

Are Schools Increasingly Becoming Re-Education Camps?

Apparently the new government of the Canadian province of Alberta has decided that its schoolchildren need to be re-educated about what 'family' means. As Charlotte Allen [quips](#): "It used to be: 'Heather has two mommies.' Now, it's: 'Heather has two non-gendered and inclusive caregivers.'"

Allen continues:

Here's the pertinent language from the rainbow-adorned ['Guidelines for Best Practices'](#) that the high-minded, progressive [NDP government issued last week](#):

"School forms, websites, letters, and other communications use non-gendered and inclusive language (e.g., parents/guardians, caregivers, families, partners, 'student' or 'their' instead of Mr., Ms., Mrs., mother, father, him, her, etc.)."

The purpose of the guidelines, according to the text, is to create "learning communities" that "respect diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions."

This is but one more manifestation of where things have been going in our culture. Sexual autonomy—even to the point of deciding what one's sex is—trumps natural, biological relationships. And when it doesn't, people should be forced to pretend that it does. Because if they don't, some people's feelings will be hurt. Or something. Hence the Soviet-style rewriting of texts and reshaping of language itself. There are countless examples of it, especially on secular college campuses. A few have even been discussed on this site.

How have things come to this pass? I incline toward an

explanation that Roger Scruton and others have been offering: There's a contradiction at the very heart of "liberalism" going all the way back to the 18th century. (Note: as made clear in the paragraph below, this is referring to what is called "political liberalism" rather than the social liberalism that is more popularly associated with the term today.)

As a secularized outgrowth of Christianity, liberalism strongly emphasizes the intrinsic value of the individual human person. What undergirds such value is our capacity for free will, understood not as being able to do whatever we happen to want, but as the ability to make reasoned choices about what we strive for and become. Hence the right to "liberty" and "the pursuit of happiness." Since then the growth of freedom has come to be seen as the process of the human person's coming into his or her own, freed from the oppressive structures inherited from the past. Technology has accelerated that process, even while chaining us to new processes and structures, such as all that's associated with the automobile.

But the process is reaching the point where reality *itself* is seen as an oppressive limitation on human freedom. At the dawn of modern science, Francis Bacon anticipated that attitude when he promoted science and technology as a means of conquering Nature by force and bending her to our own purposes. Now many see even natural human associations and relationships, such as one's chromosomal sex or the biological family, in that fashion.

But only selectively. Identity politics hinges on treating certain inheritances—such as one's race or traditional culture—as features of the individual that must be respected or even privileged for the benefit of those individuals who choose to embrace them as features of their identity. And many individuals do so embrace them, because their personal

narrative hinges on seeing themselves as members of an *oppressed* race, class, or ethnic group that is struggling to liberate itself from the other sex or a different race. Yet the narrative of liberation from oppression works a bit differently with respect to anything regarding sex or sexual identity.

As Scruton [puts it](#):

“My pleasures are mine, and if you are forbidding them you are also oppressing me. Hence sexual liberation is not just a release but a duty, and by letting it all hang out I am not just defying the bourgeois order but casting a blow for freedom everywhere. Self-gratification acquires the glamor and the moral kudos of a heroic struggle. For the ‘me’ generation, no way of acquiring a moral cause can be more gratifying. You become totally virtuous by being totally selfish.”

And not only that: anybody who gets in the way of what I want to be as a sexual creature is an oppressor. The way to deal with such oppressors is to call on government, with its legal monopoly of force, to protect my self-chosen sexual identity from being insulted or marginalized. Thus we now see schoolchildren being forbidden even to refer to their parents as “mother” and “father.” Because we must “respect diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.”

So the contradiction emerges: government becomes more and more coercive in general for the purpose of liberating the self-creating individual from others’ oppressive “disrespect.” This probably won’t end well.