

Building a Culture of Liberty I: Definitions



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“One Voluntarist’s Perspective” is an original column appearing most Mondays at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins. Archived columns can be found [here](#). OVP-only RSS feed available [here](#).

A free society, where liberty is secure, is necessarily one where you’ll find the widespread observance of the voluntary principle (all human relations should happen voluntarily, or not all). Of course, not everyone is required to practice voluntarism, but enough must so that society remains free, a state of affairs demanded by our psychological needs. Good and well. But how do we achieve a free society? What are the prerequisites? The antecedents? Before we’ll have widespread liberty, we must build a culture of liberty. How are cultures built? Everyone knows that we aren’t born with a culture. That’s a process that occurs over our lifetimes, beginning at birth. Enculturation, socialization, and education are the antecedents for every kind of society we can imagine or observe. When it comes to liberty, it seems best secured through a popular feeling of moral outrage toward its denial. How do we accomplish that? We’ll explore what I consider to be a very good answer in the following six-part essay, beginning with definitions.

Definitions

Liberty is when one is “free from restraint” by another. Imposing your will by force onto others is to deny them liberty. The authority to deny a person their liberty must either be granted by that person, or obtained as a result of that person initiating the use of force against others. The authority to retaliate by force to another’s initiation of force is granted by virtue of their obvious belief that the initiation of force is a valid human interaction. Liberty, then, is the natural state of every person, and it’s denial must be justified on the aforementioned grounds.

Enculturation is the “gradual acquisition of the characteristics and norms of a culture or group by a person” not yet enculturated. As people grow from babies into adults, they are introduced to the various practices of their family’s culture. They learn to value certain aspects of culture, things like social organization, customs and traditions, language, art and literature, forms of government, economic systems, and religion.

Socialization is “the lifelong process of inheriting and disseminating norms, customs and ideologies, providing an individual with the skills and habits necessary for participating within his or her own society.” Similar to enculturation, socialization is how one learns to get along and cooperate with others around him, others who may or may not share one’s culture.

Moral outrage is a feeling of disgust and/or anger “to infringements or transgressions on what people perceive to be the immunities they, or others with whom they identify, can expect on the basis of their rights and privileges and what they understand to be their reasonable expectations regarding the behavior of others.” One’s socialization will determine what is considered the immunities, rights, and privileges of different groups or classes of people, their violation of which produces the feeling of moral outrage. As it stands, the possibility of moral outrage is a result of one’s socialization and enculturation.

Education is the process of receiving “a body of knowledge” and wisdom, the latter a result of the application of our knowledge through experience. As we learn new things, we naturally try to fit them in to what we’ve learned before, building for ourselves an academic tapestry from which to evaluate the socialization and enculturation that is always occurring within us. Through education, we experience re-socialization and re-enculturation, which will lead to a change in the list of behaviors by others that will cause us to feel moral outrage, as well as the list of behaviors that won’t.

Final Thoughts

Having given detailed definitions of the preceding terms, I will now use them throughout the remainder of this series. We’ll first look at parenting, followed by schooling. And then we’ll look at building a culture of liberty through radical unschooling and agorism, broadly applied. I’ll finish the series on the topic of “moral outrage” and why this is a key component for achieving a free society.

Building a Culture of Liberty II: Parenting

Building a Culture of Liberty III: Schooling

Building a Culture of Liberty IV: Radical Unschooling

Building a Culture of Liberty V: Agorism

Building a Culture of Liberty VI: Moral Outrage

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