



# Observations upon Liberal Education (Natural Law Paper)

*George Turnbull*

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Originally published in 1742 and presented here in its first modern edition, *Observations upon Liberal Education* is a significant contribution to the Scottish Enlightenment and the moral-sense school of Scottish philosophy. George Turnbull embodied these movements of ideas as much as his more famous contemporary Francis Hutcheson.

In *Observations*, Turnbull applied these ideas to the education of youth. He showed how a liberal education fosters true “inward liberty” and moral strength and thus prepares for responsible and happy lives in a free society. He drew upon an impressive number of authors, both ancient and modern, including John Locke. Indeed, there is probably no richer treasure trove of sources for the educational debates of the eighteenth century.

Terrence Moore, who wrote the introduction, notes that “*Observations upon Liberal Education* provides an extensive and illuminating treatment of education, sensitive to the means of inculcating the personal responsibility necessary for living in a free society.”

Turnbull was the mentor of Thomas Reid, but his influence was not confined to Scotland. Benjamin Franklin, in drafting his *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pensilvania*, drew generously from *Observations*.

**George Turnbull** (1698–1748) belongs to the founding figures in the Scottish Enlightenment. Finding their native Calvinism repressive, they sought a rational religion closely associated with their new science of human nature, supportive of tolerance, and compatible with classical ideals.

**Terrence O. Moore, Jr.**, is  
Principal of Ridgeview Classical  
Schools in Fort Collins, Colorado.

**Knud Haakonssen** is Professor of Intellectual History at the University of Sussex, England.

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