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Locke's Educational Theories as Modified by Defoe, Johnson, and Rousseau

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LOCKE’S EDUCATIONAL THEORIES AS MODIFIED BY DEFOE, JOHNSON,
AND ROUSSEAU

By

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This thesis will show the degree of influence that the philosophies of John Locke had upon three subsequent eighteenth century writers: Daniel Defoe, Samuel Johnson, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. I contend that while aspects of Locke’s ideology can be found in the major fiction of all three writers, his ideas are modified by each author to mesh with the messages each attempted to drive home in his own writing and in order to accord with their own personal beliefs, despite many critics’ claim to the contrary.
INTRODUCTION

John Locke (1632-1704) was a jack-of-all-trades: a philosopher, politician, physician, author, and most importantly for the purposes of this study, an educational theorist. In 1693, Locke composed an enduring treatise that revolved around the proper fashion with which to raise and educate children entitled *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. Locke himself never married or had children, nonetheless the proposals and theories contained within the work can be directly attributed to the time Locke spent as a tutor. Locke credited personal experience as essential to his knowledge and in *Some Thoughts* regularly suggests that parents follow suit, allowing their children to “find by Experience.”¹ This doctrine, commonly called empiricism, is often associated with Locke, and emanates largely from his idea that children enter the world as *tabula rasa* (a blank slate), thus they possess no innate ideas. Therefore, the only way knowledge can be acquired is through a direct use of the senses, and it is the job of the parents (or tutor) to allow a child the opportunity to exercise these faculties without interference.

Locke’s educational ideas, however, were influential in more ways than merely advising parents how to best raise their children. Locke was critical of the lack of appropriate literature for children and this criticism influenced a subsequent generation of writers to begin writing literature for children. In *Children, Parents, and the Rise of the Novel*, T.G.A Nelson asserts that the “growth of children’s literature in the later eighteenth century… [has] been plausibly attributed to [Locke’s] influence” (86). Roughly twenty-five years after *Some Thoughts* was published, Daniel Defoe wrote *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), considered by many to be the first modern novel. Defoe’s novel, which was considered almost exclusively a “book for boys” for at least a century after its inception, would likely have fulfilled Locke’s criteria as an acceptable book for children, particularly because of its emphasis on Crusoe’s empirically-based education. Additionally, the plot itself illustrates several Lockean scenarios from Locke’s political perspectives regarding kingship, to his educational principles involving the proper way to instruct pupils.

¹
There is little doubt then that John Locke’s influence extended to eighteenth century writers of all genres. However, I will show that the writers in this study – Daniel Defoe (1660-1731), Samuel Johnson (1709-84), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) – have all too frequently been inaccurately stigmatized as “disciples” of Locke. Taking into consideration the popularity of Locke’s work on education, it is probably more accurate to state that Locke’s commentary simply provided later writers with subject matter that became more socially relevant in the years following Locke’s death. Nelson cites the eighteenth century as a critical period of transition in the treatment of children; a newfound emphasis was placed upon children and how they were reared (previously a largely overlooked subject). Society not only began to display concern for the methods used to instruct children, but children (and their education) became prominent issues in the emerging novel as well (27). While Locke was not the first author to address education, the popularity of his treatise and the novelty of many of the ideas espoused in Some Thoughts Concerning Education allowed the work to endure for at least a century after his death, so much so that many subsequent writers touched on such issues either directly or indirectly through their fictions, thus cementing Locke’s importance in the field of pedagogy.

I plan to divide my thesis into four chapters, beginning with a detailed analysis of Locke’s educational theories found in Some Thoughts Concerning Education. I will devote the majority of the next three chapters to each writer’s major works of fiction (in chronological order), juxtaposing these with their non-fictional efforts – essays, conduct books, etc. The bulk of chapter two will be my commentary on Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe, demonstrating its application of Lockean principles, and subsequently areas that may actually oppose Locke’s ideas. If one were to treat the scenario of Robinson Crusoe as Lockean, then it would likely be appropriate to treat Defoe as the closest writer in this study to being a disciple of Locke’s ideology, as Defoe clearly makes Locke’s ideas of practical education and hard work the key to Crusoe’s survival in the face of difficult circumstances. While I do not disagree with the notion that Crusoe gains a Lockean (largely empirical) education and this knowledge enables him to become a tutor/mentor to Friday, Crusoe’s status as a monarch (installed in such a position by God’s grace) who is incapable of being deposed is the very form of government Locke so vehemently
opposed in *A Treatise on Civil Government* (1690). This idea of a father figure as king is more consistent with puritan beliefs instilled in Defoe by his parents than it is a reflection of Lockean ideology. Indeed, Defoe’s seemingly more rigid subscription to puritan doctrine (in *Robinson Crusoe* and in his non-fiction) is likely the greatest difficulty in labeling Defoe’s work “Lockean” rather than “puritan.” I will show that Defoe was more influenced by Puritanism than Lockeanism, and while these two ideologies often intersect, they also differ significantly.

In chapter three I will address the inconsistencies of Locke’s empiricist doctrine as relates to Johnson’s *Rasselas* (1759). Johnson, like Defoe and Rousseau, was certainly knowledgeable of Locke’s work, and in some instances even agrees with him. For example, in *Rambler No. 137* (July 9, 1751), Johnson writes: “The chief art of learning, as Locke has observed, is to attempt but little at a time… the student must… accommodate his knowledge to the purposes of life” (cited in Greene 224). However, while Johnson’s *Rasselas* displays elements of Locke’s empiricist doctrine, the results of such an education are inconclusive. Although Crusoe is clearly the beneficiary of a Lockean education, it is unclear whether Rasselas and his sister, the principal characters of Johnson’s novella, gain anything substantial from their voyage, whose ultimate goal is to give the inexperienced travelers knowledge of the world.

I contend that through the very nature of *Rasselas*, from its disconcerting tone to its lack of closure, Johnson intentionally makes it difficult to discern whether an empirical education derived through interaction with strangers – a practice Locke credited with much of his own knowledge – is actually beneficial in the long run. Another issue I will consider in Johnson’s treatment of Lockean educational beliefs is the character of Imlac, for while he fulfills the role of tutor to the young travelers, his occupation and some of the methods of instruction he employs differ greatly from many ideas expressed in *Some Thoughts*. I believe that the young travelers’ various discourses with Imlac also illustrate Johnson’s doubt about the effectiveness of tutors, regardless of the instructional methods they employ.

In chapter four I will address Rousseau’s relation to Locke, which is probably the most complex of the three writers. While it might be surmised that he is the most like Locke in form – a political and educational writer and philosopher – in practice, I will
suggest that he is the most anti-Lockean. This is likely best evidenced by *Emile*, for while it is an educational treatise, it is much different from *Some Thoughts...* particularly in the sense that it is so impractical. While *Emile* is, first and foremost, a treatise on education, its fictional elements cannot be ignored; the entire premise of the work is hypothetical.

I will show that the differences depicted in the techniques of formal tutoring epitomize the great disparity between Locke’s and Rousseau’s educational practices. *Some Thoughts...* was originally addressed to Locke’s friend Edward Clarke in order to help him raise his young son to be a proper gentleman; *Emile* deals exclusively with what Rousseau *would* do if he was presented with the prospect of being a young man’s tutor. While Rousseau felt that the tutor should be the sole companion of the child until he reaches adulthood, Locke believed that social interaction was necessary for the betterment of the child, so that when he was of the proper age to benefit society, he might be better equipped to do so. This is where Rousseau’s admiration of *Robinson Crusoe* vividly presents itself, for while Crusoe exercises Lockean behavior on his desert island, Rousseau overlooks this aspect, instead focusing on the circumstances in which they are practiced. To Rousseau, the true value of industry and invention in Crusoe’s situation is that he has been productive of his own volition without any outside help; in short, Crusoe is the prototypical individualist, the very sort of person Rousseau wants Emile to become.

The concluding lines of *Some Thoughts...* somewhat reduces the strength of Locke’s prior claims, as he advises readers to “consult their own Reason” (265) in the raising and educating of their children. In essence all three of these writers in this study did exactly as Locke advised in this circumstance, for while all three men were clearly familiar with Locke’s maxims, none simply accepted Locke’s ideas as the gospel, but rather chose to subscribe to or oppose Locke’s various ideas as they saw fit. In conclusion, I will show that while each of these authors may be considered followers of Locke, suggesting that any of the three adhere *strictly* to his maxims (which seems to be the assumption of many critics) is an overstatement. Certainly each author garnered some of his ideas from Locke, but each placed his own unique twist on them, proving one of Johnson’s philosophies contained in *Rasselas*: “No man was ever great by imitation” (cited in Brady and Wimsatt 89).
NOTES

CHAPTER I
EDUCATIONAL THEORY IN JOHN LOCKE’S SOME THOUGHTS CONCERNING EDUCATION

John Locke (1632-1704) was greatly displeased by the current trend in the rearing and education of children in England, and Some Thoughts Concerning Education (1693) is his tour de force on the subject, displaying this angst while instructing parents how they might raise children who would be a credit to society. Indeed, the conclusion of Some Thoughts Concerning Education may well epitomize this disdain with tradition, as Locke advises parents to “consult their own Reason, in the Education of their Children, rather than wholly rely upon old Custom.”

Locke’s treatise was, at least initially, not intended to be a universal guide for all parents to follow in the education of their children. Locke’s original audience was actually quite specific, for his pedagogical advice was written for the benefit of one man – Locke’s good friend, Edward Clarke. The published version of Some Thoughts is divided into 217 sections and is the culmination of the entire series of letters Locke wrote to Clarke, who sought Locke’s expertise in how best to raise his son, a young gentleman. This emphasis on the importance of instructing a gentleman is reflective of Locke’s belief that the key to England’s future success was largely in the hands of the gentry, who were in need of an improved moral education.

The published version of Some Thoughts indeed seems more general than might be expected from letters that are addressed to a specific individual; Clarke’s son actually ceases to be the locus of the work. In fact, Locke routinely addresses “parents” and “children” as two very static or homogenous groups, rarely referring to Clarke or his son by name. Perhaps this is just another example of the self-acknowledged utilitarian logic that drove Locke’s compositions, as he writes of his strategy in writing An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690): “My appearing therefore in Print, being on purpose to be as useful as I may, I think it necessary to make, which I have to say, as easie and intelligible to all sorts of readers as I can” (quoted in Wood 42). It might be surmised then that the published version, which was obviously printed in order to make a profit, aimed to reach a wider audience than solely rising gentry (like Clarke); indeed,
one of the central educational philosophies Locke advocates is simply an extension of the approach he used in *Human Understanding*. In §81 of *Some Thoughts*, he writes that children (like his adult reading audience) are best instructed in “very few and plain words” (142).

While the first reader of the treatise was Clarke and the “subject” of the work was Clarke’s son, the simplicity of *Some Thoughts* allowed it to be easily consumed by a diverse readership. After its publication (as opposed to its original epistolary form), the reading audience was beyond Locke’s control; therefore, Locke’s treatise can be read as being far more ambitious than a simple attempt to better a specific class - the development of a child’s individual virtue that would ultimately culminate in an elevated national morality was the cardinal feature of his educational ideology. In §134-35, Locke’s major emphases come to the fore, as he states that “every Gentleman desires for his son […] these four Things: Virtue, Wisdom, Breeding, and Learning… I place Virtue as the first and most necessary of these Endowments” (194-5). Virtue, to Locke, can only be attained when the child “by gradual degrees” recognizes God as the “Author and Maker of all Things” (195). The overarching goal of the work is its attempt to instruct parents to inculcate in a child a strong moral constitution which in turn will benefit society when the child reaches maturity.

Locke advises parents to be prudent in not overwhelming the child with concepts or ideas that his young mind is unable to comprehend, and from there stresses the idea of prayer and routine acts of devotion to God as paramount to a child’s education because such acts can be performed without guidance. When specifically addressing the benefits of a child reading the Bible, Locke feels that the greatest advantage of such a practice is the improvement of a child’s reading ability; additionally, he states that many stories in the Bible (i.e. *David and Goliath*) may be relied upon as pillars of moral instruction for children. Despite the obvious esteem Locke holds for the Scripture, he is not oblivious to the fact that much of it is beyond the grasp of a normal child. This frustration about the lack of suitable literature for young people is evident in §190, where Locke presents a seemingly radical idea for his time – that of creating an abridged version of the Bible which would be comprehensible for children. He writes:
I conclude, it would be well, if there were made a good History of the Bible, for young People to read; wherein if every thing, that is fit to be put into it, were laid down in its due Order of Time, and several things omitted, which are suited only to riper Age, that Confusion, which is usually produced by promiscuous reading of the Scripture, as it lies now bound up in our Bibles, would be avoided. (245)

In An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Locke shows great uncertainty regarding the degree of influence exercised by the tutor over the child, for he observes that all too often the ideas a child acquires about God “resemble ‘the Opinion and Notion of the Teacher’, rather than representing the true God” (quoted in Wood 97). Not only does this quotation display Locke’s unflinching subscription to the importance of a moral education, but it simultaneously (albeit implicitly) elevates the value of a child’s own firsthand experience over the often biased instruction of a tutor. This belief regarding the superiority of experience over innate ideas, also known as empiricism, has been greatly attributed to Locke. The quotation also provides excellent insight as to why Locke may have promoted a rudimentary version of the Bible that would be more suitable for a child to read without guidance: once the faculty of reason begins to develop, a child can formulate his own opinions about God without the interference of his tutor.

In addition to the Bible, Locke cites Aesop’s Fables as appropriate reading for children due to the fact that the stories are easily accessible (as they contain pictures which help engage the child with what he reads). However, the tutor in Locke – whose greatest interest is ensuring that the child develops into a respectable man – places a high degree of value upon the book’s potentially useful application for long-term purposes. Locke states in §156, “I think Aesop’s Fables the best, which being Stories apt to delight and entertain a Child, may yet afford useful Reflections to a grown Man. And if his Memory retain them all his life after, he will not repent to find them there, amongst his manly Thoughts and serious Business” (212). When analyzing these two books, one obvious commonality arises: each has a practical application. The Bible can help better a child’s reading skills and some of its parables can be used to elevate his moral education; likewise, Aesop’s Fables teaches children simple lessons like those told in the story of “The Ant and the Grasshopper” – that industriousness will always triumph over sloth.
Clearly then, Locke never denies the value of a book education; however, he views the grammar school’s insistence on a child’s technical proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking Latin as ridiculous and counterproductive. He writes in §175 that forcing a task upon a child is never a good tactic, for it leaves them with “a disgust and aversion to their Books, wherein they find nothing but useless trouble” (232). Locke not only denounces the manner in which Latin is instructed but goes so far as to dismiss the entire principle of actually learning it in addition to English; Latin - a dead language - is of little worth in communication, the preeminent reason for speech. In §164 Locke questions the custom of “Gentlemen” and “even Tradesmen and Farmers” sending their children to school to become “Scholars” (i.e. obtaining fluency in Latin like ancient orators) because he feels Latin, among other subjects, will be of little use to a child outside of school (217-8). Therefore, in §165 he recommends a different approach to teaching Latin:

But how necessary soever Latin be to some, and is thought to be to others, to whom it is of no manner of Use or Service; yet the ordinary way of Learning it in a Grammar-School is that which having had thoughts about, I cannot be forward to incourage… Latin is no more unknown to a Child, when he comes into the World, than English: And yet he learns English without Master, Rule, or Grammar; and so might he Latin too, as Tully did, if he had some-body always to talk to him in this Language. (218)

In the following section (§166) Locke compares how Latin is taught in grammar schools to instruction at the hands of a tutor, and is clearly of the opinion that a tutor is superior; for in using Latin in everyday conversation, the child learns it in the same way he learns to speak English – without emphasis on rules. Locke espouses the benefits of a tutor in this scenario: “If therefore a Man could be got, who himself speaking good Latin, would always be about your Son, talk constantly to him, and suffer him to speak or read nothing else, this would be the true and genuine way, and that which I would propose” (218-9).

Although a firm proponent of tutors, Locke is not ignorant to the difficulty of obtaining the services of a good tutor – one who relies more heavily upon observation than pedantry - and this may be best exemplified by an idea expressed in §93 of Some
Thoughts, where Locke is once again critical of a “scholarly” education and the tacit idea that a scholar is in some way superior simply because he is formally educated. He writes:

The Character of a Sober Man and a Scholar, is, as I have above observ’d, what every one expects in a Tutor… When such an one has emptied out into his Pupil all the Latin, and Logick he has brought from the University, will that Furniture make him a fine Gentleman? Or can it be expected, that he should be better Bred, better Skill’d in the World, better Principled in the Grounds and Foundations of true Vertue and Generosity, than his young Tutor is? (150)

Locke steadfastly encourages tutors and parents not to bewildel children with rules and precepts that they are not yet able to comprehend. He rather advises tutors to set a positive example for their pupils and provide them with virtuous company, for children frequently imitate what they see, and one cannot expect a child to act properly if he is not provided with a good role model. Locke elaborates upon the importance of the tutor observing the child and vice-versa in §93:

To form a young Gentleman as he should be, ’tis fit his Governour should himself be well bred, understand the Ways of Carriage, and Measures of Civility in all the Variety of Persons, Times and Places; and keep his Pupil, as much as his Age requires, constantly in the Observation of them. This is an Art not to be learnt, nor taught by Books. Nothing can give it but good Company, and Observation joyn’d together. (150)

Locke’s repeated emphasis on observation and attention to the child’s innermost thoughts is also a crucial element of his treatise. By interacting with the child and treating him as an individual capable of rational thought, the tutor is better able to understand the child’s psychological state, thus he can more effectively govern his student.

Locke’s realization that all children are not identical and require individual attention may well be epitomized by §217 (the final section) of his treatise, where he leaves the reader with a metaphorical reference to the pivotal relationship between man’s internal and external traits: “Each Man’s Mind has some peculiarity, as well as his Face, that distinguishes him from all others” (265). This attitude is reflective of yet another pivotal element of Some Thoughts: the uncommon degree of experience Locke brings to
the table as an authority on children. Locke even goes so far as to inform Clarke of his expertise, assuring him in §166, “That this is so, perhaps I could assure you upon my own Experience” (219).

His firsthand experience with, and interest in, “Reasoning with children” and treating them as “Rational Creatures” (§81) made it necessary for Locke to interact with children on an intimate level, in the process flouting society’s custom of subordinating them; as John W. Yolton writes in *A Locke Dictionary*, “[Locke’s] interest in the importance of moral education made it imperative for him to understand child psychology” (37). Clearly, Locke’s attempt to understand the inner workings of children and treating them as rational creatures echoes his philosophy that adults were “morally equal, endowed by God with reason and placed on earth to fulfill their equal rational potentials” (Wood 28). This was very much in opposition to the status-quo, and his advocacy of an improved education for children and adults was an innovative idea that helped facilitate the movement known as the Enlightenment.

As Peter Borsay writes in his essay “The Culture of Improvement,” a central tenet of the Enlightenment was self-improvement (cited in Langford 193), attainable in large part by the suppression of desires, which would ideally create a more proper and civilized individual. This idea is quite evident in §33 of *Some Thoughts* where Locke writes, “The great Principle and Foundation of Vertue and Worth, is placed in this, That a Man is able to deny himself his own Desire [… and purely follow what Reason directs as best]” (103); however, later in the work Locke returns to the idea that a man (as opposed to a child) must learn to manage, not stifle, his desires, writing in §126, “where there is no Desire, there will be no Industry” (188). This is very typical of *Some Thoughts* as a whole, for although the bulk of the book focuses on the proper manner with which to educate a child, Locke’s underlying premise is that a virtuous child will become a virtuous man.

Such ideas evidence Locke’s character as a tutor: although he routinely pays great attention to the importance of a child’s personal autonomy, he always returns to the larger picture. In this circumstance a man’s individual ability, derived heavily through empirical education (which is attained when a child possesses his own rational reasoning abilities), is inextricably connected to his being a productive member of society. Locke
felt that the lessons learned by a child inevitably follow him into adulthood; therefore, it is easy to see why Locke viewed an individual’s overall contribution to society as directly related to childhood education. To Locke, a sound education was the fundamental distinguishing feature between adults in society, as he writes in §32, “The difference to be found in the Manners and Abilities of Men, is owning more to their Education than of any thing else” (103).

Such an idea illustrates what is arguably Locke’s most influential (and controversial) philosophy: the idea of a child as a tabula rasa, or blank slate. To Locke, tabula rasa was precisely the reason that education from youth was of the utmost importance, for a child learns almost exclusively from his surroundings; Wood writes, that for Locke, “Man is a tabula rasa at birth, to be written upon in various ways and to acquire different talents by family upbringing and education, by the customs, fashions, examples, opinions, beliefs, and values of his particular time, place, and culture” (33).

Although Locke undeniably believed that a child was born without innate ideas, Yolton and Yolton write that this opinion was heavily grounded in the notion that “the tempers of the child… must be recognized by the tutor” (4). Indeed, one of Locke’s most prevalent theories – that experience is largely responsible for a child’s education – permeates §115 of Some Thoughts. He writes:

When Children are first Born, all Objects of sight, that do not hurt the Eyes, are indifferent to them, and they are no more afraid of a Blackmore, or a Lion, than of their Nurse, or a Cat… the pleasant brightness, and luster of flame, and fire, so delights Children, that at first they always desire to be handling of it: But when constant experience has convinced them, by the exquisite Pain it has put them to, how cruel and unmerciful it is, they are afraid to touch it, and carefully avoid it. (177)

Locke’s consistent emphasis on a moral education is also a major factor in his explanation of tabula rasa, for “God has also given us the ability to discover the truth without the need for innate ideas” (Yolton 81). So although tabula rasa is a philosophy routinely associated with Locke (and Some Thoughts), it must be remembered that this idea is rarely mentioned in a philosophical vein – it is almost exclusively prefaced as a concept that must be understood by the tutor or guardian in order to ensure that the child
receives virtuous instruction. Locke’s underlying point here is actually a warning to parents or potential educators that coddling or sheltering children is as great an evil as placing them in potentially injurious situations. The only way a child can truly learn is if he is exposed, in gradual degrees (by the tutor), to something with which he is not yet familiar – be it the Bible or a flame.

Gradually exposing a child to new situations is an idea Locke subscribes to throughout Some Thoughts. Because a child is born without innate ideas, everything he sees, hears, etcetera, is new to him and it is of vital importance that tutors and parents remember this and adjust their own conduct accordingly. Locke uses a metaphor in §120 where he compares children, in all aspects of their education, to naive Travellers newly arrived in a strange Country, of which they know nothing […] 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 get out of it. (184)

This metaphor also coincides perfectly with the concluding topic of Some Thoughts - travel and its potential benefit to the nation. Locke’s view of travel seems to be largely ambivalent, or at the very least, it can be said that he restricts the benefits of such excursions to specific age groups. He feels that the customary time of travel, between “Sixteen to One and Twenty,” provides little education to a man because as a rule his habits and tempers are already established (262). Taking specific age groups into account shows Locke’s concern with a question that still plagues educators and parents today: when is the appropriate time to allow a child to go out into the world on his own?

Locke considers the paradox of the situation, weighing the pros and cons of travel for an inexperienced, unaccompanied child (who will inevitably encounter unfamiliar/often unpleasant territory) against the prospect of a child traveling with an experienced guardian (whose protectiveness may alienate the child or hinder his ability to gain self-experience). Such concerns were quite legitimate during Locke’s time, for the reputation of men who traveled the seas was quite suspect, as pirating and privateering were quite prevalent. Locke was not ignorant to this unpleasant feature of travel, writing:
To put [children] out of their Parents view at a great distance, under a Governour, when they think themselves too much Men to be governed by others, and yet have not Prudence and Experience enough to govern themselves, what is it, but to expose them to all the greatest Dangers of their whole Life […] when he begins to consort himself with Men, and think himself one; when he comes to relish, and pride himself in manly Vices, and thinks it a shame to be any longer under the Controul and Conduct of another. (262-3)

Locke concludes that a child of a relatively young age under the guidance of a tutor is the ideal circumstance for travel, for the child is pliable enough to absorb both good and bad aspects of his experience and can rely on the wisdom of his tutor to help him distinguish between the two. Locke deplores the customary trend in traveling, as it leaves “so many young Gentlemen […] so little improved by it. And if they do bring home with them any Knowledge of the Places and People, they have seen, it is often an admiration of the worst and vainest Practices they met with abroad” (263).

Certainly, Locke was not the first man to write an educational treatise and not all of his ideas were completely original (he adopted ideas from earlier writers like Milton and Hobbes), but he said old things in new ways that, in his words, “distinguished him from all others” (263). In much this fashion, Locke’s ideas filtered into the works of subsequent writers for more than a century after his death in 1704. None of these writers stole John Locke’s ideas, but rather modified them to mesh with their own personal philosophies or to make Locke’s theories more applicable to the society in which they lived. Many educational tracts written in the decades following Locke’s death incorporate many of his ideas and when the novel emerged (most critics cite 1719 as the watershed date for the genre as Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe was published), numerous authors included Lockean scenarios and logic in their fiction.

The concepts I have discussed here are just a handful of Locke’s theories that are present in the fictional (and educational) works of Daniel Defoe, Samuel Johnson and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Each writer, however Lockean he may appear to be, is far from exclusive in his adherence to, or acceptance of, the specific principles attached to Locke’s various ideologies. In the following chapters I will address the aforementioned points
(among others) specifically in regards to each writer’s fiction while also showing the educational philosophies of each author in order to show that while the Locke’s theories are quite obviously present in influence and theory, they are greatly modified in usage and practice.
NOTES

CHAPTER 2

THE FICTION OF DANIEL DEFOE: THE EPITOME AND ANTITHESIS OF LOCKEAN IDEOLOGY

"The contempt with which writers like Pope allude to Defoe is instructive… he had not graduated from the recognized school of authorship. His Latin was contemptible, he paid far too little attention to polite diction – he actually wrote more or less as he spoke – and he was full of vulgar sentiments that appealed to the lower orders.” –Pat Rogers, “Defoe as a Dunce” (1972)

It is difficult to read any extensive criticism of Defoe’s various works without finding at least some reference to Lockean ideology and its subsequent presence in Defoe’s writing. Maximillian Novak, an eminent Defoe scholar, has maintained that Locke not only influenced Defoe’s political and economic ideology, but that he also heavily contributed to Defoe’s conception of fiction, specifically in Robinson Crusoe (quoted in Zimmerman 6). Richard A. Barney makes a similar claim, asserting that Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding was pivotal in providing the blueprint for Robinson Crusoe, and that its simplistic style clearly reverberated in Defoe’s novel (228). James Sutherland’s Daniel Defoe: A Critical Study also addresses Defoe’s famed novel explicitly, judging Crusoe’s moral instruction of Friday as compatible with Locke’s educational tenets, specifically the principle of not overwhelming the pupil with concepts that are beyond his understanding (142). In Daniel Defoe: Citizen of the Modern World, John Robert Moore cites one historian’s claim that Defoe’s writing was extremely important because it popularized Locke’s ideas and accurately demonstrated his principles (203). John J. Richetti takes the prior claims a step further in Daniel Defoe by addressing the mindset of early eighteenth-century novelists as a whole (Robinson Crusoe is considered by many to be the first novel), suggesting that Defoe and other subsequent novelists were greatly indebted to the works of seventeenth-century empiricist philosophers who treated sensory experience as central to the acquisition of knowledge, and he cites Locke and Descartes in particular as the most influential of these philosophers (22).

I do not aim to disprove the accuracy of any of these assertions; however, there is an inherent difficulty in labeling Defoe’s fictions or ideology as Lockean, and that is the
degree to which Locke’s perspectives coincide with puritan religious beliefs – the very same beliefs Defoe’s parents instilled in him at a young age. The most frequently cited Lockean values (particularly when associated with Defoe’s fictions) – industriousness, self-discipline, and rationality – do not differ greatly from values esteemed by puritan families: sobriety, diligence, and self-improvement among them (Spurr 2). Locke’s ideology, which I believe is actually a modified form of Puritanism, is likewise altered by Defoe to fit his own philosophies, specifically in his educational writings that were often couched as fictions. Thus Defoe’s fictions do not operate under an exclusively Lockean premise, although such an assertion is quite logical. Defoe’s fictions instead coincide heavily with puritan beliefs instilled in him by his parents from an early age; these puritan beliefs simply happen to resemble many ideas espoused by Locke in the 1690’s.

Locke’s beliefs can certainly be considered his own in a very broad sense; however, the root of a great deal of his ideology lies in puritan doctrine, as Locke – like Defoe – was raised in a puritan household by a father who figured heavily in his son’s moral education (Dowden 320). Much of Some Thoughts Concerning Education can be characterized as having an underlying tone of Puritanism, but Locke’s educational maxims are frequently conflicted: at times they appear less strict than those advocated by traditional puritan ministers as the correct way to raise a child yet at other times they seem to be somewhat more stringent. While Some Thoughts is a guidebook whose greatest intent was to inculcate piety and virtue into a child at an early age, Locke’s tactics for accomplishing such a feat frequently deviate from established puritan standards. In English Puritanism, 1603-1689 John Spurr describes puritan ideology as one which operated largely in opposition to other prevailing religious beliefs, specifically citing the Baptist faith’s tradition of baptizing children rather than christening infants, on the grounds that it was “absurd to question babes in arms about renouncing the devil, belief in God and promising to keep his commandments” (31-2). Meanwhile, Locke writes in §157 of Some Thoughts… that “The Lord’s Prayer, the Creeds, and Ten Commandments, ‘tis necessary he should learn perfectly by heart […] even before he can read.”

Although in this section, Locke seems to place an even greater importance upon piety than the often harsh puritan doctrine suggests, he also occupies positions that can be
considered more lenient as well. The traditional puritan father held many important duties within the household, including taking the reins in providing his children with suitable moral instruction and assuring financial security for his family. These responsibilities often thrust the father into a role that T.G.A Nelson describes as being concomitant with that of a king (29). Despite the fact that many Puritans, like Defoe’s parents, clearly took issue with the monarchy and its abuse of power, the Puritan gentry subscribed heavily “to the Ten Commandments, [and] considered children had an essential duty to honor and obey their parents” (Cliffe 72). So perhaps to puritan families, the father did not gain power by performing the aforementioned tasks, but rather because the scripture dictated that children obey their parents. Regardless as to whether or not the puritan father viewed himself as a king incapable of being deposed or simply as an agent of God, the language of kingship is undeniably present in Locke’s famed educational treatise; however, he is ultimately much less puritanical in describing the way a father’s physical power should be exercised, writing in §40-43:

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… So shall you have him your obedient subject (as is fit) whilst he is a child… Liberty and indulgence can do no Good to Children: Their Want of Judgment makes them stand in need of Restraint and Discipline… Children, when little, should look upon their parents as their Lords, their Absolute Governors; and as such, stand in awe of them… I am very apt to think that great Severity of Punishment does but very little Good; nay, great Harm in Education. (109-11; emphasis mine)

These passages do not exist in isolation, as throughout the text Locke routinely uses words like “command,” “absolute authority” and “government” in reference to a father’s treatment of a son. However, as indicated in the closing sentence of the above passage, Locke was greatly against the idea of corporal punishment, which certainly deviates from Puritan fathers were expected to wholly adhere to such scripture, as described by J.T. Cliffe in *The Puritan Gentility*:

There was a wide measure of agreement among Englishmen over the need for firm discipline in the upbringing of children. It was a time when the
head of a family had sovereign authority within his own household, when children were expected to be deferential and obedient to their elders at all times and when schoolmasters and even college tutors often felt it necessary to resort to corporal punishment. Among the Puritan divines there was a strong body of opinion in favour of maintaining a strict discipline, primarily for the good of the soul. (72)

Locke’s vocabulary in Some Thoughts, though clearly evincing the puritan belief that a father should be viewed as the patriarch of the family, does not uphold the puritan belief that fathers should treat their families as domineering kings might treat their subjects. This is simply one example that demonstrates that while the foundation of Locke’s educational treatise is very much puritan, there are subtle nuances that distinguish his philosophies from essential Puritanism. Defoe’s works also address the issues of kingship and discipline; however, his mindset is clearly more puritanical than Lockean. While it is surprising that the religious Locke actually opposed the scripture’s dictate that “foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction will drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15), Defoe was more traditional in his beliefs regarding corporal punishment; in The Family Instructor Volume 2, he declares, “Blows are to be given for instruction” (cited in Leinster-Mackay 71).

While Defoe obviously adheres to the puritan idea of physically disciplining children, it is uncertain whether Defoe’s parents punished him in such a way; however, the religious zeal they exercised in raising their son is certainly compatible with Puritanism. Defoe’s parents followed their family pastor, Samuel Annesley, in joining a religious sect known as the “dissenters” (thus refusing membership in the Church of England) while Daniel was an infant. This decision had a tremendous impact on Daniel, for as Paula R. Backscheider writes in her biography Daniel Defoe, The Defoes “lost their right to worship openly and gave up their son’s chance for a university education and a civil or military career” (7). Due to this religious persecution, Defoe’s mother forced him into prodigious Bible reading; Backscheidner notes, that he “copied out large sections of the Bible, fearful that the king would prohibit privately owned Bibles” (10). However, Defoe later realized that this supposed book seizure was merely a rumor and ceased transcribing passages.
Defoe’s father, James Foe, understood that his son’s future occupational and educational options were limited due to the family’s religious affiliation, thus he had a vested interest in Daniel’s education. As Daniel’s education was essentially intended to train him for service in the clergy, James Foe took a very active role in his son’s theological instruction. Foe’s insistence upon Daniel’s Biblical education was also in line with puritan tradition; in *English Puritanism 1603-1689* John Spurr explains that “the head of the household was expected to conduct family prayers morning and evening, to read scripture to them, test them on their knowledge of the catechism and sing psalms with them” (38).

While Defoe’s father fulfilled his prescribed role as instructor in a puritan household, he did however, have other pressing matters to which he devoted a great deal of time and attention. In *The Life of Daniel Defoe*, Paul Dottin writes that Defoe’s father, “as long as his business allowed him the time, patiently fulfilled the role of religious instructor, as Puritan fathers believed they should do” (11). This was also routine protocol for puritan families, who commonly strove to improve their financial position in society (Cliffe 66). Defoe’s father, very much the entrepreneur, apparently put financial stability on equal footing with preparing Daniel for his future vocation, and Defoe’s own writings – fictional and non-fictional – aptly illustrate a preoccupation with all things financial. So although Defoe’s works demonstrate puritanical religious values likely instilled in him by his parents’ rigid moral instruction, they also display Defoe’s father’s influence in the economic realm as well. Although Defoe ultimately abandoned his father’s wishes that he pursue a career in the clergy, it is evident that James Foe’s desire to achieve monetary success greatly permeated Daniel’s thought, particularly when considering Defoe’s repeated attempts to become a prominent merchant.

In 1674 Defoe entered a dissenting academy run by Dr. Charles Morton (1627-98), who later became the first vice-president of Harvard University; such a prestigious honor clearly evidences the fact that Defoe’s education was not second rate. Prestige aside, Morton did not run his academy in accordance with the fashion of the day, which called for great emphasis on the classics. In this circumstance, Morton opted rather to avoid stressing mastery of Greek and Latin to his students; like Locke, he felt that such pursuits conflicted with a practical education. In *The Educational World of Daniel Defoe*
D.P. Leinster-Mackay demonstrates how such logic filtered into *Robinson Crusoe*, rhetorically asking: “What is the use of Greek and Latin compared with carpentry and pottery on a desert island?” (11). However, Defoe’s subsequent lack of knowledge of the classics contributed to his diminished reputation amongst the wits of his day. Leinster-Mackay describes Defoe’s contemporaries’ summation of his scholarly qualifications: “Certainly Defoe was an intellectual outcast among the writers of the Augustan world, not being a graduate of a university. He was a dunce from Grub Street whose unscholarly pen, as already noted, was entirely despised by Swift, and partially by Pope” (74).

This so-called deficiency in Defoe’s education was not one of which he was ashamed, for in many of his later writings he praised the education he received at the hands of Morton and defended the merit of dissenting academies. It is interesting to note that years after instructing Defoe, Morton had his pupils read “Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, which was forbidden at Oxford” (Backscheider 15). This insistence that pupils read Locke’s text, I feel, shows the possibility that he may well have instructed Defoe along similar lines roughly fifteen years before *An Essay* was even published. To cite Novak: “Although it has been common to derive Defoe’s theories from Locke … they more than likely derived chiefly from the manuscript of Morton’s political treatise, ‘Eutaxia’” (113).

There is still greater evidence to demonstrate the correlation in ideology between Morton and Locke. One quotation in particular from Morton’s *Spirit of Man* (coincidentally printed the same year as Locke’s *Some Thoughts*) seems to be nearly a carbon copy of an elemental Lockean maxim, mentioned in §32 of *Some Thoughts*, “We have reason to conclude, that great care is to be had of the forming of Child’s Minds, and giving them that seasoning early, which shall influence their Lives always after” (103). Morton similarly writes: “Intellectual & Moral Habits… are formed much according to the Information men meet with, especially in their younger dayes” (quoted in Backscheider 15). These similarities can likely be traced to the respective education of each man, for Novak hypothesizes that “Morton must have met John Locke during his stay at Wadham College in Oxford” (113). Suggesting that Defoe’s fictions are “Lockean” is quite logical and even accurate on many counts, but the more appropriate
consideration seems to be the degree with which “Lockean” ideology (or perhaps “Mortonian” as the case may be) is in actuality a subtle adaptation of puritan beliefs.

The father in Defoe’s *The Family Instructor* subscribes to puritan doctrine rather than Lockean ideology when it comes to reasoning with his son. Additionally, a great deal of the Seventh Dialogue of the manual actually contradicts what Locke writes in §110 of *Some Thoughts* regarding a child’s ability to understand when he is being treated unfairly: “Children cannot tell what *Injustice* is, till they understand Property, and how particular persons come by it” (170). The child in Defoe’s work (albeit older) has little concern with ownership of tangible items; his complaint instead revolves around his father’s attempt to make him a better Christian, which the son feels is actually a forceful mandate rather than positive instruction. Indeed, the father seems more content with being a dictator and in the process of his discourse, ignores his son’s concerns thereby reinforcing his status as the undisputed lord and ruler of his family:

*Father:* I might with much more justice insist upon my undoubted right to *govern* my own family, without giving an account to my children of what I do… it is my unquestioned duty, to make all that are under my *command*, do their duty… I will take care that you shall not help it while you call me Father, for I will not bear the title without the *authority*….

*Son:* *Liberty* is a native right….

*Father:* I can give liberty no longer to any under my roof to break God’s commands, or prophane his Sabbath, it is not in *my power*; if you will not *submit* to *my government*, you must quit my dominions … my doors shall be open to let you out when you please.

*Son:* I think we are religious enough; what should we do more than we do? (Quoted in Curtis 426-7; emphasis mine)

Because the child has lived his entire life to this point without the benefit of religious education, he feels that his father’s insistence upon such piety is conducted in a restricting vein as opposed to an enlightening one. Like *The Family Instructor*, *Robinson Crusoe* also demonstrates how an individual’s self-perception as an autocrat can lead him to institute an obligatory form of religious compliance among his “subjects.” Although Crusoe is depicted in a much less overbearing manner than the father in *The Family*
Instructor, he is likewise guilty of enforcing his dictates onto an individual (Friday) who has no choice but to abide by them.

While the father figure in *The Family Instructor* assumes the role of king in attempting to give his son moral tutelage, this is necessary because he has neglected this aspect of his son’s education, and as a result his adolescent son is obstinate and disrespectful. Therefore, the motivation in providing his son with instruction is not to make him a better Christian, but to make the father’s life less stressful. Likewise, Crusoe’s instruction of Friday – both moral and occupational - opposes Locke’s notion that a tutor’s goal should be to make the pupil a better man than he. So while Locke’s central tenet of educating a child is to make him into a virtuous man who will credit society, Crusoe’s instruction of Friday is merely a means to serve Crusoe’s own avaricious ends. Crusoe explains Friday’s initial education consists of ensuring that Friday realizes Crusoe is his master and that Friday is able to understand the words yes and no so that his master can direct his servant’s conduct:

In a little time I began to speak to him, and teach him to speak to me … I likewise taught him to say Master, and then let him know that was to be my name. I likewise taught him to say Yes and No, and to know the meaning of them … I made it my business to teach him everything that was proper to make him useful, handy, and helpful; but especially to make him speak, and understand me when I spake… and now my life began to be so easy.²

It is clear that Crusoe’s goal in educating Friday with practical skills is not analogous to Locke’s position, beginning in §201 of *Some Thoughts*, regarding the importance of a child learning a trade so that he may acquire the dignity which accompanies the satisfaction of having completed a task through his own industry. Instead, Friday’s mechanical and agricultural education is integral to Crusoe because it leaves Crusoe time to pursue other interests, namely hatching a plan to escape the confines of the island, and Friday’s now improved education gives Crusoe hope that “this poor savage might be a means to help me to [escape]” (213).

Crusoe’s intent in teaching Friday about the Bible really differs very little from his reasons for teaching Friday to become a productive laborer. Friday must learn the
tenets of Christianity in order to allay Crusoe’s fears that Friday, a pagan, may lapse into the barbarous customs of his faith, specifically cannibalism (an act which routinely terrifies Crusoe throughout the book). Indeed, Crusoe is so adamant in instilling his own infinitesimal amount of religious knowledge into Friday that he seemingly takes the puritan notion of corporal punishment – “the rod” – a step further. Crusoe describes his experience in trying to eliminate Friday’s pagan tendencies: “I found Friday had still a hankering stomach after some of the flesh, and was still a cannibal in his nature; but I discovered so much abhorrence at the very thoughts of it, and at the least appearance of it, that he durst not discover it; for I had by some means let him know that I would kill him if he offered it” (205; my emphasis).

Perhaps the most noteworthy inconsistency regarding Crusoe’s moral instruction of Friday lies in the fact that Crusoe is far from a religious scholar. Through Crusoe’s own admission, his father provides him with at least a modicum of moral instruction; however, Crusoe’s seafaring ways have left him with “no divine knowledge,” for what little he had received from his father is “worn out by an uninterrupted series, for eight years, of seafaring wickedness” (90). Crusoe’s religious self-instruction actually begins when he turns randomly to the New Testament of the Bible and reads a few passages. He describes the somewhat haphazard fashion in which he initially delves into the Scripture, clearly viewing it as divine intervention: “One morning, being very sad, I opened the Bible upon these words, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Immediately it occurred that these words were to me. Why else should they be directed in such a manner, just at the moment when I was mourning over my condition as one forsaken of God and man?” (113).

Crusoe’s rationality in labor aside, his overwhelming belief in what he routinely calls “God’s providence” follows the puritanical belief in the importance of divine intervention in the shaping of the individual’s faith. Spurr writes, “The whole of their religion was predicated upon a spiritual experience, an emotional response to God [...] in the end it was only an inward, spiritual experience which could assure each puritan that he or she had saving faith and was one of the elect” (5-6). Indeed, Locke’s unflinching advocacy of reason and rational thought may be the greatest disparity between his philosophy and Puritanism. Locke, though clearly a proponent of moral education,
disbelieved the prospect of man’s ability to come to religious awakening through an epiphany, writing, “He that takes away reason to make way for revelation puts out the light of both, and does much—what the same as if he would persuade a man to put out his eyes, the better to receive the remote light of an invisible star by a telescope” (cited in Dowden 324-5).

Crusoe’s moral education is initiated by an epiphany of sorts, but it nonetheless fulfills the traditional function of religion: providing him peace of mind during his time of need. However, turning to the middle of the Bible without any prior knowledge of its contents and reading a few so-called inspiring passages hardly qualifies one as an expert. In The Sense of an Ending Frank Kermode describes the Bible as a “wholly concordant structure, the end is in harmony with the beginning, the middle with beginning and end” (6). Such logic would dictate that for a person to understand the middle of the Book he would have to know what precedes it and subsequently, what follows it. However, more problematic than his lack of knowledge regarding Scriptural nuances is the specific reason Crusoe opts to indoctrinate Friday to Christianity. One particular passage shows Crusoe’s Eurocentrism, as he explains to Friday the “proper” way things are done in England, a civilized country, as opposed to the barbarous clime from which Friday hails: “I described to him the country of Europe, and particularly England, which I came from; how we lived, how we worshipped God, how we behaved to one another, and how we traded in ships to all parts of the world” (219). It is certainly intriguing, and indicative of Defoe himself, that Crusoe would somehow manage to turn a discourse on religion into one about civility, ethics and enterprise.

As for Crusoe himself, when occupying the role of a father-figure, he somewhat abides by Locke’s maxims. Although Crusoe somewhat hastily casts Friday into the role of a child, to Crusoe’s credit, he does engage Friday in conversation and allows Friday to explain his own religious beliefs; however, Crusoe’s way of teaching Friday the supposed “true” faith is not congruous with Locke’s suggestions. Crusoe is not only pedantic in the sense that he feels that his way is the only way, he is also highly condescending to Friday, attacking his beliefs because they conflict with Crusoe’s. Locke states early in Some Thoughts that chiding or mocking children can have as negative of repercussions as physically abusing them; of course Crusoe, who will go so far as to kill Friday if he
shows any lingering tendencies toward cannibalism, obviously does not feel that denouncing Friday’s religion is the least bit inappropriate. Crusoe clearly holds Friday’s religion in contempt and subsequently attempts to debunk its practices:

I made him explain it to me, their religious, or clergy; and that [older men]
went to say $O$ (so he called saying prayers), and then came back and told them what Benamuckee said. By this I observed that there is priest-craft even amongst the most blinded ignorant pagans in the world; and the policy of making a secret religion, in order to preserve the veneration of the people to the clergy, is not only to be found in the Roman, but perhaps among all religions in the world, even among the most brutish and barbarous savages. I endeavoured to clear up this fraud to my man Friday, and told him that the pretence of their old men going up to the mountains to say $O$ to their god Benamuckee was a cheat. (214)

The concluding sentences of the above passage reflect what Spurr describes as typical behavior for a puritan, who “usually, but not invariably, displayed an exceptional hatred of ‘popery’ (as Roman Catholicism was dubbed)” (15). Again, in this circumstance, Crusoe’s tactics seem concordant with Puritanism, for Crusoe (perhaps Defoe) equates paganism with Catholicism.

Crusoe not only suffers from tunnel vision as to what is morally “appropriate,” he also lacks one of the traits Locke cites as pivotal in a tutor: patience. After bringing attention to the inherent flaws in teasing and chiding a child, in §76 of Some Thoughts, Locke notes that in order to excite a child’s interest, a tutor “needs Patience and Skill, Gentleness and Attention, and a prudent Conduct to attain this at first” (137). Crusoe possesses few, if any, of these aforementioned attributes. Indeed, when describing another religious “conversation” with Friday (which more or less amounts to Crusoe’s ill-informed descriptions of God’s power), Crusoe shows an irascibility that certainly confounds anything remotely resembling what Locke advocates as suitable or effective behavior for a tutor:

I said, “God will at last punish [the devil] severely; [the devil] is reserved for the judgment, and is to be cast into the bottomless pit to dwell with everlasting fire.” This did not satisfy Friday; but he returns upon me,
repeating my words, “Reserve – at last,’ me no understand. But why not kill the devil now, not kill great ago?” “You may as well ask me,” said I, “why God does not kill you and me when we do wicked things here that offend Him”… [Friday says]: “So you, I, devil, all wicked, all preserve, repent, God pardon all.” Here I was run down again by him to the last degree… I therefore diverted the present discourse between me and my man, rising up hastily, as upon some sudden occasion of going out. (216)

The tactic employed by Crusoe at the end of this passage is also discouraged by Locke, who advises parents never to ignore a child’s questions, regardless of how simple (or complex) they may be; Crusoe also views Friday’s questions as an affront to his authority or knowledge, feeling “run down” by his student. In §108 of Some Thoughts, Locke suggests that “Curiosity should be… carefully cherished in Children” (167). Shortly before the above passage, Friday asks Crusoe another question that he is unable to answer, to which he responds using a similar tactic, admitting that he “pretended not to hear him” (215). Indeed, Crusoe’s techniques of instruction may ultimately serve to improve his own life, but Locke would likely question whether or not such an education has improved Friday’s life. According to Crusoe – the narrator - it undeniably has; however, the reader is not privy to Friday’s account of the situation.

Crusoe clearly does not treat Friday with a high deal of regard (at least initially) and this is aptly displayed by the lack of legitimacy he grants to Friday’s queries, which he brushes off – not because they are ridiculous questions – but because he is unable to answer them. One must bear in mind that Crusoe himself admits to the reader that he is no expert on the scripture; however, admitting this to Friday would nullify Crusoe’s omnipotent status. Thus Crusoe’s pedagogical strategies, while ultimately effective in converting Friday into what Crusoe considers to be a finer Christian than he, greatly differ from what Locke recommends to be most effective in educating a child. However, Locke does end his treatise by advising tutors and parents to follow their own reason and rationality in instructing their children, which Crusoe obviously does, however self-aggrandizing his motives may be.

Indeed, the greatest contrast between the ideas Locke expresses in Some Thoughts and the behavior of Robinson Crusoe can likely be traced to Defoe’s more strict
interpretation of puritan doctrine than his predecessor. Crusoe’s persistent belief in divine intervention or “God’s providence” (as Crusoe labels it) as the driving force in everything that happens to him on the island coincides with puritan religious enthusiasm and simultaneously conflicts with Locke’s persistent belief in the value of reason. Crusoe himself professes, “Nothing but divine revelation can form the knowledge of Jesus Christ” (216). Crusoe’s exercise of Lockean behavior can be limited in scope to the practices mentioned in the introduction of this paper – industriousness, self-discipline, and rationality – because Crusoe’s pedagogical strategies seem to echo the same puritanical ideology with which Defoe was indoctrinated from childhood. Crusoe’s moral education (and his subsequent attempts to teach Friday Christianity) – arguably the greatest virtue gained during his twenty-eight year island reign – is likely the element of the novel that most greatly appealed to “The Great Moralist” Samuel Johnson, who not only revered travel literature as a genre, but publicly lauded Defoe’s work as one of three books wished longer by its readers, and I believe that shades of Robinson Crusoe can be seen in Johnson’s most renowned fiction, Rasselas (1759).
NOTES

1 John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. Eds. John W. and Jean S. Yolton, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 212. All subsequent quotations from this volume are followed by the page number.

2 Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (Norwalk: The Easton Press, 1976), 1. All subsequent quotations from this edition are followed by the page number.
CHAPTER 3

JOHNSON’S RASSELAS: THE UN-FULFILLING ASPECTS OF LOCKE’S EMPIRICIST DOCTRINE

“Johnson ought to be ashamed of publishing such an ill-contrived, unfinished, unnatural and uninstructive tale […] I think the one maxim we can deduce from the story is that human life is a scene of unmixd wretchedness.” –Hester Chapone (close friend of Henry Richardson) speaking of Rasselas

“I attribute the little I know to my not having been ashamed to ask for information, and to my rule of conversing with all descriptions of men on those topics that form their own peculiar professions and pursuits.” –John Locke

Samuel Johnson’s notoriety as a moral writer and his belief that “books without the knowledge of life are useless” (quoted in Curwen 44) are likely two telling factors in many critics’ tendency to attribute John Locke as a central influence on Johnson’s philosophies and writings. Many of Locke’s writings, including Some Thoughts Concerning Education, were heavily grounded in the belief that morally educating (or reeducating as the case may be) the populace was integral to England’s future progress. Thomas M. Curley’s Samuel Johnson and the Age of Travel addresses Johnson’s reputation as a moral writer at length and in the process Curley describes Johnson as “a disciple of John Locke [who] followed An Essay Concerning Human Understanding in treating conduct as a dynamic journey of psychological growth in life’s realities” (15). In his essay “Johnson and the Enlightenment,” Robert Shackleton makes a similarly forceful claim, comparing Johnson with the French philosophes (like Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot) whose emphasis on feeling epitomized Lockean empiricism:

Judgment and ratiocination… draw their decisions only from experience. This acceptance of Lockean sensationalism was from 1734 onwards the criterion of the true philosophe and Johnson was at one with the representatives of the early enlightenment … He embraced the main doctrine, that ideas come from the senses … Johnson’s discipleship of Locke was doubtless achieved independently of Voltaire and those other philosophes who held [Locke] in the same esteem. (Quoted in Powell 84-5)
The conclusion of Some Thoughts, where Locke advises his readers to avoid the status quo and consult their own reason in raising children is echoed in Lionel Trilling’s paraphrase of Johnson’s idea of the true purpose of literature: “Inviting [the reader] to put his own motives under examination, suggesting that reality is not as his conventional education has led him to see it” (cited in Greene, Samuel 197). Indeed, this idea pertains to Johnson’s most enduring fiction, Rasselas (1759), whose plot revolves around a young prince’s escape from his father’s kingdom (the Happy Valley) and subsequent voyage to gain knowledge of a world to which he has never been exposed. Curley asserts that this spirit of Rasselas’s journey coincides with “Lockean standards of empirical research” (8); however, this hypothesis is problematic, particularly because the technical definition of empiricism is experience learned through the senses. Rasselas’s experiences are, by and large, restricted to conversation with strangers in hopes of determining the proper “choice of life.”

Rasselas, like Robinson Crusoe, chooses to explore the world because there is simply nothing at home to keep him amused; travel becomes a last ditch effort for self-fulfillment and if education occurs along the way, all the better. Although there is proof that Johnson named his character after an actual historical figure, I think it is ironic that the name “Rasselas” bears such a close resemblance to the word “restless,” which is a perfect character sketch of the young prince. Indeed, I feel there are as many commonalities present between the travel narratives of which Johnson was so enamored (specifically Robinson Crusoe) and Rasselas than there are between Rasselas’s novelistic structure and the ideas of John Locke. By examining some of Johnson’s own biographical background, personal beliefs, and analyzing Rasselas in close contrast to supposed Lockean theory, I will illustrate the inaccuracies of the blanket statement that labels Johnson a “disciple of Locke.”

James Boswell’s seminal biography The Life of Samuel Johnson (1791) documents numerous discourses that he, Johnson, and others engaged in about nearly every issue in eighteenth-century society, including education. Although many of Johnson’s theories and precepts do concur with much of Some Thoughts Concerning Education, his own words may well express the degree with which he subscribed to Locke’s ideology, which certainly seems less than wholehearted:
Education in England has been in danger of being hurt by two of its greatest men, Milton and Locke. Milton’s plan is impracticable, and I suppose has never been tried. Locke’s, I fancy, has been tried often enough, but it is very imperfect; it gives too much to one side, and too little to the other; it gives too little to literature. (Quoted in Boswell I. 270)

Despite his denunciation of Locke’s educational theories in the above passage, Johnson was not universally critical of Locke’s maxims, for in The Rambler 137 (July 9, 1751), Johnson writes in favor of one of the central ideas proposed in Some Thoughts: “The chief art of learning, as Locke has observed is to attempt but little at a time” (Johnson 223). However, as indicated by his criticism of Locke, Johnson was highly skeptical of the amount of attention Locke paid to literature. Despite his reputation as a harsh literary critic, Johnson actually did emphatically praise three tales that can be considered influential in the narrative structure of Rasselas. Johnson once said that, in addition to Don Quixote and The Pilgrim’s Progress, Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe was “one of the three books wished longer by its readers” (quoted in Curwen 36). A great deal of Johnson’s youthful education was self-imposed, and he read copiously; therefore, I think there is a strong possibility that Robinson Crusoe is a potential contributor to Johnson’s works (specifically Rasselas, which I will examine later in the chapter), as Defoe’s novel was originally considered a “book for boys,” and Johnson was ten years old when it was published. One common element among Don Quixote, The Pilgrim’s Progress, and Robinson Crusoe is their focus upon a moral/educational reformation evoked through travel, a topic that Johnson wrote about at great length, and which is a major element of Rasselas.

The extent to which Johnson was influenced by travel and its ability to foster morality and education can be seen in his most celebrated undertaking, the Dictionary (1755), which clearly had a more lofty aim than to merely document the English language. Curley explores the impact of travel narrative and Johnson’s own voyages upon his writings, suggesting that they “always insist on the need to explore and civilize the world rather than exploit backward races and corrupt national morality at home” (62). Locke’s ambitious underlying vision - shaping the individual into someone who would
become a viable member of society - was clearly shared by Johnson, whose similarly lofty goals are metaphorically displayed in his Plan (1747) for his Dictionary:

I hope, that though I should not complete the conquest [of establishing a “universal” language], I shall at least discover the coast, civilize part of the inhabitants, and make it easier for some other adventurer to proceed farther, to reduce them wholly to subjection and settle them under laws [emphasis mine]. (Quoted in Borsay 196)

As my emphasis in the above passage indicates, it is easy to see that if Robinson Crusoe specifically did not have some sort of long-lasting impact on Johnson and his ideology (and perhaps it didn’t), then at the very least, some paramount ideas of travel literature did: self-discovery, civilization, and dissemination of knowledge for the improvement of society among them. In this circumstance it seems impossible not to envision Defoe’s novel’s demonstration of education as a tool for civilization (as used by Crusoe to mold Friday, for example) as having infiltrated Johnson’s thought on some level.

Perhaps the most Lockean idea from Some Thoughts that can be found in Rasselas is actually a travel metaphor used by Locke, describing children as

Travellers newly arrived in a strange Country, of which they know nothing… 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 get out of it.¹

Such an approach can be found very early in Johnson’s novella, as Imlac (the tutor) explains to Rasselas and his sister, Nekayah, the purpose of their expedition:

“This,” said Imlac to the prince, “is the place where travelers and merchants assemble from all the corners of the earth. You will here find men of every character and every occupation… You shall live as strangers who have no other end of travel than curiosity… you will see all the conditions of humanity, and enable yourself at leisure to make your choice of life.”²

The entire premise of Rasselas is a young prince and his sister’s quest to determine the appropriate “choice of life,” which they hope to determine based on their interaction with
more worldly, experienced individuals who may be able to satisfy their curiosities about
the world and ultimately life itself.

Johnson’s position on the potential benefit of travel was highly influenced by his
moralistic stance. This position may be best expressed by the Idler 97 (23 February
1760), which expresses his disappointment in travel literature as a genre because it does
far too much entertaining and far too little instructing (for example, he routinely debases
Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* in Boswell’s *Life*). He concludes by wholeheartedly expecting
the same outcome from travel literature that Locke advocates in *Some Thoughts*:

He only is a useful traveller who brings home something by which his
country may be benefited; who procures some supply of want or some
mitigation of evil, which may enable his readers to compare their
condition with that of others, to improve it whenever it is worse, and
whenever it is better to enjoy it. (Quoted in Lynch)

In §214 of *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, where Locke writes: “So many
young gentlemen come back so little improved by it [travel]. And if they do bring home
with them any Knowledge of the Places and People, they have seen, it is often an
admiration of the worst and vainest Practices they met with Abroad […] rather than of
what should make them better and wiser after their return” (263). However, in contrast
to Johnson, Locke rarely discusses the idea of travel, except to say that it provides little
educational benefit unless conducted under proper circumstances. Although Johnson
read a great deal of travel literature and used travel metaphors extensively, the reasons
behind his advocacy of overseas exploration were entirely different from the pragmatic
Whig minds of Locke and Defoe. Johnson (whose negative feelings toward the Scotch
are well documented) actually appears to condemn the value of a “practical” education in
Scotland based upon his experiences there. In a conversation with Boswell (a Scot), there
is a definite air of condescension present in referring to pedagogical merits of such
instruction; simultaneously, however, there is an implicit notion that traveling allows a
man to appreciate what he has at home by experiencing different customs firsthand:

You in Scotland do not attain that nice critical skill in languages, which
we get in our schools in England. I would not put a boy to [a Scotch
schoolmaster], whom I intended for a man of learning. But for the sons of
citizen, who are to learn a little, get good morals, and then go to trade, he may do very well. (Quoted in Boswell I. 453)

Locke and Defoe felt that England’s stability relied heavily upon colonial expansion and trade, and thus placed great value on a practical education which necessarily deviated from a study of classics; Johnson was no doubt much more traditional in his view of an appropriate curriculum, as in 1736, Johnson opened his own academy which was devoted to creating scholars, particularly those whose oratory skills would be on par with their headmaster’s (legendary stage actor David Garrick was educated there). In *The Life*, Boswell describes finding a list handwritten by Johnson indicating the curriculum he felt to be most appropriate for his pupils, the majority of which revolves around proficiency in language: “When the introduction, or formation of nouns and verbs, is perfectly mastered, let them learn;” “Practise in the Latin rules till they are perfect in them;” and “Write themes and verses, and to learn Greek” (I. 67-8).

Locke would certainly have opposed Johnson’s instructional strategy, as he writes in §94 of *Some Thoughts*: “Latin and Learning make all the noise: And the main stress is laid upon his Proficiency in Things, a great part whereof belong not a Gentleman’s Calling; which is to have the Knowledge of a Man of Business” (156).

Locke and Defoe were largely in agreement that prolonged instruction in Latin is unnecessary for young gentlemen, as they should be prepared for careers in mercantile affairs. Johnson clearly felt differently, and this may derive largely from the fact that he did not view education’s value as revolving around financial gain. Johnson’s motivation in opening his school was to create scholars – something Locke and Defoe would have viewed as impractical – for Locke himself denounces the present fashion of teaching Latin in §86 of *Some Thoughts* (which Locke felt was imposed on children as “business”): “Why, else, does the Learning of Latin and Greek need the Rod, when French and Italian needs it not?” (146). Through Johnson’s own admission, Locke’s assertions are apparently very accurate, as he tells Boswell how he attained mastery in Latin:

‘My master whipt me very well. Without that, Sir, I should have done nothing […] I would rather have the rod to be the general terror to all, to make them learn, than tell a child, if you do thus, or thus, you will be more
esteemed than your brothers or sisters. The rod produces an effect which terminates in itself. A child is afraid of being whipped, and gets his task, and there’s an end on’t; whereas, by exciting emulation and comparisons of superiority, you lay the foundation of lasting mischief. (Cited in Boswell I. 32)

Boswell intersperses his own observations throughout the passage, commenting upon the fact that Johnson was a staunch proponent of corporal punishment in the classroom, and later in the work Boswell describes Johnson’s defense of a Scotch schoolmaster accused of using excessive force to discipline students. Johnson, upon discovering that the schoolmaster lost his case (and his job) spoke in favor of the man, lamenting that “[severity] is the way to govern [boys or men]” (I. 464). So while Locke sought to unify children and parents (or tutors) through reason and virtue as opposed to fear and power, and thus was boldly against the physical discipline Defoe felt could be used for instruction, Johnson’s stance on the subject was no doubt linked to his own personal experience. In his eyes, it seems that the old adage “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” is most apropos.

Perhaps nowhere, however, do the circumstances of Johnson’s own life exhibit themselves more directly than in his most famous fiction, Rasselas. The work, about which Hester Chapone’s unflattering quotation opens this chapter, was written by Johnson over seven nights in 1759 in order to pay his dying mother’s funeral expenses and absolve any remaining debts she may have incurred. Boswell writes of the somber tone of Rasselas, in almost such a way as to justify the accusations of Chapone:

I will not maintain that the ‘morbid melancholy’ in Johnson’s constitution may not, perhaps, have made life appear to him more insipid and unhappy than it generally is… the truth is, however, that we judge of the happiness and misery of life differently at different times, according to the state of our changeable frame… [Rasselas] is a part of the mysterious plan of Providence, that intellectual beings must ‘be made perfect through suffering.’ (I. 228)

Boswell’s concluding thought in the passage indicates that despite its seemingly hopeless feel and lack of resolution for the central characters (the final chapter is entitled “The
Conclusion, in Which Nothing is Concluded”), readers of the time were able to see the book as having some underlying redeeming value, quite possibly resulting from Johnson’s consistent desire to write didactically. At the same time, however, when considering Johnson’s semi-autobiographical placement in the novel, it could be inferred that despite Johnson’s lifelong devotion to scholarship, his present state of mind may have contributed to Rasselas’s somewhat ambiguous treatment of education.

Although a great deal of Rasselas involves the protagonist’s struggle to learn through personal experience, Rasselas’s dilemma becomes unmistakable not long after his journey begins: he attempts to learn from others solely on the basis of engaging them in discourses about their experiences; this again seems in conflict with the central tenet of empiricism. Earlier I mentioned Locke’s metaphor for children as strangers in a strange land who depend on the kindness of native people (adults) to help allay their ignorance; the strangers Rasselas and his sister encounter do attempt to educate the young travelers; however, for the most part their interaction with new people leaves them either confused or no more wise than they were before their meeting.

If we consider Locke’s quotation at the opening of the chapter as reflecting a ambivalent empiricism, since another person’s experience can never directly translate to our own, then it is obvious that Johnson’s novella debunks the validity of this idea. Rasselas spends most of his time attempting (unsuccessfully) to discern why the lives of the various people he meets are more or less favorable than his own without the benefit of having experienced such a life himself in order to decipher if their happiness (or sadness) might be applicable to his situation. Early in his excursion he naively concludes, after meeting what he perceives to be a great sage, that the man “shall be my future guide: I will learn his doctrines and imitate his life” (99). Rasselas’s ignorance and impressionability certainly echoes §175 of Some Thoughts where Locke asks, “What can be more ridiculous, than to mix the rich Thoughts and Sayings of others, with a deal of poor Stuff of his own?” (231). But whereas Locke also felt that engaging in conversation with learned men and inquiring of them was paramount to his own learning, Johnson makes precisely the opposite point with Rasselas; Imlac even advises his young pupil to beware of subscribing to another man’s maxims out of arbitrary capriciousness, warning
Rasselas, “Be not too hasty to trust, or to admire, the teachers of morality; they discourse like angels, but they live like men” (103).

Imlac’s attitude in this scenario is not only anti-Lockean, but the character himself is perhaps the most anti-Lockean feature of the story as well, for he frequently seems to fall short of the mark that Locke establishes in describing an effective tutor. We are first introduced to Imlac in chapter three, but we know little of him until chapter eight, entitled “The History of Imlac,” and immediately the similarity to Robinson Crusoe is visible. Imlac tells Rasselas:

My father originally intended that I should have no other education than such as might qualify me for commerce… I was twenty years old before his tenderness would expose me to the fatigue of travel… it was easy for me to become acquainted with the master of a ship and procure a passage to some other country. I had no motives of choice to regulate my voyage; it was sufficient for me that, wherever I wandered, I should see a country which I had not seen before. (87-89)

This coincides with the opening pages of Robinson Crusoe, where Crusoe explains that his father “designed me for the law”3 which he has no interest in pursuing, and that “one of my companions being going to sea in his father’s ship, prompt[ed] me to go with them, with the common allurement of seafaring men – namely that it should cost me nothing” (6). While his travels undoubtedly make him a worldly and wise tutor to Rasselas, Imlac possesses at least two major traits that make him contrary to the ideal tutor Locke describes in Some Thoughts - namely his chosen occupation (poet) and his tendency toward pedantry.

In §174 of Some Thoughts… Locke, for lack of a better term, assaults poetry and its lack of utility for those who practice the art. He writes that a father should “stifle and suppress” the art in his child and ultimately concludes that “Poetry and Gaming… seldom bring any advantage, but to those who have nothing else to live on” (231). One of Johnson’s most famed works, The Lives of the Poets (1781) epitomizes Johnson’s love of poetry and chapter ten of Rasselas begins with a line that might be construed as autobiographical when considering Johnson’s reverence for the genre. Imlac explains to Rasselas, “Wherever I went, I found that poetry was considered as the highest learning”
(89). Imlac continues his lecture which further undermines Locke’s notion regarding the value of poetry: “Being now resolved to be a poet, I saw everything with a new purpose… [the poet must] trace the changes of the human mind as they are modified by various institutions and accidental influences of climate or custom” (89-90). His incessant commentary upon the purpose of poetry and description of his attempts at mastering the art are certainly borderline pedantry, as Rasselas’s impatience and agitation compels him to lash out against his mentor, exclaiming, “Enough! Thou hast convinced me that no human being can ever be a poet. Proceed with thy narration… I will at present hear no more of his labors” (90-1). While Locke suggests that the tutor should allow his pupil to learn by degrees and to follow his own inclination, Imlac (like his sometimes unruly students) loses his patience with Rasselas and Nekayah’s futile endeavors to determine the proper “choice of life.”

His pessimism is also ever-present, which seems to undermine the idea of allowing his unworldly companions to experience life’s pitfalls for themselves. For example he says things like, “Human life is everywhere a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed” (93) and “very few live by choice” (101). Perhaps nowhere is his pedantry more apparent than in chapter thirty, where he attacks his pupils’ ignorance:

> It seems to me, that while you are making the choice of life, you neglect to live. You wander about a single city which, however large and diversified, can now afford few novelties, and forget that you are in a country famous among the earliest monarchies for the power and wisdom of its inhabitants; a country where the sciences first dawned that illuminate the world, and beyond which the arts cannot be traced of civil society or domestic life. (120)

This scenario greatly displays the difference between Imlac and his youthful companions. Imlac’s experience and knowledge allows him to appreciate the environment (he discourses on the pyramids) and history of Egypt, but his young counterparts are not interested in these aspects of the country. Imlac falls prey to something that any tutor can easily be guilty of: imposing his desires and opinions onto those under his tutelage rather than allowing them to choose their own path, however unproductive or fraught with
errors it may be. If his students are unable to learn from the experiences of other people they encounter, then it stands to reason that learning something through the words of Imlac would be an equally arduous challenge.

Rasselas and Nekayah’s excursion can be interpreted as having much the same goal as Crusoe’s. In chapter 23, Nekayah suggests to Rasselas that they need to explore the various castes of human existence in order to determine if their lofty rank of royalty is actually superior to the lower orders, wondering, “Perhaps what this world can give may be found in the modest habitations of middle fortune: too low for great designs and too high for penury and distress” (110). This statement echoes that of Crusoe’s father, who advises his son that his proper place is

The upper station of low life, which he had found by long experience was the best state in the world, the most suited to human happiness, not exposed to the miseries and hardships, the labor and sufferings of the mechanic part of mankind, and not embarrassed with the pride, luxury, ambition, and envy of the upper part of mankind. (2)

Rasselas and Nekayah search for the answer to this question only to reach a very inconclusive conclusion: Rasselas, choosing only to examine “the happiness of High Stations” (110), observes that those who have power, despite being a privileged position to exercise it at will, are under constant pressure to make appropriate decisions and must constantly be aware of potential uprisings from even their most trusted confidants – a view that seems almost Machiavellian. Pekuah, whose task is to observe those of lower orders, finds that she is too sophisticated to find pleasure in such a lifestyle; she is “not pleased with childish levity and prattle which had no meaning. She found their thoughts narrow, their wishes low, and their merriment often artificial” (111). Both conclude that the middle state is more stable, but obviously lacks extreme highs or lows that accompany the power or penury.

Ultimately, the frustration of attempting to achieve an education based on observation takes its toll on Rasselas, who laments, “The more we inquire, the less we resolve” (114). The continuation of this theme throughout the entire novel also seems to contradict Locke’s empirical stance, for Rasselas and Nekayah’s so-called experience not only leaves them unfulfilled, it leaves them with few answers to the questions they had
when they began their journey. It seems as if one of Imlac’s initial lamentations involving his own experience as a voyager is a microcosm of Johnson’s work; when describing his education at the hands of sailors, he admits that much of what he learned he has “never practiced, and sometimes by forming schemes for my conduct in different situations, in not one of which I have ever been placed” (87).

It is ironic how little Imlac’s mindset differs from that of Rasselas in this circumstance. Although he lacks the wisdom and experience of his tutor, Rasselas clearly falls victim to this same flight of fancy, for his “chief amusement was to picture himself that world which he had never seen: to place himself in various conditions; to be entangled in imaginary difficulties, and to be engaged in wild adventures” (79). This is also reminiscent of Crusoe’s obsessive delusion of himself as the slayer of savages: “Night and day I could think of nothing but how I might destroy some of these monsters […] and if possible, save the victim they should bring hither to destroy” (167). Thus, even practical education gained through experiences like Imlac’s and Crusoe’s is not enough to quell the power of imagination which is exercised by young and old alike.

*Rasselas* then allows us to see Johnson as a realist. I contend that Johnson’s underlying aim in the novel was to teach the *true* tenets of empiricism by intentionally failing to provide his audience with any sense of closure, for reading or hearing about someone else’s experience is not a worthy substitute for one’s own personal experience. For Johnson to have depicted travel as the solution to all of life’s questions or problems would have been in a great sense hypocritical on his part since his own travels and reading of other’s travels failed to absolve his melancholy. Instead, Johnson leaves the reader with the overwhelming impression that a pilgrimage of any sort will not necessarily benefit an individual more than following their own inclinations and desires, whatever they may be, or as Locke might suggest, following their own reason.
NOTES

1 John Locke, Some Thoughts Concerning Education. Eds. John W. and Jean S. Yolton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 184. All subsequent quotations from this edition are followed by the page number.


3 Daniel Defoe, Robinson Crusoe (Norwalk: The Easton Press, 1976), 1. All subsequent quotations from this edition are followed by the page number.
CHAPTER 4

TO BE (OR NOT TO BE) LOCKEAN? THE WORKS OF JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

“The instruction we find in books is like fire. We fetch it from our neighbors, kindle it at home, communicate it to others, and it becomes the property of all.” –Voltaire

“I think [Rousseau] one of the worst of men; a rascal who ought to be hunted out of society, as he has been. Three or four nations have expelled him; and it is a shame that he is protected in this country […] Rousseau, Sir, is a very bad man. I would sooner sign a sentence for his transportation, than that of any felon who has gone from the Old Bailey in many years. Yes, I should like to have him work in the plantations.” –Samuel Johnson (1766)

Whereas Samuel Johnson critiqued John Locke’s educational philosophy by arguing that it gave too little to literature, Jean-Jacques Rousseau abruptly undermines a great deal of Locke’s *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* in his famed educational treatise *Émile* (1762). It might well be accurate to suggest that, particularly when addressing Locke by name in the text, he not only treats Locke with a degree of contempt, but from the onset of the novel, Rousseau actually (perhaps inadvertently) distances his intentions in *Émile* from those of Locke in *Some Thoughts*. While Locke makes certain to remind his readers that he has evidence to support his claims and that his experiences have proven the validity of his maxims, Rousseau on the other hand directly informs his audience that he is more of an “everyman” writer who does not place himself in a position so as to talk down to his readers:

> Readers, always bear in mind that he who speaks to you is neither a scholar nor a philosopher, but a plain man, a friend of truth, attached to no system or party; a recluse, who living little among men, has fewer occasions for being imbued with their prejudices, and more time for reflecting on what strikes him when he associates with them. My arguments are founded less on principles than on facts.¹

Critics, however, have tended to pigeonhole Rousseau, labeling him a strict adherent to Lockean beliefs. The extreme datedness of his work notwithstanding, Thomas L. Davidson’s *Rousseau and Education According to Nature* espouses roughly the same ideas expressed by many contemporary critics. Davidson writes: “In England, Locke had written a plain, common-sense treatise on education… and from this Rousseau
drew his chief inspiration” (98). In his analysis of Rousseau’s *Confessions* (written nearly a century after Davidson’s work) Peter France makes a similar claim: “England was indeed a source of inspiration to the *philosophes*; the work of Newton and Locke provided models which were developed by such writers [as Rousseau]” (4). T.G.A. Nelson’s wording is a bit more extreme, as he considers Rousseau “among Locke’s disciples.”2

While there is absolutely no denying that Rousseau addresses many ideas that permeate *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* in his own educational writings, I contend that he is committed to disproving Locke’s established precepts along the way as a means to (in the words of Locke) eliminate foolish reliance upon custom. As I will show through an examination of Rousseau’s novels *Julie*, or *The New Heloise* (1761); *Émile*, or *On Education* (1762); and his posthumously published memoirs *The Confessions* (1781), Rousseau’s attention to “passions [and] sentiments, rather than reason” (Yolton and Yolton 27) allowed him, in an era where feelings began to take precedent over logic, to portray Locke’s maxims as outmoded. By placing Locke as a focal point of contention, Rousseau was able to further his own more radical ideology in response to Locke’s pragmatism.

Rousseau, like most of the writers in this study, did not really hit his creative stride until he reached somewhat advanced age. He was nearly fifty years old when he began two of his greatest fictional undertakings, *Julie* and *Emile*, which were written simultaneously. The similarity between specific parts of the two works is striking; chapter five of *Julie* introduces many of the educational precepts Rousseau would put forth in *Émile* roughly a year later. *The Confessions* is debatably a fiction, as Rousseau’s imagination (or distorted memory) appears to run rampant, creating scenarios that in actuality are impossibilities; however, it is also necessary to view his autobiography in correlation with his educational treatises. Whereas *Julie* and *Émile* are somewhat more philosophical fictions – as they outline Rousseau’s own beliefs under the guise of fictional circumstances – *The Confessions* demonstrate how Rousseau’s various beliefs applied (or could have been applied) to his own life. In short, *Julie* and *Emile* lay out the theories; *The Confessions* shows them in practice.
It is apparent that Rousseau had Locke in mind when he composed *Émile*, for no fewer than half a dozen times in the novel does Rousseau castigate Locke by name, essentially calling his ideas foolish or inapplicable to what Rousseau is attempting to do. Although *Émile*, like *Some Thoughts*, is by and large an educational treatise, similarities between the two works essentially end there. For example, Rousseau shudders at the thought of educating a “gentleman” – something he describes as being furthest from his intention in writing the book. In addition, Rousseau’s preeminent educational treatise is fictional and most of the education he describes giving to Emile is very utopian in nature – in essence, many of his stratagems are not only unrealistic, they would be impossible to employ. Locke’s work is very practical and utilitarian, written with the goal to help Edward Clarke better raise a young gentleman; conversely, Rousseau’s is fanciful. It illustrates the ideal education as Rousseau perceives it to be, most prominently focusing on an education achieved in a state of nature without potential for corruption from outside society. Of course, not many children are “privileged” enough to be denied interaction with others until they reach maturity, nor are most prevented from reading of any kind until age twelve, as Rousseau feels they should be.

In fact, the motivation of *Émile* can be viewed as somewhat suspect, for although the narrator (Rousseau) is himself a tutor, he routinely debases the idea of parents hiring tutors to educate their children - a very anti-Lockean idea in itself. Indeed, had Rousseau been writing *Émile* to a father (as Locke did with *Some Thoughts*), his reader might be greatly offended by his insinuations that a father should assume responsibility for the instruction of his children:

> The first thing that occurs to me is that a father who should comprehend the full price of a good tutor would decide to do without one; for it would require more trouble to secure one than to become one himself […] But what does this rich man do, this father who is so full of business, and compelled, as he says, to abandon his children? He pays another man to discharge those duties which are binding on himself. Venal soul! Do you expect with your money to give your son another father? (17)

This quotation itself seems rather contradictory, and may illustrate a cardinal difference between both men: Locke’s treatise recommends to parents what they *should do* in
raising children; Rousseau’s takes a more defensive tack, advising parents what they shouldn’t do, largely by illustrating the ineffectiveness of prevailing trends, much of which could be attributed to Locke’s perspectives. Rousseau frequently cites Locke as a practitioner of specious beliefs, which he attempts to undermine throughout his treatise. Rousseau not only attempts to oppose Locke in ideology alone but in attitude as well; while Locke’s Some Thoughts attempts to answer Clarke’s question, “How should I raise my son?”, Rousseau poses a rhetorical question to himself from a hypothetical parent who asks, “Who then shall educate my child?” to which Rousseau, attempting to sound as non-pedantic as possible, responds: “I have already told you – yourself. I can not” (17). Rousseau may well have viewed himself as an expert on education, politics, etcetera; however, he wants the reader to leave with the impression that he does not consider himself as such, and unlike Locke, he does not have all the answers.

As mentioned in the first chapter, Locke felt that education’s most fundamental goal should be instilling moral virtue into the child so that he may become a productive man who might benefit society. In The Confessions, Rousseau’s attitude toward such a practice seems to be in distinct opposition to Locke, for Rousseau writes:

> When I said that one should not talk to children about religion if one hopes that one day they will have some, and that they are incapable of knowing God, even in our imperfect way, I was basing my conviction on my observations, but not on my own experience. For I knew that my experience did not apply to others. Find me a Jean-Jacques Rousseau of six, talk to him of God at seven, and I promise you that you will be taking no risks.

Rousseau’s attitude in the above passage regarding moral instruction seems to oppose Locke’s, as Rousseau implies that such endeavors are a waste of time unless the child happens to be a “prodigy” as Rousseau himself claims to have been. Émile, on the other hand, while not an immoral work, does not pay a great deal of attention to the importance of moral instruction. While Locke’s high regard for morality was founded largely on the grounds that it would ultimately benefit society as a whole, Émile deals much more with educating the individual, as Rousseau eschews the corruptive influence of society upon his pupil, largely due to his overwhelmingly negative opinion of people at large.
Rousseau asks why, “Instead of educating a man for himself, we wish to educate him for others?… We must choose between making a man and a citizen, for we can not make both at once … these two words, country and citizen, ought to be expunged from modern languages” (5, 6-7). Rousseau would likely conclude that in Locke’s treatise creating a viable citizen supersedes creating a viable man; Rousseau on the other hand, having little need for society, would cite that Émile performs the latter function.

The idea of the individual’s role in society is invariably political, and like Locke, Rousseau was also well known for his political perspectives which frequently spill over into his educational writings. In his Social Contract (also written in 1762), Rousseau put forth perhaps his most enduring quotation regarding the human condition: “Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains.” This quotation finds a home in Émile, and a great deal of Rousseau’s other works – political and educational – particularly in the seemingly outlandish condition in which he will raise Emile: in a state of nature where he will be his own man rather than a man who will be shaped and molded by society. Using a tone echoing that of his famed quotation from The Social Contract, he writes in Émile:

Civilized man is born, lives, and dies in a state of slavery. At his birth he is stitched in swaddling-clothes; at his death he is nailed in his coffin; and as long as he preserves the human form he is fettered by our institutions… the first gifts [your child] receives from you are chains; the first attentions they experience are torments. (10-1)

Shortly after this initial statement, Rousseau does invoke a slightly moralistic tone, essentially undermining the intent of Locke’s treatise (and perhaps contradicting his own work as well) by suggesting that philosophers’ desire to express their own views as correct and subsequently attempt to persuade others to their way of thinking undermines God’s creation of the individual. He states, “It seems that our heads were badly fashioned by the Author of Nature, and that they need to be made over, outwardly by nurses and inwardly by philosophers!” (11). Rousseau implies that philosophers are skeptical of God’s ability to create sufficient beings, thus they attempt to impose their own so-called theories and beliefs into a child’s head rather than letting nature take its course by allowing the child to develop his own ideas, which is in a sense Lockean. However, there is an implicit jab here at writers like Locke, who Rousseau feels pays
great lip service to the idea of letting a child learn independently; however, Locke’s writing is replete with advice and tactics on how to ensure that a child learns under at least some sort of structure, of which Rousseau disapproves.

Although Rousseau’s aforementioned stance about philosophy itself seems somewhat contradictory (since today he is considered as much a philosopher as a novelist), his negative opinion about the medical profession was atypically consistent for the oft-conflicted Rousseau. Roughly the first thirty sections of Locke’s *Some Thoughts* reflect Locke’s experience not as a tutor but as a physician; he essentially describes the proper way to maintain a child’s health and to ensure that he grows to have a robust constitution, because in §31 Locke asserts that a sound mind can only operate in harmony with a healthy body, writing, “Due care [is necessary] to keep the Body in Strength and Vigor, so that it may be able to obey and execute the Orders of the Mind.” In contrast, Rousseau derides modern medicine early in *Émile*, calling medicine “an art more pernicious to men than all of the ills which it pretends to cure… medicine is in fashion with us, and it ought to be. It is the amusement of indolent and unemployed people, who, not knowing what to do with their time, spend it keeping themselves alive” (23). Perhaps this is not convincing enough to demonstrate Rousseau’s indictment of Locke’s views on medical care, but roughly two paragraphs later, he names Locke specifically, sarcastically referring to him as “the wise Locke”, who having spent a part of his life in the study of medicine, strongly recommends that children should never be doctored, neither by way of precaution nor for trifling ailments. I shall go further, and I declare that, never calling physicians for myself, I shall never call them for my Émile unless his life is in evident danger; for then they can do nothing worse than kill him. (23)

Such pessimism regarding modern medicine runs throughout *Émile*, and living in an era where the mortality rate of children was quite high may have helped shape Rousseau’s perspective, which seems to suggest that parents should not burden a child with precepts and rules because surviving childhood at that time was no small feat. He writes, “Of all the children who are born, only a half, at most, come to adolescence; and it is probable that your pupil will not live to be a man… Why would you take from those little innocents the enjoyment of a time so short which is slipping from them, and of a good so
precious which they can not abuse?” (44-5). In other words, the child should be allowed to enjoy what little time he may have, without the interference of so-called knowledgeable tutors or overbearing parents.

Rousseau’s idea of relying upon nature to raise a child is somewhat foggy, as he (like many other philosophers) never precisely defines what he means by “nature.” In Émile it can probably be asserted that Rousseau’s idea of nature is simply an intensified version of Locke’s doctrine of empiricism; so while Rousseau certainly refuted many of Locke’s ideas, there were also instances where he simply furthered them. For instance, Rousseau’s empirical stance was adamantly described by his idea that children learn through their senses, writing emphatically, “All that enters the human understanding comes there through the senses” (90). As such, the narrator of Émile states that he will allow his pupil to learn entirely through his own experiences without interfering in his education – “doing all while doing nothing” (86). In fact, Rousseau predates Wordsworth’s idea that child will be the teacher of man, going so far as to say that the narrator will not teach Émile, but rather Émile will teach the narrator. Allowing a child to learn exclusively through his own sensory experiences seems also to refute Locke’s idea of reasoning with a child because according to Locke, until a child has sufficient experience of his own, he lacks the foundation upon which reason must be built.

Contrary to Locke’s unflinching advocacy of fostering reason in a child through rational discussion, the childrearing tactics of the title character of Rousseau’s epistolary novel Julie discourage such a tactic. Julie anticipates many of Rousseau’s beliefs which would be arise a year later in Émile; Julie explains that treating children like adults is a greater detriment than it is an advantage:

Nature would have it that children are children before they are men…
Childhood has ways of seeing, thinking, feeling which are proper to it. Nothing is less reasonable than trying to substitute ours for theirs, and I would as soon require a child to be five feet tall as to have judgment at age ten. Reason begins to take shape only after several years… forever closed up in a room with books, they lose all their vigor; they become delicate, feeble, sickly, rather stultified than reasonable. (461)
This certainly opposes §81 of Some Thoughts where Locke writes: “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” (142). Rousseau goes a step further in Emile than he does in Julie, not only addressing this issue at length, but again calling out Locke by name when commenting upon the ludicrousness of the present trend in attempting to treat a child as a man:

To reason with children was the grand maxim of Locke, and it is the one chiefly in fashion today. Its success, however, does not appear to me to argue very much in its favor; and for my part I know nothing more silly than those children with whom one has reasoned with. Of all the faculties of man, reason, which, so to speak, is but the aggregate of all others, is that which is developed with the most difficulty and the latest, and it is this one which we propose to employ to develop the first!… If children were capable of reasoning, they would have no need of being educated.

(52-3)

The Confessions aptly illustrates how Rousseau’s theories about reason (or lack thereof) applied to his own life. His own faulty reasoning as a child is demonstrated by a story that describes his aunt and uncle accusing him of a wrongdoing which he denies. His guardians try to make him admit to the transgression, which Rousseau (even as the sixty year old author of The Confessions) steadfastly denies. His aunt and uncle are apparently very judicious with him, explaining why they feel he has misbehaved by presenting evidence for believing such; young Jean-Jacques still refuses to concede to their demands, and ultimately receives an “appalling punishment.” The adult Rousseau, reflecting on the experience, explains: “I had not yet sufficient reasoning power to realize the extent to which appearances were against me, to put myself in my elders’ position” (29-30). Rousseau essentially states that as a child, he lacks the ability to comprehend why his guardians are so certain that he is guilty of the crime of which they accuse him. His lack of maturation creates an inability to consider their evidence as sufficient grounds for their charges, thus he feels unfairly accused (and subsequently punished).

Meanwhile, the more emotionally developed narrator of The Confessions still maintains
he is innocent of the crime, but is now able to understand why his aunt and uncle suspected his guilt.

Rousseau’s notion of a child learning in a state of nature not only means that the child should learn largely of his own accord but also that his interaction with other people should be greatly limited (if not altogether excluded). Rousseau’s disdain for society as a whole may well be epitomized by a passage in *The Confessions*, where his own social awkwardness or nervousness is demonstrated by his commentary on how uncomfortable public speaking makes him:

> Seeing that I am so little master of myself when I am alone, imagine what I am like in conversation, when in order to speak to the point one must think promptly of a dozen things at a time. The mere thought of all the conventions, of which I am sure to forget at least one, is enough to frighten me. I cannot understand how a man can have the confidence to speak in company. (114)

Indeed, while Rousseau pays great lip service to not interfering in Émile’s education, it seems that the very maxims he proposes as proper for his instruction emanate from Rousseau’s own personal preference. Although Rousseau seemingly attacks Locke for pedantry in some form (since Locke’s treatise is essentially advice-oriented), it is certainly possible to accuse Rousseau of the same infraction. Rousseau’s ideology in educating Émile appears to be based largely upon what works for Rousseau, not what may benefit Émile the most.

In addition to the overwhelming anxiety that accompanies personal interaction and conversation, Rousseau felt that society was guilty of purveying other potentially insidious influences that should be thwarted before the child encounters them, books in particular. While Locke did in fact criticize the dearth of suitable literature for children, he lacks the extremity of Rousseau, who maintained that books of all kinds were perilous and Émile was not to be exposed to any book until the age of twelve. Even fables, which Locke advocated as valuable to children for their moral instruction, were shunned by Rousseau:

> The words of fables are no more fables than the words of history are history. How can one be so blind as to call fables the morals of children,
without reflecting that the apologue, while amusing them, also deludes them; that, while seduced by the fiction, they allow the truth to escape them; and that the effort made to render the instruction agreeable, prevents them from profiting by it?… In the fable of the Ant and the Cricket you fancy you are giving them the cricket for an example, but you are greatly mistaken: it is the ant that they will choose. No one likes to be humiliated… what a horrible lesson this is for children! (80-1)

Rousseau also boldly states in Émile, “I hate books; they merely teach us to talk of what we do not know” (162). Oddly enough, the ever-conflicted Rousseau’s education was acquired through the very means he denounces Émile. In The Confessions, Rousseau clearly has fond recollections of his own book-based instruction, admitting:

I do not know how I learnt to read. I only remember my first books and their effect upon me; it is from my earliest reading that I date the unbroken consciousness of my own existence. My mother had possessed some novels, and my father and I began to read them after our supper. At first it was only to give me some practice in reading. But soon my interest in this entertaining literature became so strong that we read by turns continuously… I became indeed that character whose life I was reading. (20-1)

Rousseau later sums up his own instruction in a complimentary fashion, stating, “If ever a child received a sound and reasonable education that child was I” (66).

However, remaining true to his contradictory spirit, Rousseau does exonerate one book from his attack: Robinson Crusoe. To Rousseau, the novel was not valuable for the entertainment it provided, or even for its so-called Lockean emphasis on empirical education; its greatest value could be attributed to the protagonist’s survival, education, and subsequent success achieved while living a solitary existence in a state of nature - one of which was uninterrupted by the restraints and rigors of society’s perverse influence.

Rousseau’s quotation about Defoe’s immortal novel, though quite lengthy, shows the profound admiration he has for Robinson Crusoe despite his obvious prejudices regarding books as a whole (the following is a small passage from a larger quotation):
Since we must necessarily have books, there exists one which, to my way of thinking, furnishes the happiest treatise on natural education. This book shall be the first which my Émile will read; for a long time it will of itself constitute his whole library, and always hold a distinguished place in it. It shall be the text on which all our conversations on the natural sciences will serve merely as a commentary. During our progress it will serve as a test for the state of our judgment… What, then, is this wonderful book?... it is Robinson Crusoe. (162-3)

From this staunch recommendation of Robinson Crusoe’s pedagogical merit, Rousseau goes into an extended description of the novel, focusing heavily upon the idea that the best way for a man to reach an accurate conclusion about life is to examine it from a distance, as an isolated man on a desert island might (similarly to how Rousseau describes his acquisition of knowledge in the opening paragraph of this chapter). The idea of separating man from citizen arises again here, as Rousseau lauds the fact that Crusoe’s own labor (and the fruits it yields) are his alone, and are not to be consumed by other members of society who do not contribute to their production. Intriguingly, this description was reiterated roughly a century later by Karl Marx, who in Das Kapital (1867) addresses Defoe’s novel from an economic standpoint: “Our friend Robinson learns by experience… all the relations between Robinson and the objects… form this wealth of his own creation” (Marx 780).

Another interesting parallel between Rousseau’s precepts and his own real life practice emerges here in relation to Defoe’s work: despite the fact that the narrator of Émile emphasizes the fact that he is not to interfere with Émile’s learning, the narrator contradicts himself in stating that he will have Émile “think he is Robinson himself” (164) – a sentiment echoed by Rousseau himself in his Confessions when recounting his experiences in Genoa in 1743. During his voyage, there was an outbreak of the plague, and Rousseau was quarantined for twenty-one days in a state of solitude that apparently even unnerved the normally asocial Rousseau. He writes, “Like another Robinson Crusoe I started making arrangements for my twenty-one days, as if it were for my whole life” (279). His imagination in this circumstance aptly illustrates part of the earlier mentioned quotation from The Confessions where Rousseau admits that he “became the
character whose life he was reading” (20-1). It is certainly hard not to perceive Rousseau as the narrator of Émile, as it certainly seems like little coincidence that Émile is advised to envision himself as the same fictional character the real life Rousseau assumed some twenty years before he composed Émile.

I have already mentioned that for the most part Émile is a vast departure from Some Thoughts and, to Rousseau at any rate, the greatest difference between the two may be the intended audience. While the original version of Some Thoughts focuses on how to raise a gentleman, Rousseau never clearly delineates a particular group to whom his work is directed. Undoubtedly, Émile is almost solely concentrated on the education of a young man (of unspecified class); however, the final chapter of the work is dedicated to the education of women. The final chapter deals with Émile’s future wife, Sophie, and the brand of education she must receive in order to be a perfect spouse to Émile, who in Rousseau’s eyes is the benefactor of a perfect education. This differs greatly from Some Thoughts which barely addresses girls (and women); Rousseau draws attention to this discrepancy immediately in the concluding chapter of Émile, and in doing so again criticizes Locke’s efforts:

“Since our young gentleman,” says Locke, “is now got within sight of matrimony, it is time to leave him to his mistress.” And thereupon he finishes his work. For myself, who have not the honor to educate a gentleman, I shall refrain from imitating Locke in this particular. (259)

While Nelson writes that “Locke is far more sympathetic and tolerant in his attitudes to females than, for example, Rousseau” (96), I think it is very telling that regardless of the antiquated (by today’s standards) position to which Rousseau relegates women, he does devote an entire chapter to their education. Locke speaks rarely, if at all, about women in Some Thoughts (the one quotation I found was actually negative, as in §60 Locke suggests that any benefit garnered from shaming a child is tantamount to modesty in a woman, for it is quickly fleeting) (118). Rousseau, on the other hand, does say some things about women in Emile that make him seem somewhat more liberal minded than he is often given credit for. For example, although he essentially says that the purpose for a woman’s education is that she learns how to please a man, he is complimentary of women’s inherent aptitude in things that men lack. He writes, “Women have a flexible
tongue; they speak sooner, more easily, and more agreeably than men” (274). In an odd way, also, Rousseau does advocate a Lockean sort of education for women in the sense that he suggests “all their studies ought to have reference to the practical” (281). Though “practical” to Rousseau inevitably means that women should be proficient in the domestic realm.

In this chapter I have demonstrated that Rousseau’s ideas were not only very different from John Locke’s, but that Locke’s perspectives were particularly relevant to Rousseau in that they gave him a foundation upon which to base his attacks and advance his own political and social theories. Locke’s treatise was composed mainly for Edward Clarke, but in a broader context, it was Locke’s attempt to help improve his country by instructing parents and tutors how to better teach children at a young age to be virtuous, God-fearing, practical, and industrious. Rousseau’s audience is never actually specified (although we do know he does not propose to educate gentlemen) and his overarching goal in *Emile*, although difficult to explicitly decipher, seems to be the much more focused notion of an education that emphasizes individual improvement rather than a collective betterment of society as a whole. So although Locke did stress that it was necessary for tutors and guardians to closely observe their children as individuals, Locke proposed this on the grounds that effective individuals might coexist to make effective groups – in essence, a more productive society. Rousseau, on the other hand, is an “individualist,” for he wanted children to be raised as individuals who could subsequently live on their own without help from outsiders.

This is in all likelihood why Rousseau was so enamored with *Robinson Crusoe*. As unbelievable as Defoe’s story may be, it nonetheless shows that a man with no practical education can, when forced by nature, rise to the occasion and become the ruler of his own kingdom. Horace (65-8 B.C.) once said, “Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents, which in prosperous circumstances would have lain dormant.” This quotation seems quite applicable to Rousseauian logic, for Locke’s form of practical education would not be necessary in a state of nature, as man would have no choice but to be industrious in such a condition.
NOTES

1 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile. Trans. William H. Payne (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1907), 76. All subsequent quotations from this edition are followed by the page number.


4 John Locke, Some Thoughts Concerning Education. Eds. John W. and Jean S. Yolton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 103. All subsequent quotations from this edition are followed by the page number.

This thesis sheds light on the fact that Daniel Defoe, Samuel Johnson, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (three important eighteenth century writers), along with others of the period, who have been cast in the shadow of John Locke need to be considered foremost for their own unique literary contributions. While each of the writers discussed throughout this study certainly read Locke and were familiar with his ideas, each modified Locke’s maxims in their works, inevitably making various elements of Locke’s ideology integral to their own unique ideas. Undeniably, these three men were cut from very different molds, but each clearly forged his own path through his writing, whether this feat was accomplished from a novel, a dictionary, or an autobiography; therefore, it seems reductive to attribute so much of any of these authors’ style or ideology to another writer.

The greatest potential ramification of this study might be to suggest that, contrary to what we in literary studies often do, it is not always helpful or accurate to gauge one author’s influence on another. If a reader with minimal knowledge of Defoe, Johnson, or Rousseau (or Locke) were to read criticism suggesting that each writer is a “disciple” of John Locke, then the reader might likely just accept the statement and move on. I am not suggesting that reading literature in isolation is a superior alternative to contrasting works with one another; however, it is not altogether unproblematic. When comparing new literature to what preceded it becomes a way of indicting newer writers as imitators or followers of authors who came before them, in the process we might overlook the inherent value of more recent works by superimposing past thoughts and ideas on them.
REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Douglas Root was born in Warrenton, Virginia, a suburb of Washington, D.C., on February 15th, 1980. He began his academic career at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) in August, 1998. In late 1999 he declared his intent to pursue studies in the field of English with a minor in History and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in December, 2002. In August, 2003, Douglas began work in the Master of Arts program for Literature at Florida State University. He will be awarded the degree in August, 2005 and will then move on to the University of Georgia in hopes of obtaining a PhD in Literature.