

Theories of Societal Development: Effects of Education and the Promotion of a Free
Society

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ABSTRACT

The analysis and synthesis of educational philosophies of Adler (1982), Dewey (1907), Greene (1988), and Illich (1970) in terms of their underlying principles about the strengths and limitations of building education systems for the purpose of promoting freedom for individuals and society are discussed. Information that is reflective of current thinking on the modern American school's role in promoting individual and societal freedom is also explored.

THEORIES OF SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT

One may ask the question, “What does it mean to be free, and what does freedom have to do with education and social change? It is the intent to share theories by reputable theorists of the past who have suggested their ideas of effecting positive social change through education and present a broad interpretation of the word freedom and its significance to a free society.

According to M. Adler, the word “discipline” is associated more with duty than the idea of the word “freedom” (Adler, 1944). However, it is important for everyone to understand that true freedom can only exist where there is discipline. Therefore, according to Adler, freedom is discipline. Contrary to the belief that freedom means doing whatever one may desire to do, freedom should be connected to the idea of the regulation of conduct in terms of ought or should (Adler). In other words, freedom does not operate in a vacuum by itself. Responsibility accompanies freedom. For example: under anarchy, (a state of society without government or law; confusion; disorder) there is no freedom (Adler). There is only license for every man to do what he pleases, and since the desires and wants of individual men will bring them into conflict, freedom from laws necessarily means subjection to the war of each man against every other (Adler). Some people believe that instilling within children at an early age (as early as the toddler stage of growth) the significance of these words: right, wrong, responsibility, discipline, and duty are some of the first educational steps toward a positive social change in a free society. Knowing the difference between right and wrong and having a clear understanding of the responsibility of duties are some of the key ingredients that are

needed to set the foundation for an effective and efficient free society. According to Adler, “Civil rights and duties are instituted by laws, and so it is through law, and the discipline it imposes upon our social conduct, that men are able to live together freely and in peace.” Learning these virtues at an early age and sustaining its practice throughout the formative years, makes the transitioning period into adolescents and eventually into adulthood much easier with little or no risk factors involved.

Greene (1988) stated, “Personal freedom refers to self-dependence and self-determination; it has little to do with connectedness or being together in a community.” According to Greene, some Americans assume that they were born free which entitles them to do as they please and to pursue their desires and dreams independently. “Given the climate of the time, there should be celebrations of that dream coming true” (Greene). However, society speaks of irresponsibility, illiteracy, relativism, and unethical behavior (Greene). In his poem, *Murder in the Cathedral* by T.S. Eliot, Greene interprets what he considered to be a “lassitude, a disinterest, and an absence of care” of the twentieth-century with regards to society’s view of freedom.

There have been oppression and luxury.
 There have been poverty and license,
 There has been minor injustice,
 Yet we have gone on living.

Living and partly living...
 We have seen births, deaths and marriages,
 We have had various scandals,
 We have been afflicted with taxes,
 We have had laughter and gossip,
 Several girls have disappeared
 Unaccountably, and some not able to.
 We have all had our private terrors,
 Our particular shadows, our secret fears (1958, pp 180-181)

Greene stated, “The ‘secret fears’ afflicting people today may be of sickness, pollution, crime, disorder, nuclear war; and indeed most do go ‘living and partly living.’” One could ask, “Is this really the kind of freedom that I want to become a part of in today’s society?”

According to Dewey (1907), “Learning how to be self-sufficient and functional in the world constitutes true freedom. All that society has accomplished for itself is put through the agency of the school, at the disposal of its future members. Here individualism and socialism are one.” Some parents train their children to be self-sufficient and functional with the hopes of preparing their son or daughter with the necessary tools of survival in what they perceive to be a challenging and sometimes unfair world. It is the hope of these parents that their children would be able to survive and live comfortably without the fear of having someone who could take advantage of them. Much effort is given to teaching these children how to be “tough” and resilient mentally, emotionally, and physically. The need for self-preservation can be seen when parents teach their children not to become afraid of anyone, and to be confident when speaking to address a perceived injustice. From careful evaluation of the manner in which parents in the 21st century train their children in comparison to the manner in which parents trained their children in the 1930’s, 40’s, and 50’s, one may observe that the old adage, “Children should be seen and not heard” does not seem to be a part of the vernacular of child rearing today. Thus, the philosophy of Dewey in 1907 that states “Learning how to be self-sufficient and functional in the world constitutes true freedom” is evident exactly 100 years later in the manner how many parents have chosen to raise their children.

The next question that one may ask is, “What is the relationship between individual freedom and society?” According to Greene, “Freedom is a matter of choice by the individual.” Therefore, the same voices of society that speak about irresponsibility, illiteracy, relativism, and unethical behavior, are the same voices that increases an uncomfortable feeling that focuses more on everyday life and education (Greene). In other words, in order to have a free society for everyone to enjoy, the responsibility of training the future members of society is a focal part of the responsibility of educators.

Greene viewed freedom as synonymous to desire. He stated that women were able to discover their freedom in a resisting world; but first they had to perceive the world as resistant to their desires. Greene believed that the obstacle (which he characterized as a wall) should be viewed as a block (personal challenge) to individuals risking free choice (Greene). Dewey believed that people do not think about freedom or go in search of freedom “unless they run during action against conditions that resist their original impulses...” Dewey’s main concern was to promote choices for individuals to express their ideas “in the open air of public discussion and communication” (Dewey, 1960, p286). Greene stated that if freedom comes to mind, it is ordinarily associated with an individualist stance. “It signifies a self-dependence rather than a relationship; self-regarding and self-regulated behavior rather than involvement with others” (Greene). The analogy that Greene gives to the relationship between individual freedom and society is as follows:

People consider themselves free if the road is opened before them-to pursue success or security or status, to “get ahead.” Others are more likely to think in

terms of expressivism, of satisfying desire, of giving impulse free play. Greene continued to explain that the two notions were linked: “One pursues success; and one achieves so that one can indulge oneself” (Greene). However, Greene also believed that there is another group of individuals who believe that risk is irrelevant and that the only important factor that matters is the fulfillment (perhaps momentary) of one’s desires.

In his book, *Freedom, education, and public spaces*, Greene referenced C. Taylor who said that the “self which has arrived at freedom by setting aside all external obstacles and impingements is characterless, and hence without defined purpose” (Taylor, 1985, p160). He viewed the association by others between freedom as pure autonomy or self-dependence and nihilism-total rejection of established laws and institutions, to be dangerous. Taylor believed that there is an equal danger with the idea of freedom as “an indulgence of the instinctual and the irrational” (Taylor). Situation ethics is a term that refers to the decision that a person makes when a particular situation presents itself. Taylor was concerned with a conception that he called, “situated freedom”-a conception of free activity seen as a response called for by a situation which is ours in virtue of our condition as natural and social beings, or in virtue of some inescapable vocation or purpose (Taylor). According to Taylor, those who believe in situated freedom believe that freedom (free activity) is rooted in accepting the defining situation.

In responding to the relationship between individual freedom and society, Dewey believed that schools should teach children to have “effective self-direction,” that would guarantee a “larger society which is worthy, lovely and harmonious” (Dewey, p10). Many philosophies and mission statements from a number of schools across the nation

tend to reflect Dewey's philosophy. For example: the philosophy and the mission statements of the St. Croix Central High School in St. Croix U.S. Virgin Islands states:

Philosophy

The St. Croix Central High School community recognizes its diverse student body as unique with individual aptitudes, goals, and achievements. Central High School offers educational programs and extracurricular activities that develop the competence and confidence necessary to assume productive and rewarding roles in a global society by encouraging greater parental involvement, as well as school and community partnerships (St. Croix Central High School Faculty Handbook).

Mission Statement

The St. Croix Central High School is committed to providing the best educational opportunities for our diverse student body by offering students academic, vocational, technological, athletic, and ethical challenges that continue our rich legacy of nurturing young minds (St. Croix Central High School Faculty Handbook).

Sometimes, the school's mission statement grows out of the school's philosophy and vice versa, the school's philosophy grows from the school's mission statement. Whichever action may be true, the focus usually remains the same. Schools are preparing children to have "effective self-direction" that would guarantee a "larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious (Dewey).

Greene's philosophy of the relationship between individual freedom and society is a matter of choice that the individual has to make to obtain freedom. Dewey's philosophy of the relationship between individual freedom and society is teaching children to have effective self-direction that guarantees a larger society that is worthy, lovely, and harmonious. According to Adler, men are politically free when they live

under a just government. “Justice is the root of political freedom. It is also the root of moral freedom and economic freedom” (Adler, p2). Some people mistakenly believe and say, “I have a right to do what I want to do, and when I feel like doing it!” According to Adler, rights are only one aspect of freedom.

The other aspect consists of duties. The free man must be unrestrained from doing what he ought to do, and he must not be coerced into doing what he ought not to do (Adler).

Adler’s philosophy of the relationship between individual freedom and society is a just government which equals political freedom. Justice is the root of political freedom. It is also the root of moral freedom and economic freedom (Adler). Adler’s philosophy also states that just “as political freedom is liberty under just laws, so moral freedom is liberty under the direction and discipline of moral virtues” (Adler). Referencing St. Augustine, Adler shares insights from him. According to St. Augustine, “moral virtues consist in a proper use of our free will.”

Nothing can take our free will away from us, neither tyrannical government nor a vicious character; but tyranny and vice can prevent us from using our free will properly, that is, for our ultimate good and for the common good of the society in which we live (St. Augustine).

Illich had a slightly different perspective on the relationship between individual freedom and society. According to Illich, “both individual freedom and society rely on an outer force to dictate and control the thought processes and actions.” He believed that the “institutionalization of values leads inevitably to physical pollution, social polarization, and psychological impotence: three dimensions in a process of global

degradation and modernized misery.” Illich felt that the “result of services” or “treatments” of health, education, personal mobility, welfare, or psychological healing is another process of degradation that is accelerated when “nonmaterial needs are transformed into demands for commodities.” He also believed that there is an increase for future institutionalization of values that society should not allow to happen. In order for individuals to be truly free in society, government’s responsibility is solely to protect the inalienable rights of its citizens. The inalienable rights of the citizens of government are the right to life, the right to liberty, and the right to the pursuits of happiness. The role of government in the life of its citizens is not to “characterize our world view and language through modern institutions and other bureaucratic agencies of the corporate state such as the consumer-family, the party, the army, the church, and the media” (Illich).

We need research on the possible use of technology to create institutions which serve personal, creative, and autonomous interaction and the emergence of values which cannot be substantially controlled by technocrats. We need counterfoil research to current futurology (Illich).

He believed that the operational definition of poor and privileged had been monopolized by government and that “the reliance on institutional treatment renders independent accomplishment suspect.” According to Him, “Welfare bureaucracies claim a professional, political, and financial monopoly over the social imagination, setting standards of what is valuable and what is feasible. This monopoly is at the root of the modernization of poverty.” He stated that every need that is addressed by an institution “permits the invention of a new class of poor and a new definition of poverty.”

Ten years ago in Mexico it was the normal thing to be born and to die in one's own home and to be buried by one's own friends. Only the soul's needs were taken care of by the institutional church (Illich).

Presently, beginning and ending life at home is either a reflection of poverty or of "special privilege" said Illich. According to him, "dying and death have come under the institutional management of doctors and undertakers." If basic needs have been re-defined by society/government to mean "scientifically produced commodities" then poverty "is defined by standards which the technocrats can change at will (Illich).

Poverty then refers to those who have fallen behind an advertised ideal of consumption in some important respect. In Mexico the poor are those who lack three years of schooling, and in New York they are those who lack twelve (Illich). He concluded that the relationship between individual freedom and society relies on an outer force to dictate and control the thought processes and action.

It may be interesting to note that both Adler and Dewey expressed similar points regarding freedom through discipline. Adler stated that, true freedom is identical with duty. Discipline is indispensable to such freedom. "Political liberty is a freedom achieved through the discipline of laws." Dewey stated that, "We cannot overlook the factors of discipline and of character-building involved in training in habits of order and of industry, and in the idea of responsibility, of obligation to do something, to produce something, in the world." Dewey's concern for individual freedom living in society not only parallels Adler's sentiments but also was expressed in a question he asked in one of his lectures in April, 1899 to an audience of parents and other interested members of the audience in the Laboratory School of the University of Chicago.

Yet there is a real problem: how shall we retain these advantages, and yet introduce into the school something representing the other side of life-occupations which exact personal responsibilities and which train the child with relation to the physical realities of life? (Dewey).

In addressing individual freedom and political freedom, Adler also addressed economic freedom. According to Adler, “economic freedom consists, not in the absence of restraints upon enterprise or economic organization, but in a just regulation of economic processes.” Adler stated that the ideal of free enterprise “confuses liberty and license.” Adler compared and contrasted the differences and similarities of the injustice of laissez-faire capitalism and the injustice of complete collectivism. He stated that in neither of these two kinds of government are men economically free. According to Adler, “...the injustice in the profit system enslaves them to individual entrepreneurs; and the injustice of a completely regimented economy enslaves them to bureaucratic commissariats.” Adler believed that there is a correlation between economic freedom and “education for freedom” or “education for duty.”

A good education is an education for freedom only when freedom is properly understood as a function of rights and duties, both founded upon justice. It follows, therefore, that education for freedom is incompatible with tyrannical or despotic government, with fascism and Nazism (Adler).

Adler also cautioned that education for freedom cannot be expected to be protected by the ideal of the “American way of life” when it actually means “free enterprise unqualified by justice” (Adler).

As one observes and evaluates the theories of social change many questions may come to one's mind. Some of these questions have already been addressed such as, "What does it mean to be free?" and "What is the relationship between individual freedom and society?" As each theorist gave their views on the theories of social change and what it meant to them to be a free person living in society, additional questions present themselves. For example: "How does education contribute to the freedom of individuals?" According to Greene, "It is through and by means of education that individuals become empowered to think about what they are doing, to become mindful, to share meanings, to conceptualize, and to make sense of their world. It is through education that preferences may be released, languages learned, intelligences developed, perspectives opened, and possibilities disclosed" (Greene). In a global economy where technology is innovative and accessible, focus seems to be placed on "dominant watch words," according to Greene, such as: "effectiveness," "proficiency," "efficiency," and an "ill defined, one dimensional 'excellence'" (Greene). Teachers are asked to teach to prepare their students for a global economy where they the students could become outstanding and contributing members of society. "Economic Competitiveness" says Greene, is the focus that many expect schools to undertake in preparing its future citizens to operate the nation. The young are viewed as "human resources" trained to perform at an acceptable level that society defines as successful in preparing them for the "systematized world" (Greene). Today, many school districts rely on standardized testing to measure the achievement of their students. One of the topics surrounding student achievement is the notion that using a "cookie cutter" approach or the "one size fits all" approach of measuring success in the nation's public schools is fair and effective.

However, from personal observation some critics believe that Federal Government should not mandate how schools function. Local school boards should be given the right to issue policies for their own local school districts. They also believe that holding all schools accountable to one standard mandated by the government is unfair to schools that may have seen improvement in student achievement, but because the school did not meet a mark of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) defined by the government, that school is labeled (unfairly) as “in need of improvement.”

Adler believed that, “Liberal education is education for freedom only in so far as it is revolutionary against every form of injustice.” He continued to make the argument that true freedom equals justice.

Education for freedom must be dissociated from that false liberalism which makes a travesty of liberal education that consists in confusing authority with autocracy, discipline with regimentation, and hence liberty with license (Adler).

Although liberty is paramount, Adler says that authority and discipline should not be sacrificed for the sake of liberty. He referenced the words of President Barr of St. John’s College who said:

We have slithered into the belief that liberty meant being left alone and nothing else. We have come to assume that liberalism is the absence of authority because we no longer distinguish between authority and tyranny. We have forgotten that the mind that denies the authority of reason falls under the tyranny of caprice. We have forgotten that he who will not answer to the rudder must answer to the rock (Barr).

False liberalism defends the “elective system” and defeats the very purpose of liberal education, stated Adler. False liberalism emphasizes the untrained will of the student by giving choices that the student is not prepared to make. However, true liberal education with freedom through discipline as its objective, emphasizes the training of the mind and will of the student which helps the student to accomplish his/her duties freely. In the essay, *Freedom through discipline*, Adler referenced Santayana’s perspectives on the elective system. According to Santayana, “...to be free and cultivate individuality one must first exist, one’s nature must be functioning. ‘What was I?’ ‘What were my powers and my vocation?’ Before I had discovered that, all freedom could be nothing but frivolity” (Santayana). Adler stated that liberal education “rightly conceived as a discipline of man’s rational and moral nature” answered Santayana’s questions.

Each student is a man or woman. His or her characteristic powers are reason and free will. His or her vocation is to be the citizen of a democratic society, which shall include all men or women as members of a single community, existing perpetually at peace under world government, justly constituted (Adler).

Greene believed that in order for education to contribute to the freedom of individuals, schools needed to prepare all groups of students to “meet current market demand.” This is one way that schools can show their effectiveness by equipping students to become free individuals living successfully in a free society. Referencing the poet, Rene Char and his recollections of his time spent in the French Resistance during World War II, Greene mentioned that a number of individuals living in France during that time viewed the Nazis government as “obstacles to their own projects, affronts to their own chosen principles, barriers to their self-realization.” Although there was no

certainty that the Nazis occupation of France would end soon, people of France refused to believe that their present condition was unchangeable (Greene). The people of France listed the atrocities that they were experiencing and focused their attention on them as “factors to be resisted” according to Greene. They came together to reject their present conditions as something that was intolerable. They would not have thought it to be intolerable if they had been unable to imagine their situation as being better concluded (Greene).

In answering the question, “How does education contribute to the freedom of individuals?” Illich responded that the de-schooling of society will help the educational process where the “de-schooling of the education depends on the leadership of those brought up in the schools (p.14). Illich’s theory matches people according to their interest in a particular field. Mutual desires are discussed while a third party records the meeting. The objectives of Illich’s theory: “highlights the deep-seated resistance to de-schooling education, separates learning from social control, and suggest existing resources which are not currently used for learning purposes.” For example, Illich proposed that schools and universities should allow students classified as “match seekers” to base their self-identification on an idea or an issue of interest to the match seeker. In other words, schools and universities should conduct their educational activities similar to political parties, churches, unions, clubs, neighborhood centers, and professional societies that match people in order to explore certain themes. The exploration of common themes of interest by the match seeker is developed through courses, seminars, and curricula. Illich also proposed the inclusion of information on “age, background, world view, competence, experience, or other defining characteristics”

to be added to the identification of the match seeker. Lastly, Illich proposed “incidental assistance” for match seekers that will facilitate their meetings-with space, schedules, screening, and protection (Illich). He believed that the equal right of each man to exercise his competence to learn and to instruct is now pre-empted by certified teachers. The teachers’ competence in turn, is restricted to what may be done in school (Illich). In order for education to truly contribute to the freedom of individuals, Illich stated that:

A radical alternative to a schooled society requires not only new formal mechanisms for the formal acquisition of skills and their education use. A de-schooled society implies a new approach to incidental or informal education.

Dewey stated that our social life has undergone a thorough and radical change. “...If our education is to have any meaning for life, it must pass through an equally complete transformation (Dewey). One hundred years later, Dewey’s words seem hauntingly familiar to the present conditions of education. During the early 1900’s hardly one percent of the entire school’s population attained a degree in higher education. The majority of students who graduated from high school did so as soon as they could read, write, and calculate well enough to get a job in society (Dewey).

While our educational leaders are talking of culture, the development of personality, etc., as the end and aim of education, the great majority of those who pass under the tuition of the school regard it only as a narrowly practical tool with which to get bread and butter enough to eke out a restricted life (Dewey).

Dewey believed that if educators were to present education in a less exclusive manner while introducing into educational processes activities which appeal to those whose dominant interest is to do and to make, the end result would be a school that is capable of

capturing and maintaining the interest of its students to be more vital, prolonged, and containing more of culture (Dewey). He was of the belief that the social evolution within the school system was needed and should be appreciated. He felt that the ideas and ideals involved within this social evolution should uncompromisingly be a possession of the school system (Dewey). He theorized that educators should take each school as an “embryonic community life” that reflected the life of a larger society, filled with art, history, and science. He believed that once the school began to introduce and train each “child of society into a membership within a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with the instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guarantee of a larger society which is worthy, lovely and harmonious” (Dewey).

As one looks at the theories of societal development and its significance to individual freedom and education, one question remains unanswered. “What type of education best prepares citizens to maintain the freedom that is cherished in the culture?” According to Greene, “Education that takes place on the ‘verge’ is what is best to maintain the freedom that we cherish. Confronting a void, confronting nothingness, we may be able to empower the young to create and recreate a common world-and, in cherishing it, in renewing it, and discover what it signifies to be free” (Greene). He believed and suggested that “education on the verge” which is interpreted by this author to mean education on the cutting edge of the latest innovation, can and will assist individuals to become equipped with the knowledge and the resources to bring about a positive social change in the world. This is necessary for providing citizens with the freedom that is enjoyed and cherished in this culture. While Greene held to the belief

that education on the cutting edge of innovation is necessary to maintaining the freedom that many enjoy, Adler's theme of freedom through justice is stated once again as he addressed the question: "What type of education best prepares citizens to maintain the freedom that we cherish in our society?"

Adler stated that, "Education for freedom cannot be instituted until the educators understand the principles of freedom, and that freedom is not an end in itself, but a consequence of justice, and an affair of rights and duties" (p 3). Adler believed that once students were educated through liberal education where they are taught responsibilities of citizenship, and the obligations of the moral and intellectual life, one will see the unification of a world through its individual communities existing together in world peace.

Life and liberty are good only as prerequisites to the pursuit of happiness, a pursuit in which all men should be able to engage without hindering or frustrating each other. No man should have more freedom than he can use justly, or less liberty than he needs to lead a good life in the society of his fellows (Adler). Adler continued to recommend that although man is born free and is a social being by nature, he should not ask for more freedom than is necessary and neither should he be deprived of less freedom than is needed. "Man achieves the fullness of liberty only through an education which prepares him to do his duty; he knows what his duties are and is competent to do them only when education disciplines him to be free" (Adler).

Illich's response to the question, "What type of education best prepares citizens to maintain the freedom that we cherish in our culture?" was that "...the de-schooling of society would help schools to profit just as family life, politics, security, faith, and

communication would profit from an analogous process” (Illich). His argument was that the institutionalization of different aspects of society such as schools, family life, faith, etc., was counter productive to the individuals and their quest to enjoy a free society and maintain the perceived freedom that they think they have. In some governmental agencies such as the Social Welfare Department and the Department of Housing, adherence to a set of strict policies regarding the obtaining of benefits and privileges are limited to income and the number of children that one has. Unfortunately, some individuals limit their freedom to liberty and the pursuit of happiness by accepting the operational definition of what constitutes the poor and the privilege through the adherence of the modernization of poverty.

Modernized poverty combines the lack of power over circumstances with a loss of personal potency. This modernization of poverty is a world-wide phenomenon, and lies at the root of contemporary underdevelopment (Illich).

Illich felt that poverty is most intensely felt in the U.S. cities and treated at a greater cost. According to him, the treatment of poverty produces much anger, frustration, and further demands. “Poverty, once it has become modernized, has become resistant to dollars alone and requires an institutional revolution” (Illich). The root of the modernization of poverty is the “welfare bureaucracies claim over the professional, political, and financial monopoly over the social imagination, setting standards of what is valuable and what is feasible” (Illich).

In responding to the question, “What type of education best prepares citizens to maintain the freedom that we cherish in our culture?” Dewey stated, “...All that society has accomplished for itself is put through the agency of the school, at the disposal of its

members. Only by being true to the full growth of all the individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be true to itself” (Dewey). He suggested that whenever there is discussion about change in education, taking the broader view or the social view is important. It is necessary to take the broader and/or social view with regards to education reform in order for the prevention of any perceived arbitrary actions of teachers as a “transitory fad.”

This author has focused on the theories of theorists in the fields of education and psychology who have contributed their ideas to the challenges of education and society. The ideas, opinions, and theories from these theorists were compared and contrasted with each other. First, an analysis of the educational philosophies of Adler (1982), Dewey (1907), Greene (1988), and Illich (1970) were presented in terms of their underlying principles about the relationship between education and the promotion of a free society. Second, a synthesis of their works compared and contrasted their philosophies from their perspectives on the organization of educational systems. Lastly, an attempt to explore the strengths and limitations of building education systems for the purpose of promoting freedom for individuals and society will be discussed.

The following poem summarizes the discussion on the strengths and limitations of building education systems for the purpose of promoting freedom for individuals and society.

FREEDOM MEANS RESPONSIBILITY

Taken from Daily Motivation by Max Steingart

Freedom is the right to live as you wish.
If you wish to free yourself from enslavement,
You must choose freedom and the responsibility it entails.
There’s a price for every freedom,

Something to be given up for every liberty.

It's up to you to weigh the price you must pay
For each of your freedoms.
And everything you want has a price.

Freedom is the opportunity to make decisions.
It's the capacity to take a hand in your own development.
Freedom is the right to choose.
It's the right to create for yourself the alternatives of choice.

No one is free who is not master of himself.
You are free to do whatever you like.
You only need face the consequences of your actions.

In order to build education systems for the purpose of promoting freedom for individuals and society one needs the shared vision of the intended mission to accomplish the task. Commitment, dedication, patience, desire, faith, fairness and hard work of those building education systems for the purpose of promoting freedom for individuals and society are some of the needed ingredients as expressed by Adler, Dewey, Greene, and Illich. The difficulties arise when one or more of these characteristics to build education systems are lacking. According to Illich, incidental education and contemporary society are different. In incidental education the focus was on traditional society that operated within the mold of the "village" or the "medieval town." In the village, "language, architecture, work, religion, and family customs were consistent with one another, mutually explanatory and reinforcing" (*Deschooling Society*, chap. 1). Work and leisure did not compete for time with education. The majority of education was lifelong and unplanned (Illich). Contemporary society focused on conscious designs and the educational opportunities that were designed to fit those conscious designs (Illich). In other words, striking the balance of social value between work and leisure, and

educational opportunities is the best evaluative tool to use to insure a high level of the educational system.

According to Greene in his article *The dialectic of freedom*, “It is not a question of freedom being neglected as an official value in America.” There is a constant message prevailing throughout society about what it signifies to educate free men and women in these times. “There is a constant emphasis on free choice and self-reliance, on people overcoming dependency and taking responsibility for themselves” (Greene). He continued to contend that the themes derive from an early liberalism associated with *laissez-faire* approaches to the economy. “Deregulation, noninterference, privatization: All are linked to the development of character, to consumption, to merit, to (deserved) material gain” (Greene).

It is interesting to note that history tends to repeat itself. Therefore, one needs to learn from the mistakes of the past in order not to repeat them. In 1988, Greene addressed the issue of civil rights legislation and affirmative action arrangements that he believed were treated as “infringements on people’s liberties” and that social programs were considered not only “wasteful but injurious to character” (Greene). He also believed that “public servants seldom acknowledged any longer what was once considered a ‘right’ to income support when needed, or to housing, or to medical attention. Quite obviously, the wealthy, and the advantaged, benefited from this new attention to freedom” (Greene). Twenty years later in 2008, presidential candidates for the United States were debating issues surrounding the economic crisis, poor and uncertain healthcare, a failing education system, and tax breaks for the wealthy.

Therefore, what are the implications of the present condition towards education and a free society? Dewey made the point a century ago when he said that “when obstructions are removed in the economic domain, the ‘robber barons,’ the bankers, the financiers always have benefited. But, it left all the others at the mercy of the new social conditions brought about by the freed powers of those advantageously situated” (p.271). In his article, *The dialectic of freedom* Greene quoted Isaiah Berlin who wrote, “to offer political rights, or safeguards against intervention by the state to men who are half-naked, illiterate, underfed, and diseased is to mock their condition; they need medical help or education before they can understand, or make use of, an increase in their freedom” (p. 19).

In order not to repeat the mistakes of the past, adhering to these words by Greene may be beneficial to everyone now and in the future. “We may have reached a moment in history when teaching and learning, if they are to happen meaningfully, must happen on the verge. Confronting a void, confronting nothingness, we may be able to empower the young to create and re-create a common world-and, in cherishing it, in renewing it, discover what it signifies to be free” (Greene).

As one fast forwards to the 21st Century, the words of Adler (1982), Dewey (1907), Green (1988), and Illich (1970) reverberates throughout the annals of time. One only needs to listen to the nightly news on the various media outlets to see the similarities between the worlds of today and yesterday that have been in dire need of positive change which not only would affect the individual locally, but also would affect nations globally. As Obama (first African American President of the United States, 2008) stated in his book, *The audacity of hope: thoughts on reclaiming the American dream* (2006),

Only by returning to the principles that gave birth to our Constitution can Americans repair a political process that is broken and restore to working order a government that has fallen dangerously out of touch with millions of ordinary Americans. Those Americans are out there waiting for Republicans and Democrats to catch up with them.

There is a common human thread that is woven throughout society. That common thread is the satisfying of basic human needs. According to Obama (2006), one interesting aspect caught his attention as he traveled from state to state and county to county. The hopes of people were very modest and their beliefs appeared to be “constant across race, region, religion, and class” (p. 7). These hopes and beliefs which spanned across race, region, religion, and class manifested themselves in the following:

- Most people thought that anybody willing to work should be able to find a job that paid a living wage.
- Most people figured that they should not have to file for bankruptcy because they became sick.
- Most people believed that every child should have a genuinely good education and that it should not be “a bunch of talk” and that those same children should be able to go to college even if their parents were not rich.
- Most people wanted to be safe, from criminals and from terrorists.
- Most people wanted clean air, clean water, and time with their children.
- And lastly, most people, when they became old, wanted to be able to retire with some dignity and respect (p.7).

This is a summary of what “most people” want out of life. They knew and understood that how they did in life was based mainly on their own efforts. Many do not expect government to solve all of their problems; however, they believe that government does have a level of responsibility to help those in need (p.7).

One can respond to Dewey’s point on the implications of the present condition towards education and a free society by fully acting upon the words of Obama when he said:

We have a stake in one another, and that what binds us together is greater than what drives us apart, and that if enough people believe in the truth of that proposition and act on it, then we might not solve every problem, but we can get something meaningful done.

As America begins the process of working on changing its political life and civic life, educators are tasked with the responsibility of making their instruction in school rigorous, relevant, and relational (p. 9). In many schools across the nation and its territories, schools were working hard to be in compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act that former President Bush re-enacted as law from the 1960’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Those schools were faced with a number of challenges. They were faced with the challenge of meeting federal mandates by law to meet Adequate Yearly Improvements (AYP). They had the challenge of maintaining old schools that were in dire need of re-construction. There was the challenge of lack of resources for students. There was the struggle to find highly qualified teachers to teach the students. There was also a challenge of teachers’ salaries that did not reflect the time, energy, and skill that the teacher had invested and developed to work under extreme poor conditions, and

lastly, the challenge of poor performing students in the schools all presented a dismal picture not only of the schools, or its systems, but also a dismal picture for the future of society. Since schools are a microcosm of the larger society, educators are tasked with the responsibility of preparing the future for everyone. Therefore, society as a whole, as well as government, are both stakeholders in the educational process and system.

Because society and government are stakeholders in the educational process and system, there is a certain level of responsibility that they need to own.

A look back into history during the time of the Civil War will give one an idea (a template) of how in the midst of challenging times, ingenuity can be born for the greater good of everyone concerned. Lincoln began a series of policies that helped not only the national economy but also helped the layman. His ingenuity and innovation coupled with his optimism of viewing America as a land of opportunity and free labor for one to advance in life were the cornerstones of the foundation that he laid to help America to meet the challenges of their time (Obama, p. 152). The following listing of Lincoln's policies demonstrates how government in conjunction with society can positively impact education. This is an excerpt from the book, *The audacity of hope*.

- Lincoln pushed for the construction of the first transcontinental railroad.
- He incorporated the National Academy of Sciences, to encourage basic research and scientific discovery that could lead to new technology and commercial applications.
- He passed the landmark Homestead Act of 1862, which turned over vast amounts of public land across the western United States to settlers from the

East and immigrants from around the world so that they could claim a stake in the nation's growing economy.

- He created a system of land grant colleges to instruct farmers on the latest agricultural techniques (since America was moving away from an agricultural to an industrial society).
- And lastly, he provided the farmers the liberal education that would allow them to dream beyond the confines of life on the farm (p. 152).

It has been noted that the foundations of both the Republican and Democratic policies at every stage of America's development have been the knowledge that "the resources and power of the national government can facilitate, rather than supplant, a vibrant free market" (p. 152). Providing the necessary resources in conjunction with the assistance of government to schools across the nation and its territories would greatly improve the present dire conditions of our learning institutions. Yet the provisions of resources and the assistance of government are not the only ingredients needed to improve schools. There is also a certain level of responsibility on the parts of parents and students. "Parents have the primary responsibility for instilling an ethic of hard work and educational achievement in their children. But parents rightly expect their government, through the public schools, to serve as full partners in the educational process-just as it has for earlier generations of Americans" (p. 160).

In addressing the educational dilemma in schools today, Obama presented possible solutions to assist in tackling the problems plaguing children, parents, teachers, and society. He stated that the task that educators and policy makers have is "to identify those reforms that have the highest impact on student achievement, fund them

adequately, and eliminate those programs that don't produce results" (p. 161). He continued to delineate the "hard evidence of reform that work" which is as follows:

- A more challenging and rigorous curriculum with emphasis on math, science, and literacy skills
- Longer hours and more days to give children the time and sustained attention they need to learn
- Early childhood education for every child, so that they are not already behind on their first day of school
- Meaningful, performance-based assessments that can provide a fuller picture of how a student is doing, and
- The recruitment and training of transformative principals and more effective teachers (p. 160).

Lastly, the salary of teachers should reflect their credentials especially when those teachers are teaching in the toughest urban schools (p. 162). However, there is a caveat. "In exchange for more money, teachers need to become more accountable for their performance, and school districts need to have greater ability to get rid of ineffective teachers" (p. 162).

The words of Obama sum up the earlier question of the impact that society has on education and the impact that education has on society.

Education, Science and Technology, and Energy, investments in these three key areas would go a long way in making America more competitive. If we fail to act, our competitive position in the world will decline. If we act boldly, then our economy will be less vulnerable

to economic disruption, our trade balance will improve, the pace of U.S. technological innovation will accelerate, and the American worker will be in a stronger position to adapt to the global economy.

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