Locke's pioneering theory of mind by explaining how to educate a child using three complementary methods: the development of a healthy body; the formation of a virtuous mind; and the pursuit of an academic curriculum including the emerging sciences, mathematics and languages. *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* continues the theme of the earlier essay by describing how to develop rational thought. For over a century after the publication of these essays, John Locke's views on education were considered authoritative, and his work was translated into almost all major European languages.

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1 *Mens Sana in Corpore Sano*
 is a short but full description of a happy state by which these two are either more to wish for or by which either of them is but little to be desired for anything else. Mens ~~is~~ happiness or misery is most part of their own making. He whose mind directly not wisely will never take the right way, or whose body is crazy & feeble will never be able to maintain it. I confess there are some men of constitution of body & mind so vigorous & well framed by nature that they need not much assistance from others, but by the strength of their natural genius are from their cradles carried towards it is excellent & by the ^{vigour} ~~strength~~ of their constitutions are able to do wonders but these examples are but few, & I think

Facsimile page of the original draft of
Some Thoughts concerning Education.

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THE EDUCATIONAL WRITINGS
OF
JOHN LOCKE

EDITED BY

JOHN WILLIAM ADAMSON

PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

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PREFACE

THE educational writings of an author who died more than two centuries ago may be thought to possess an interest little more than antiquarian at the present day. Unfortunately, the historical study of education, as commonly pursued, serves to confirm rather than to correct such a supposition, since it frequently diverts the student from the development which has taken place in the actual application of educational ideas, and transfers his attention to the biographies, personal opinions, or mere *obiter dicta* of individual men and women, whose influence upon homes, schools, universities, or administration has been either small or quite negligible.

But there have been men and women whose lives or writings or both combined have exerted great influence upon the course of events; the educational situation of the present is to be understood in its completeness only by reference to the past as embodied in their work. John Locke is of the number. He was profoundly dissatisfied with education as practised in his own day, and his criticisms throw light on the aims and methods of

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the schools of the late seventeenth century. But his writings also shaped the theory and practice of his immediate successors outside his own country, particularly in France and Germany. His principles and methods still live, as witness some of the most recent changes of scholastic procedure. The present volume attempts to make clear his position amongst the various influences which have shaped the real history of education.

The educational writings of John Locke are of more than professional interest; indeed, their more obvious appeal is to the parent and the young man who conscientiously sets himself the task of "self-education." But the reader, whether lay or professional, is apt to find the longer treatise somewhat prolix and encumbered by repetitions, while the *Conduct of the Understanding* was not revised by its author. In the present work, the provision of cross-references and the selection of the first edition of *Some Thoughts* as the basal text have, it is hoped, secured an arrangement of Locke's exposition convenient for the purposes of study.

J. W. A.

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FACSIMILE FROM LOCKE'S HOLOGRAPHIC DRAFT OF
SOME THOUGHTS CONCERNING EDUCATION

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CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1632. John Locke, born at Wrington, Somerset, August 29.
- 1646–52. At Westminster School.
- 1652–67. At Christ Church, Oxford. B.A. 1656. M.A. 1658.
 Senior student, tutor, teacher of Greek and of rhetoric.
 First continental tour 1665. M.B. 1674.
1668. Locke, a Fellow of the Royal Society.
- 1667–84. Member of the household of Lord Ashley (first Earl of Shaftesbury 1672). Guardian to Ashley's grandson (third Earl) 1674–83. 1675–79: Locke in France. 1684: Expelled from his studentship at Christ Church by desire of Charles II.
- 1683–89. Exile in Holland. Locke's letters on the education of Clarke's son.
- 1689–1704. Commissioner of Appeals.
1690. *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* published.
1693. *Some Thoughts concerning Education* published.
- 1695–1700. Locke, a Commissioner of Trade and Plantations.
1695. Third edition of *Some Thoughts*, enlarged; Coste's French translation (fifth edition 1744).
1697. *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* begun. Memorandum proposing Poor Law reform and the institution of "Working Schools."
1698. Fourth edition of *Some Thoughts*.
1704. Locke died at Oates, High Laver, Essex, October 28. Oates was his home from 1691 onwards.
1706. *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* published in *The Works of Mr. John Locke*.
1714. First edition of Locke's Collected Works published.