

Education and the Free Society

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"If fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom, are children getting knowledge and wisdom at public schools?"



Education for liberty:

Perpetuating the necessary conditions for ordered
liberty, one child at a time,
one generation to the next

Three Competing Educational Visions

- "Traditional Education"-- Liberty is the right to do what you ought.
- "Progressive Education": Collectivism--
"Liberty" means abiding by the collective will manifested through government power and "experts."
- "Progressive Education": Radical Autonomy--
-"Liberty" is the freedom to create one's own self and identity.

I.

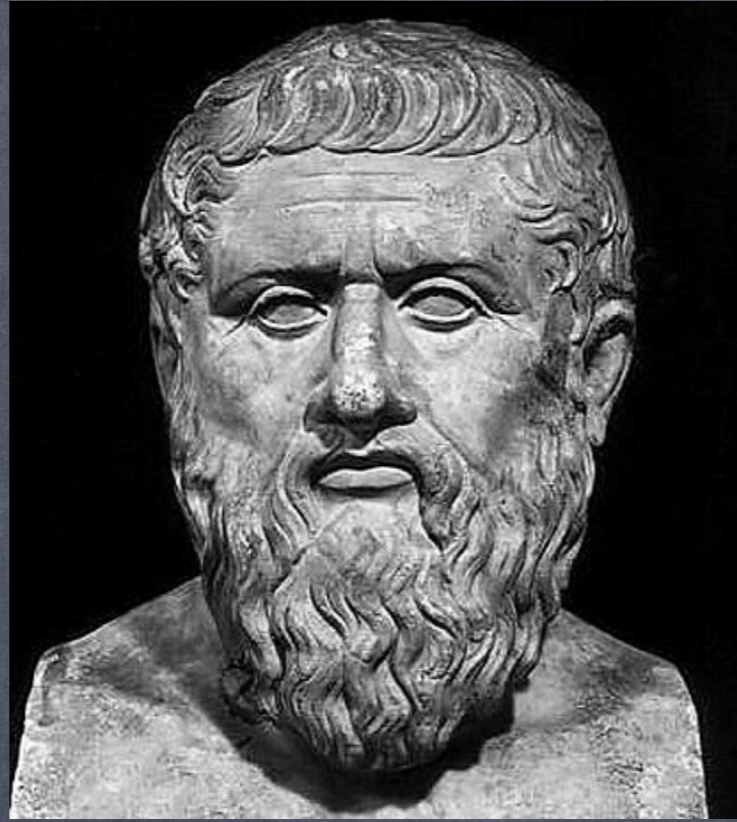
"Traditional" Education

Liberty is the right to do
what you ought.

Artēs Līberālēs:

works befitting a free person

- What is freedom rightly understood?
- What is freedom for?
- How do I cultivate habits of freedom?
- How do I responsibly exercise it?
- How do I preserve and perpetuate it?

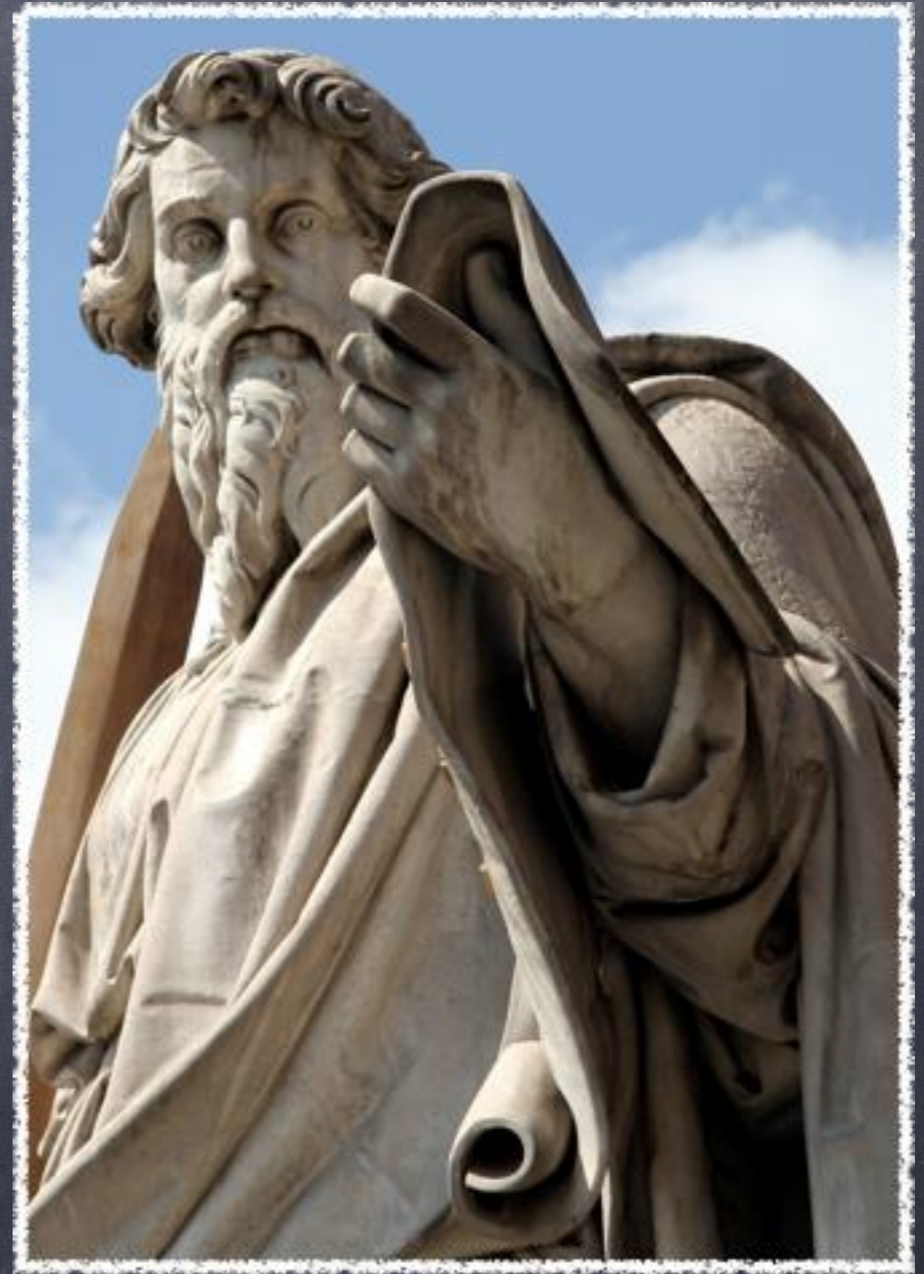


"The object of education is to teach us to love what is beautiful."

-Plato

"For when you were slaves of sin, you were 'free' as far as righteousness was concerned. What benefit did you get from doing those things?"

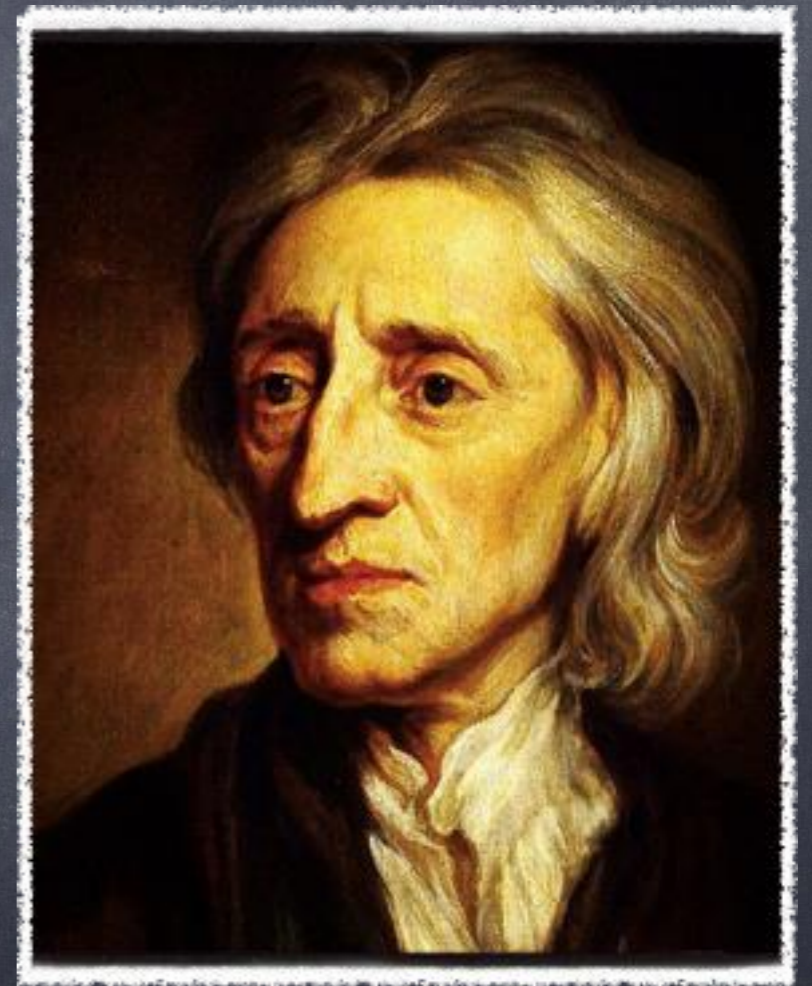
Saint Paul,
Romans 6:20



John Locke, 1693

Some Thoughts Concerning Education

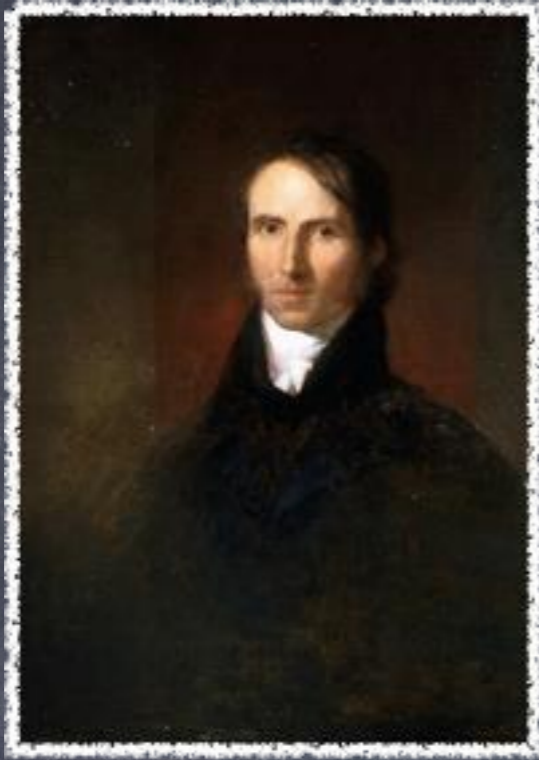
- Virtue: "A man is able to deny himself his own desires, cross his own inclinations, and purely follow what reason directs as best, though the appetite lean the other way."
- emphasis on self-denial, rationality, and habit—necessary for governing oneself



John Clarke, 1730

"Classical Program of Studies"

- "Virtue should be the principal Thing aim'd at in Education. For this purpose, right Notions of God and Religion should be instill'd into their Minds now and then, as Occasion may offer, in the reading of Authors."



William Channing, 1833

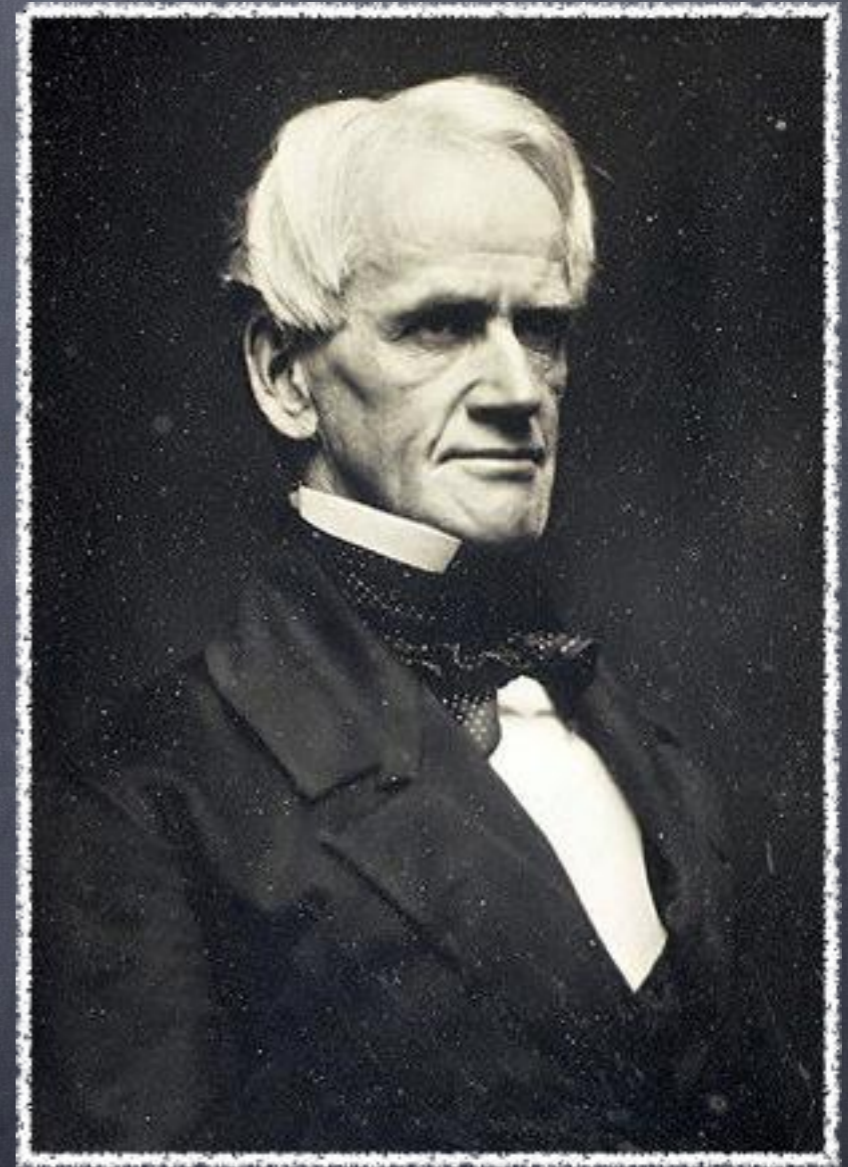
Unitarian Leader, "Remarks on Education"

- "Every school should be specially bound..to unfold the principles of free institutions.... A generation is growing up, to which our civil and religious liberties cannot safely be committed.."

Horace Mann, 1840

Education reformer, "The Common School
Journal"

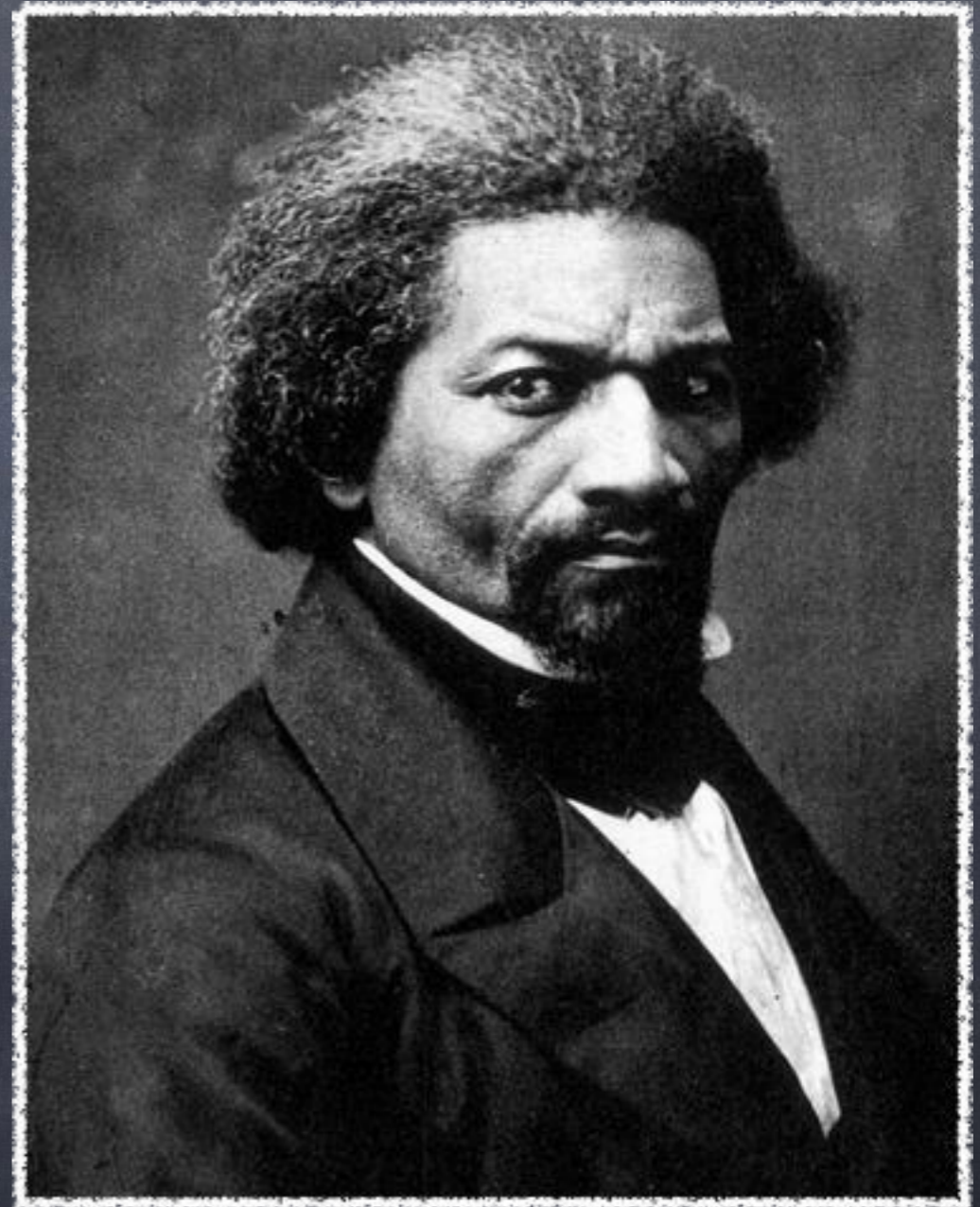
- Schools "could train well and furnish the mind, form and consolidate the character, establish Christian principles, form moral habits, and thus prepare for usefulness, prosperity, and happiness."



Frederick Douglass

1894

"Education means emancipation. It means light and liberty. It means the uplifting of the soul of man into the glorious light of truth, the light only by which men can be free."



Common "Traditional" themes

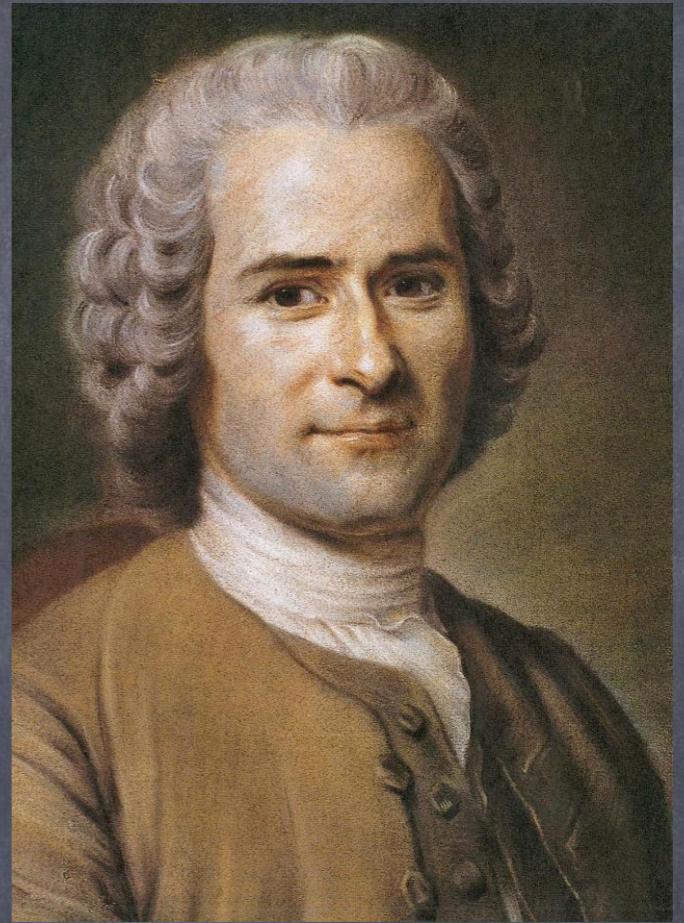
- "light of truth" in Classical and religious sources
- Rights come from human nature and nature's God
- Ethical/religious principles for ordering life
- man isn't particularly good left to his own devices (fallen and needs redemption from slavery to sin)
- moral habits for usefulness
- Economic, political, and religious liberty as bedrocks of a virtuous society

II.

"Progressive" Education:
Collectivism

"Liberty" means abiding by the collective will manifested through government power and "experts."

Influence of J-J Rousseau, (died 1778)

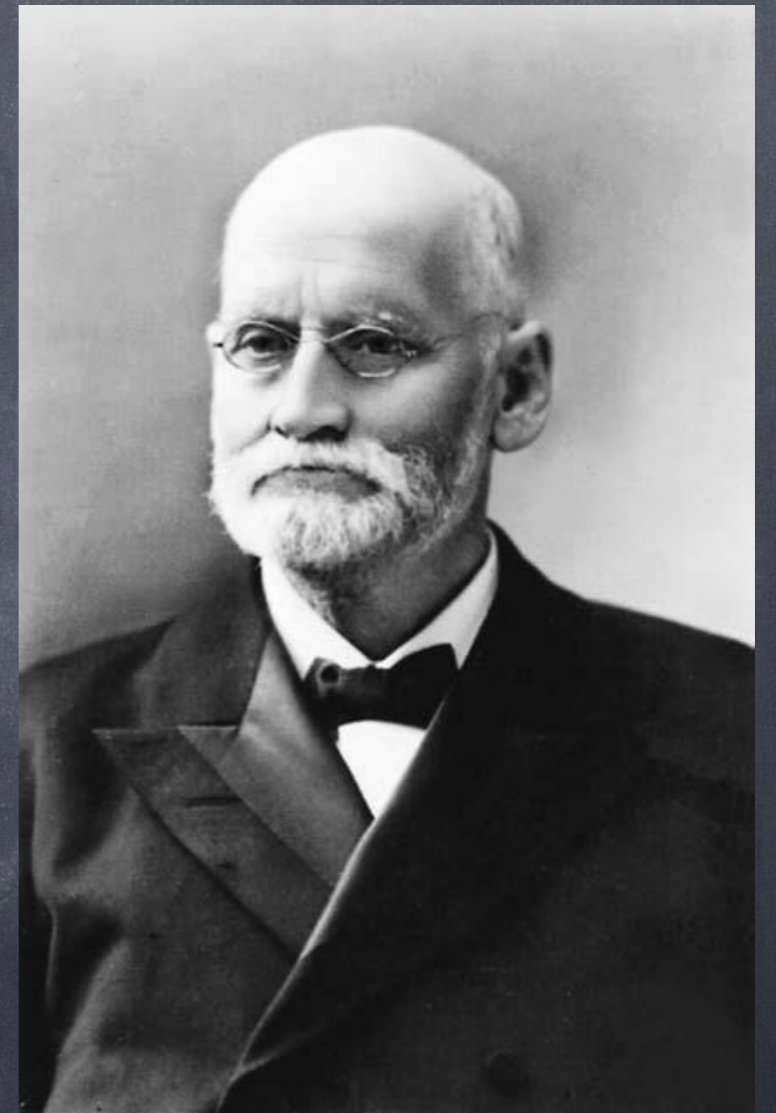


- Man is naturally good.
- Religion is a problem (original sin, etc.)
- Society corrupts: system must be gotten right.

William T. Harris, 1871

Education reformer, address to the newly formed NEA

- "A free, self-conscious, self-controlled manhood, is to be produced only through universal public education... And as this is the object of our Government, it is proper for our government to provide this means."





Laurence Gronlund, 1884

Education theorist, "The Cooperative Commonwealth"

"The Coming Commonwealth must radically do away with all and any form of quackery and amateurship, in educational matters especially. Education is essentially scientific labor. A competent and qualified body of educators will therefore be raised up to whom the whole function of education can be trusted."

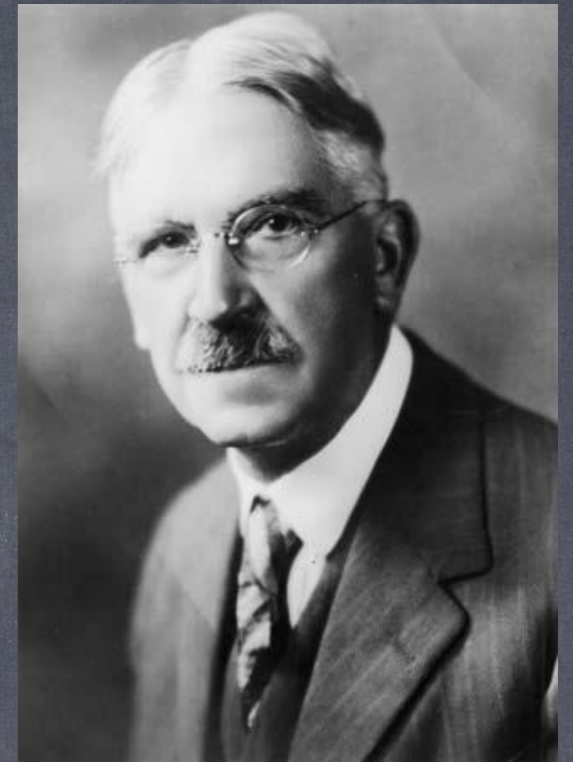
Terry McAuliffe, Former Governor of Virginia

- “I don’t think parents should be telling schools what they should teach.”
-Sept. 29, 2021



John Dewey, 1897

Philosopher, education reformer, "My Pedagogic Creed"



"I believe that the community's duty to education is its paramount moral duty. Through education society can formulate its own purposes, can organize its own means and resources, and thus shape itself with definiteness and economy in the direction in which it wishes to move."

Dewey, 1929

"Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary World"

- "The Russian educational situation is enough to convert one to the idea that only in a society based upon the cooperative principle can the ideals of educational reformers be adequately carried into operation."

Common themes of Progressive Education: Collectivism

- Man is naturally good and can be perfected by perfecting corrupt society.
- "Truth" unfolds in a mysterious historical process of "progress." We must "get on the right side of history" in order to discover what is "true."
- Government powers must be expanded in the educational realm to achieve "equity," since oppressor classes will disguise their power in the names of "truth" and "equality."
- "Rights" are subordinated to the progressive state, and the state defines "rights."

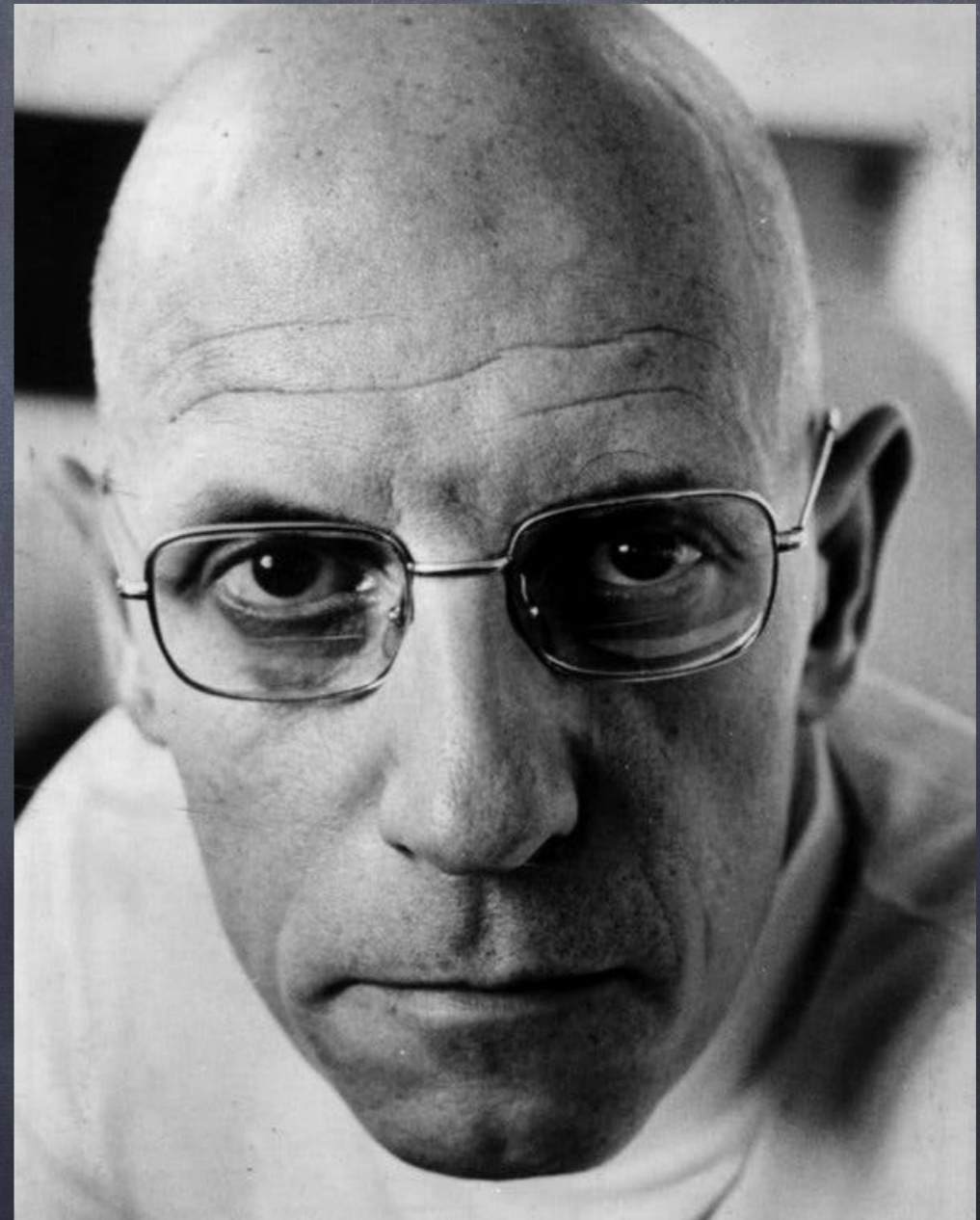
III.

"Progressive" Education:
Radical Autonomy

"Liberty" is the freedom to create
one's own self and identity.

Michel Foucault, d. 1984

- “Schools serve the same social functions as prisons and mental institutions—to define, classify, control, and regulate people.”
- “Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are.”



Planned Parenthood v. Casey, 1992

- “At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.”

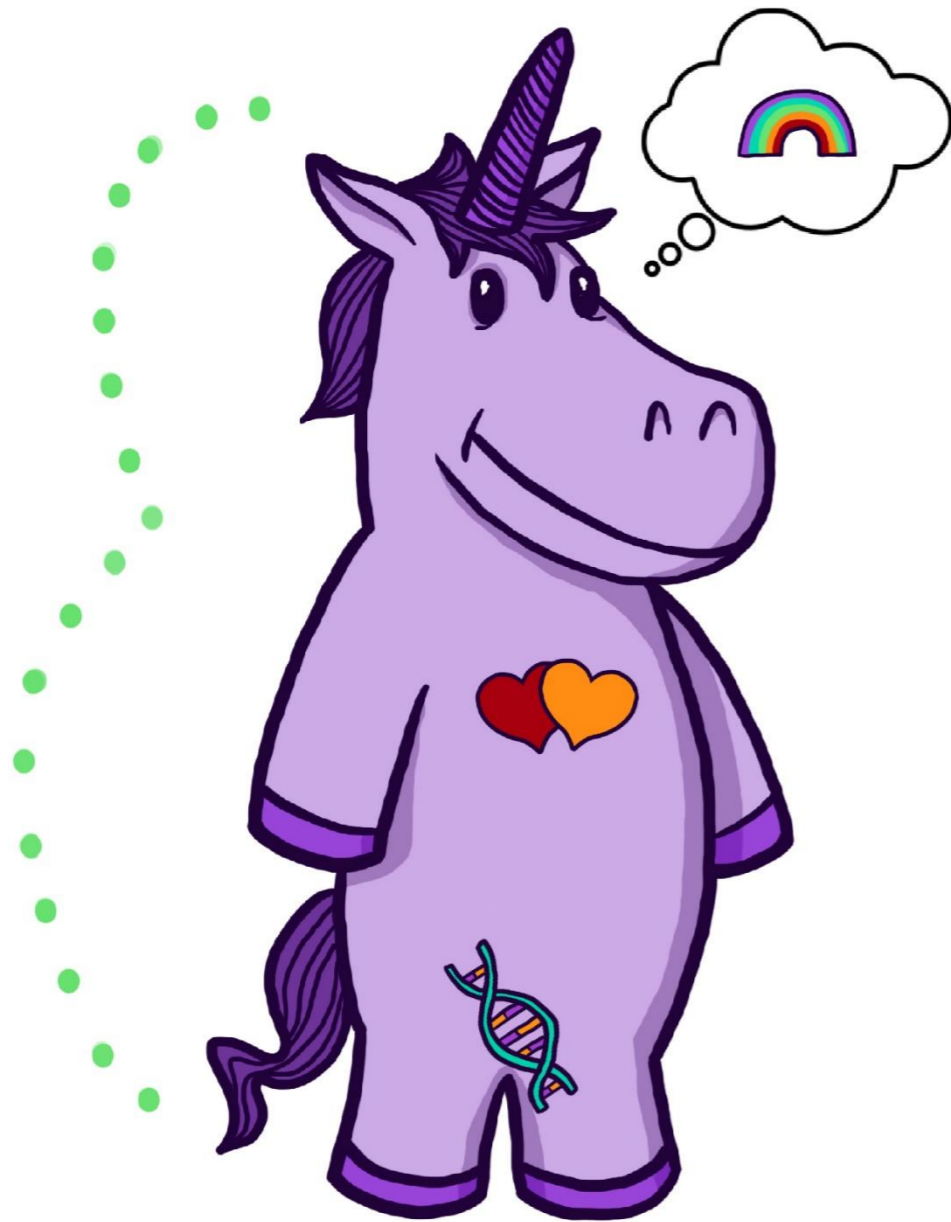
"Ye shall be as gods."

Genesis 3:5

Children must create and choose their
identities.

The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:
TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



Gender Identity



Gender Expression



Sex Assigned at Birth



Physically Attracted to



Emotionally Attracted to



To learn more, go to:
www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore

Themes of Progressivism: Radical Autonomy

- "Human nature" means only that we are autonomous consciousnesses with bodily desires. Education must provide tools for children to create their identities and to satisfy their desires.
- "Rights" arise from autonomous will; the state will determine what "rights" to favor and what ones to oppose.

What the two
"Progressivisms" have in
common:

The state must always expand its
control over social and economic
organizations and individuals.

To Summarize:

three competing views of education

- Traditional -- Human nature (created by God) points to the aims of education, and children should be trained in the knowledge, skills, morality, to be free and responsible human beings. Liberty is the right to do what you ought.
- Progressive Education: Collectivism-- Society creates and determines the goals of education, and the government should enforce inculcation of these ideas by certified experts. "Liberty" means abiding by the collective will incarnated in government power and experts.
- Progressive: Radical Autonomy -- Personal autonomy is the goal of education. Liberty is the freedom to create one's own self and identity. The state is responsible for mandating and supplying the means to self-creation.

C.S. Lewis, 1943

The Abolition of Man

- The old [education] dealt with its pupils as grown birds deal with young birds when they teach them to fly....



"The new deals with them more as the poultry-keeper deals with young birds—making them thus or thus for purposes of which the birds know nothing.

In a word, the old was a kind of propagation—men transmitting manhood to men; the new is merely propaganda."

Dorothy Sayers, 1947

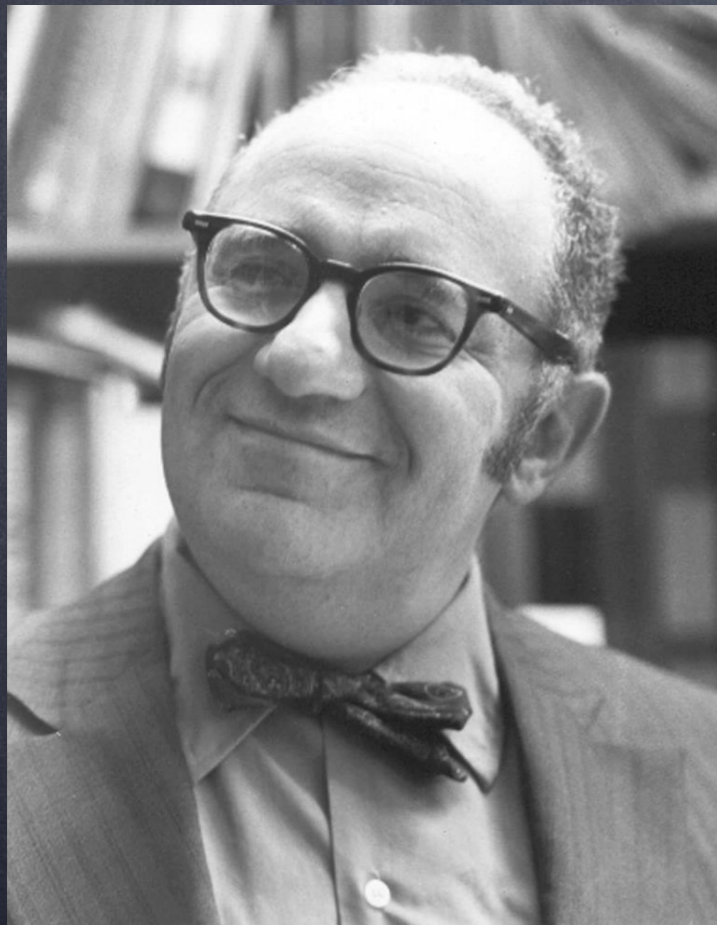
"The Lost Tools of Learning"

- "Has it ever struck you as odd or unfortunate that today people should have become susceptible to mass propaganda to an extent hitherto unheard of or imagined?"



Murray Rothbard, 1972

"Education: Free and Compulsory"



- "Children are now being prepared for democracy by being led to discuss current events without first learning the systematic subjects (politics, economics, history) which are necessary in order to discuss them. The effect of progressive education is to destroy independent thought in the child, indeed to repress any thought whatsoever."

A Way Forward for
True Liberty?

Vigorously assert the rights
of parents

- "Parents have the primary and inalienable right and duty to educate their children. They must enjoy true liberty in their choice of schools. The public power must see to it, in its concern for distributive justice, that public subsidies are paid out in such a way that parents are truly free to choose according to their conscience the schools they want for their children."

-Vatican Declaration on Christian Education, 1965
Pope Paul VI

Me, 2004

"American Experiment Quarterly"



- "The state has an interest in assuring that its citizens are educated, much as it has an interest in assuring that its citizens are fed. But the state need not run all the schools any more than it need run all the farms. Formal education, unlike daily bread, costs too much to make it accessible to most families without subsidy. The state's interest in an educated citizenry justifies subsidies."

Vigorously argue the rights of religious
schools, and the goodness of our
principles



Liberty is the prevention of control by others. This requires self-control and, therefore, religious and spiritual influences; education, knowledge, well-being.

(John Acton)

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Perpetuating the necessary conditions for ordered
liberty, one child at a time,
one generation to the next