

OBSERVATIONS
UPON
LIBERAL EDUCATION

NATURAL LAW AND
ENLIGHTENMENT CLASSICS

Knud Haakonssen

General Editor



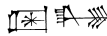
Map of Aberdeen

NATURAL LAW AND
ENLIGHTENMENT CLASSICS

*Observations
upon
Liberal Education,
in All Its Branches*

George Turnbull

Edited and with an Introduction
by Terrence O. Moore, Jr.



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INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Enlightenment was recognized at the time and is studied today as one of the great moments in the history of liberal thought. Scottish thinkers in the eighteenth century understood both the benefits and the hazards in the creation and preservation of a free and commercial society. Hutcheson, Hume, Smith, and others wrote extensive treatises concerning almost every aspect of the growth of commerce, learning, and a liberal constitutional order. Nonetheless, one great embarrassment for the Scottish Enlightenment, or so it has seemed, was the lack of any formal treatise written on education, despite the emphasis placed upon “education, custom, and example” in Scottish moral philosophy and political economy. Although there are passing references to education in the writings of the great luminaries, thus underlining its importance, the Scots seem to have put forth no treatise as comprehensive as Locke’s *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* or Rousseau’s *Emile*.¹ This seeming omission in the body of enlightened Scottish thought is in fact an illusion of modern editing and reading. For an extensive and illuminating treatment of education, sensitive to the means of inculcating the personal responsibility necessary for living in a free society, was provided by George Turnbull’s *Observations upon Liberal Education*.

George Turnbull (1698–1748) was born in Alloa, Scotland, and began

1. John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, in *The Educational Writings of John Locke*, ed. James L. Axtell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968). The most recent edition in print is John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education and Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, ed. Ruth W. Grant and Nathan Tarcov (Indianapolis, Ind., and Cambridge, Mass.: Hackett Publishing, 1996). Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

his studies at the University of Edinburgh in 1711.² While in Edinburgh, Turnbull was an active member of the Rankenian club, founded in 1716 or 1717 by a group of young students dedicated to the writings of Shaftesbury.³ After graduating with a master of arts degree from Edinburgh in 1721, Turnbull taught as a regent at Marischal College, Aberdeen. Although he is principally known as the teacher of Thomas Reid, Turnbull can be considered innovative in his own right. While at Marischal he promoted the study of Shaftesbury in the moral philosophy curriculum, became the first Scottish moralist to call for the experimental method in the investigation of morals, and went further than any other of the Moral Sense philosophers in developing the analogy between moral inquiry and the natural sciences. Turnbull did not, as is often thought, owe his ideas to Hutcheson; rather, he worked out many of the implications of Shaftesbury's thought simultaneously with the great moral philosopher at Glasgow.

Despite his initial success in Aberdeen, Turnbull left in 1727 and began to tutor young aristocrats on their continental grand tours. Yet his writing drew upon his experience at Marischal, and he gave more attention to the role of education in the maintenance of civic and religious freedom than anyone else among the Scots except perhaps David Fordyce.⁴ Besides vari-

2. For biographical information on Turnbull, see M. A. Stewart, "George Turnbull and Educational Reform," in *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment*, ed. Jennifer J. Carter and Joan H. Pittock (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987). On Turnbull's educational philosophy, see Stewart and the following works: David Fate Norton, "George Turnbull and the Furniture of the Mind," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36 (1975): 701–16; Earl R. Wasserman, "Nature Moralized: The Divine Analogy in the Eighteenth Century," *ELH* 20 (1953): 39–76; Paul B. Wood, *The Aberdeen Enlightenment: The Arts Curriculum in the Eighteenth Century* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1993).

3. See Anthony, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, foreword by Douglas Den Uyl (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Fund, 2001).

4. Fordyce taught moral philosophy at Marischal College from 1742 to 1751. His best-known works were *Dialogues Concerning Education* (1745) and *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (1754), ed. Thomas Kennedy (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Fund, 2003). He also wrote the article on moral philosophy for the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

ous works on rational Christianity, moral philosophy, and natural law,⁵ he published *A Treatise on Ancient Painting* in 1740 and *Observations upon Liberal Education* in 1742, both concerned with education reform. In 1739 Turnbull was ordained in the Anglican Church. He became rector of a small Irish parish in 1742 and died six years later on a trip to the Netherlands.

In *Observations upon Liberal Education* Turnbull joined a discussion of the best means of educating young gentlemen that began in antiquity but was reinvigorated at the close of the seventeenth century by the English philosopher John Locke. In his *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) Locke irrevocably altered the scope of education in the English-speaking world. The pedagogical inheritance from the Renaissance throughout Europe had been the study of the classical languages. In their period of vibrancy, the classical schools of England, founded mostly during the Tudor and the early Stuart period, taught the Latin and Greek classics to young boys destined for careers in the church and the law. Locke himself had attended the prestigious grammar school of Westminster under the schoolmaster Richard Busby, a man famous for his classical erudition and notorious for his brutal methods of discipline. Despite the distinguished history of such schools, Locke accused late-seventeenth-century schoolmasters of beating children for failing to understand the arcane rules of grammar in languages the schoolmasters barely understood themselves. English gentlemen would be better served, according to Locke, by learning the language and history of their own country. In addition, the high numbers of unruly boys in English boarding schools, whom masters could only barely control by means of merciless beatings, turned these celebrated institutions of learning into schools of vice. Locke warned parents against compromising their sons' virtue for the sake of the

5. See George Turnbull, *The Principles of Moral and Christian Philosophy* (1740), ed. Alexander Broadie (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Fund, forthcoming); *A Methodical System of Universal Law: Or the Laws of Nature and Nations Deduced from Certain Principles, and Applied to Proper Cases*, by Johann Gottlieb Heineccius, trans. George Turnbull (1741), ed. Peter Schröder (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Fund, forthcoming).

dead languages. He advocated, instead, education in the home, under a polite and virtuous tutor, in more modern and useful subjects.

In addition to his critique of grammar schools, Locke provided the age with an epistemology that both alarmed and inspired moral educators. In Locke's view, the individual has no innate understanding of truth and beauty. Rather, the individual's ideas of the world are formed in early childhood according to his or her exposure to certain stimuli perceived by the mind simultaneously, a process Locke called "the association of ideas" and a concept on which Turnbull often drew. Simple elements that have no natural relation to each other, but are joined by social customs, become connected in the individual's imagination. Once the association is made, it is almost impossible to break. False associations made in early youth could have an adverse effect on the whole course of a person's life. Locke and subsequent philosophers worried about the "false associations" made by the culture at large that would cause youth to engage in pernicious pursuits. For example, Locke thought that children had no proclivity toward violence but acquired a taste for it when they read accounts of cruelties in history or when people laughed at the children's feeble attempts to hit others. Acquiring false associations in childhood, if unchecked, led by degrees to a course of ruin in adulthood, both to oneself and to others. Although originally used by Locke to criticize the schools, the appeal of this theory of association for enlightened schoolmasters and educational theorists became irresistible. It was simple. It placed a premium on the early upbringing and education of the child. And it took aim against the "false associations" of a culture that too often preferred luxury to virtue. As a result, education reformers throughout the eighteenth century attempted to demonstrate how children might be steered away from the false associations of the culture (and too often the home) and toward the true association of happiness with virtue.

Like all eighteenth-century education reformers, Turnbull owed a considerable debt to John Locke. He appropriated wholesale many of Locke's ideas on early instruction and the cultivation of good habits, specifically, on the dangers of parental indulgence, on the importance of self-denial, on the use of praise and blame, and on the best means of disciplining children. Turnbull also embraced the Lockean description of the ideal English

gentleman. The child should learn to be natural in company rather than affected, industrious rather than lazy, and courageous rather than pusillanimous. Turnbull also followed Locke closely in his prescriptions for the teaching of English and foreign languages as well as British history and law. Despite these obvious borrowings, Turnbull's *Observations* cannot be regarded as merely a restatement and elaboration of Locke's educational writings. Locke proved too antiestablishment and anticlassical in his pedagogy and apparently too antinormative in his epistemology for Turnbull's more balanced view of human nature and education.

An instance of Turnbull's balanced approach to education reform can be seen in his handling of the most controversial educational issue of the century and the one with which he began his *Observations*. Every elite family in Britain had to decide whether to send its sons to school, usually one of the "public" boarding schools such as Eton or Westminster, or to educate them privately in the home by hiring a domestic tutor. Though Locke had made a strong case against corrupting the young gentleman's morals by sending him to a school, the accomplished schoolmasters of Britain were not without their own powerful arguments. Foremost they rehearsed the advantages of public education set forth by the great Roman schoolmaster Quintilian.⁶ His *Institutio Oratoria* offered a systematic account of the rigorous oratorical training undertaken by the Roman youth and aimed ultimately at producing a Cicero. Renaissance education had largely been modeled on the *Institutio Oratoria*, and Quintilian's authority had by no means diminished in the eyes of eighteenth-century British schoolmasters. According to Quintilian, a boy's morals could be preserved in a public school provided that upstanding and watchful instructors were in charge. Moreover, a child's morals were as often corrupted in the home as in the school. Parents spoiled their children, and slaves introduced them to all sorts of vice. Even more important, a school offered youth a public setting that stimulated their minds through "emulation," that is, the spirited rivalry of many boys competing to be the best. The advantages of

6. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, trans. H. E. Butler, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963).

emulation for producing a great orator and a public man were obvious. British schoolmasters adopted Quintilian's arguments wholesale; they had only to adjust "slaves" to "servants." Turnbull, however, saw the merits of both sides and hoped to effect a compromise. In his Socratic dialogue devoted to the issue, he concluded that smaller schools could preserve morality and also offer emulation, "rivalship," and "bustling."

As important as the educational setting, the curriculum was something that must be addressed by every education reformer. Turnbull devoted considerable attention to the subjects that should be taught, and even more to how they should be taught. Again he reached a compromise between Locke and the classicists. In doing so, he made some unique contributions to his age's understanding of what today is called "the canon," those arts and sciences that should be studied by all liberally educated individuals. Turnbull agreed that British youth should study their own history and language. At the same time he allowed for more training in the classical languages and classical history than did Locke.

For support of this more classical curriculum, Turnbull drew on the Frenchman Charles Rollin as well as Quintilian. After Locke, Charles Rollin was probably the most authoritative writer on education in eighteenth-century Europe.⁷ Whereas Locke's experience in education derived from his office as private secretary and tutor in the house of Shaftesbury and later his observations of Damaris Mascham educating her children, Rollin was a schoolmaster through and through. While rector of the University of Paris, he turned his lectures into two of the most voluminous and popular works of the century, *The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres* and *The Ancient History*. In the former work Rollin explained his methods of teaching the classics, methods that drew liberally from Cicero, Horace, Seneca, Xenophon, Plutarch, Plato, and, above all, Quintilian, authors who also make frequent appearances in Turnbull's *Observations*.

7. See his monumental treatise, *De la manière d'enseigner et d'étudier les belles lettres* (1726–28), translated as *The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres*, 4 vols. (London, 1734). On Rollin's importance, see Albert Charles Gaudin, "The Educational Views of Charles Rollin" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1939), and Georges Snyders, *La Pédagogie en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe Siècles* (Paris, 1965).

Rollin explained how youth should be steered away from false images of “glory” presented by the culture and instead turned toward true glory and a correct taste as found in the great works of history and literature. In short, Rollin paved the way for Turnbull by showing how the proper teaching of a canon of great works in school could achieve the same ends that Locke advocated in his system of private instruction. As much as a tribute to Locke, the *Observations* can be read as a defense of teaching the classics for moral purposes.

Turnbull’s curriculum comprehended far more than the classics. Turnbull also embraced subjects that Locke either criticized or largely ignored, such as poetry, painting, and the natural sciences. Although today we take for granted scientific and aesthetic subjects in a liberal-arts curriculum, it must be realized that the rigorous linguistic basis of the classical curriculum left little room for “modern” subjects. Turnbull was one of the first educational theorists to open up liberal education to the study of the natural world as it had been explained by Newton. He stood virtually alone in his enthusiasm for art.⁸ Unlike educators today, however, Turnbull did not compartmentalize or departmentalize such different “branches” of learning. As the metaphor of the tree implies, all forms of learning had a common origin and were connected. Invoking Plato and other ancient philosophers, Turnbull pronounced all knowledge as having “one common scope” whose purpose is to harmonize the human mind and affections. The lessons drawn from nature were the same as those to be found in the human, or “moral,” world because a benevolent creator has set into motion laws of nature, both human and material. It is therefore the duty of human beings to live according to the designs of “God’s moral providence” as revealed to us in history and through the “analogies” of the physical world. The one true purpose of philosophy, therefore, is to make men better. For Turnbull moral philosophers were, strictly speaking, philosophers who moralized.

Moral philosophers had an ally in human nature itself according to

8. Turnbull’s aesthetic theories are explored in Carol Gibson-Wood, “Painting as Philosophy: George Turnbull’s *Treatise on Ancient Painting*,” in *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment*, 189–98.

Turnbull. Following Shaftesbury, Turnbull rejected the ideas of a “certain set of philosophers” who regarded human nature as “originally deformed.” These unnamed philosophers were no doubt Hobbes and Mandeville, but also by implication Saint Augustine and the theologians inspired by him, especially the orthodox Calvinists in the Church of Scotland. To explain evil deeds in the world, Turnbull had recourse to Locke’s association of ideas. Individuals would become vicious when they were exposed to false associations in childhood and formed habits accordingly. Yet he seemed as troubled as Shaftesbury by the underlying idea that morality is only the result of custom, habit, or education, as one reading of Locke would have it. Instead, Turnbull posited that human beings are equipped with a “natural furniture” of the mind that urges them to advance in knowledge and virtue. By natural furniture Turnbull referred to reason, the imagination, the moral sense, the passions or affections, and other capacities common to every individual. The benevolent “author of Nature” endowed human beings with these capacities so they could “exercise a very large power” by doing good in the world. Given proper instruction, people would normally imitate their benevolent creator and thereby attain real and lasting happiness. Turnbull’s optimistic view of human nature allowed him to enlist for moral purposes certain parts of the mind that seventeenth-century philosophers had distrusted, such as the imagination. Of course, the “fancy” had to be regulated, but it could not be restrained completely. Rather, the imagination opened up to the spectator the beauties of nature and of poetic and artistic excellence. Like Shaftesbury, Turnbull held that the aesthetic and moral senses were closely allied. Pleasures of the imagination, as Addison had shown, could thus be used to harmonize the soul.⁹

9. The importance of Addison and Steele’s *The Spectator* in creating a culture of politeness in eighteenth-century Britain has been traced in the various essays of Nicholas Phillipson. See especially “The Scottish Enlightenment,” in *The Enlightenment in National Context*, ed. R. Porter and M. Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), and *Hume* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989). On this same theme in Shaftesbury, see Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

By “liberal education,” then, Turnbull meant the employment of the various branches of learning to show youth how to gain mastery over their “affections.” The ability to regulate the passions and imagination granted youth a true “inward liberty” and strength. Teachers and moralists should therefore “cherish into proper vigour the love of liberty” in children but not allow it to degenerate into willfulness and vice. Such a liberty constituted a real “power,” a command over the self and a power to do good in the world. This self-command in turn led one to true happiness and, according to Turnbull, moral “perfection.”

There has been some dispute over Turnbull’s originality and influence as a moral philosopher. As an educational theorist, however, his influence was more direct. References to the *Observations* and *A Treatise on Ancient Painting* in eighteenth-century schoolmasters’ educational treatises suggest that Turnbull’s advice was read, admired, and followed by enlightened teachers.¹⁰ Perhaps the most important use of Turnbull was in America. When writing his *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pensilvania*, Benjamin Franklin drew explicitly on George Turnbull.¹¹ Franklin, of course, was one of the early advocates of a liberal, moral, and English curriculum in American schools. He was also a great believer in attempting to reach “moral perfection.” Turnbull’s *Observations upon Liberal Education*, therefore, was an important contribution to the theory and practice of education during the Age of Enlightenment, a period when the best minds in Europe turned their attention to making young people “happy in themselves and useful to others.” The *Observations* should prove worthwhile reading to scholars of moral philosophy, liberal education, and the eighteenth century. In addition, as our own age struggles to reform schools and to form free and responsible citizens, concerned teachers and parents may wish to return to their enlightened moorings by contemplat-

10. James Barclay, *A Treatise on Education* (Edinburgh: James Cochran, 1743), 217–18. George Chapman, *A Treatise on Education*, 4th ed. (London, 1790), appendix.

11. Franklin identified the authors he consulted while writing the *Proposals* as Milton, Locke, Hutcheson, Obadiah Walker, Rollin, and George Turnbull, in that order. Franklin actually mistook David Fordyce for Francis Hutcheson. See Benjamin Franklin, *Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1987), 323–44.

ing and indeed emulating Turnbull's ambitious curriculum in virtue and learning.

Terrence O. Moore, Jr.

Editorial Note

George Turnbull left no stone unturned in supporting his observations on education with the best of classical and modern sources. He assumed a readership that was well versed in the literature of antiquity, ancient and modern history, and contemporary works on moral philosophy and education. Like many an eighteenth-century author, he did not always identify these sources precisely. Moreover, he was prone to make general references along the lines of "see Plato on this." A modern editor could potentially offer a thousand footnotes to this edition and still not consider his or her job complete.

My principle of editing has been less ambitious and, perhaps, less obtrusive. I have simply tried to make Turnbull more readable for a modern audience. To this end, I have followed three basic guidelines. First, I have attempted to identify all of the direct quotations in the body of the text. Many of these passages are taken from authors such as Locke, Rollin, and Quintilian. Turnbull was often unreliable in setting off quoted passages with both opening and closing quotation marks. To assist the reader I have supplied the missing punctuation, using intelligent guesswork in a few instances. Second, I have provided translations for all of the Latin and Greek passages, whether in the text or in the notes. Where possible, I have used the Loeb Classical Library published by Harvard University Press. All such identifications and translations added by me are enclosed in square brackets. Third, I have studiously avoided piling up my own footnotes on top of Turnbull's. The general quality of some of these notes is an important aspect of Turnbull's style. Furthermore, he seems to invite readers to take on whole texts, especially those of ancient philosophers, rather than to

consult them on specific points of interest. A thorough acquaintance with Turnbull will, no doubt, enlist many of today's readers to study the ancients on the all-consuming topic of education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Like so many other students and scholars of the Scottish Enlightenment, I owe a considerable debt to the teaching and conversation of Nicholas Phillipson. If the chief purpose of the historian is to make a period of the past come alive for modern students, then Dr. Phillipson has fulfilled that office with conspicuous wit and learning for many decades. Professor Knud Haakonssen has been an exceedingly patient and helpful general editor. I am deeply grateful to my friend Professor Erik Gunderson of The Ohio State University, who has identified and translated a number of obscure classical passages at a moment's notice. Finally, I am most thankful to my wife, Jennifer, who has endured my working on Turnbull over weekends and holidays in our first year of marriage while during the regular workweek I was setting up a classical school that is not unworthy, I hope, of Turnbull's ideal.

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UPON
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Liberal Education,

In all its Branches

CONTAINING

The Substance of what hath been said upon that important Subject by the best Writers Ancient or Modern; with many new Remarks interspersed:

Designed for the Assistance of Young Gentlemen, who having made some Progress in Useful Sciences, are desirous of making further Improvements, by a proper Prosecution of their Studies; as well as for the Use of Parents, who would give right Education to their Children, and of those who are engaged in the Business of Education, whether in a more Private or public Manner.

IN THREE PARTS.

By George Turnbull, LL. D.

Chaplain to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales.

*Gratum est, quod patriae civem, populoque dedisti,
Si facis, ut patriae sit idoneus, utilis agris,
Utilis & bellorum & pacis rebus agendis.
Plurimum enim intererit, quibus artibus, & quibus hunc tu,
Moribus instituas.*—JUVENAL Sat. 14.¹

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1. [Juvenal, *Satires*, 14.70–74: “It is good that you have presented your country and your people with a citizen, if you can make him serviceable to his country, useful for the land, useful for the things both of peace and war. For it will make all the difference in what practices, in what habits, you bring him up” (Loeb translation by G. G. Ramsay).]