

Building a Culture of Liberty III: Schooling



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Building a Culture of Liberty I: Definitions

Building a Culture of Liberty II: Parenting

Schooling is the typical next step in a person’s life, and the socialization that occurs in school is quite ill-suited to building a culture of liberty. That’s the intent, actually. Modern schooling was founded in Prussia as a means to socialize children into the acceptance of state authority (always illegitimate) and a life of subservience to parents, opinion makers, educators, bureaucrats, and bosses. The brilliance of schooling in this regard was not lost on the rest of the world’s ruling class. It quickly spread to every country on earth. Today, schooling is touted as a child’s right and necessary for becoming a functional adult. But everything about school is antithetical to building a culture of liberty.

Unnatural Authority

To start, children are expected to obey adults who are emotional strangers to them. Teachers demand love, respect, and obedience without earning them the only way they can be earned, through bonding, connection, and impression. And so, children learn to follow others because they said so, or else! The seeds of totalitarianism are thus planted, and watered with every “authority” the child encounters. His life becomes one of obedience and regimentation.

Intellectual Prison

Children in school must do everything the person-in-charge tells them to do, whether they really want to or not, and often contrary to their own instincts. They must sit down and be quiet when they want to run around and be noisy. They must ask permission to get a tissue or go to the bathroom. They must work on projects they might find uninteresting. When they do discover something interesting, the time they’re allowed to focus on it is temporary and fleeting. Also, when they are presented with new information, it’s presented in an unnatural way. Life does not approach us in subjects, nor does life separate facts from

skills. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are skills. History, geography, and science are facts. Life has a way of throwing a big mess of experience (skills) and knowledge (facts) at us in a less than compartmentalized way. To approach learning unnaturally creates a handicap and, I believe, damages the desire to learn new things. I would call all of the above “intellectual prison” because of their non-intuitive and unnatural effects on the kind of education that children need to live in a free society, ie. freedom of thought and curiosity.

Bullying

The prison metaphor certainly doesn't stop at the intellect, unfortunately. Children in school are forced to work all day in the classroom, and all evening at home. And when their work is unsatisfactory, they are punished. Not to mention the punishing effect that rewards like stickers and grades have. Alfie Kohn has explained the deleterious effects that grades have on the drive to learn and explore. Artificial incentives cause people to put more focus on the incentive than on their work. The results are disinterest, short memory, and cheating. Another likely result is bullying. Some kids are made to feel stupid and ashamed of their poor performance in academics, a feeling that likely finds its relief in finding triumph on the playground, either in competitive sports, or in dominating those who they're compared against inside the classroom. Bullying is also a result of violent parenting. This makes for improper socialization of both bullies and the bullied if the goal is a culture of liberty.

Final Thoughts

For these and other reasons, including the pro-state “facts” that are disseminated, schooling is a very bad place for children both as it regards their physical and intellectual needs and for the prospects of a free society. Government schools are worse than private schools, which are worse than home schools. As I've written elsewhere, schooling is akin to prison, a plantation, and an indoctrination center. The socialization that occurs in school is contrary to the socialization needed to achieve and maintain a free society. For that, our children need a radical approach to their education.

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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