

too often found in Professors. So far from that, he is a polite well-bred man, is extremely [sic] fond of having his students with him and treats them with all the easiness and affability imaginable.”

Smith spent 13 years at the University of Glasgow, then left in 1764 to become the private tutor to the Duke of Buccleuch. The Duke was so grateful for Smith’s skill as a teacher that he paid him 300 pounds a year until 1778, when Smith became a customs commissioner. Buccleuch’s investment gave Smith the time he needed to produce *The Wealth of Nations*.

Phillipson’s book will not tell you why Adam Smith became a great economist. But it superbly shows *how* Smith became important and why *The Wealth of Nations* remains significant. **FEE**

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Homeschooling: A Hope for America

edited by Carl Watner

The Voluntaryists • 2010 • 258 pages • \$19.99

Reviewed by Karen Y. Palasek



In his foreword, John Taylor Gatto, the New York City Teacher of the Year from 1989 through 1991, raises the following question: “What would happen if we let the imagination and energy of the young free again—as it was in Ben Franklin’s day—free to add value directly to the world around them as the young did when America was coherent? . . . What if they were taught the truth of things instead of having their heads filled with sound bites? What if they learned hard skills instead of ‘subjects?’” Reaching back in time is reaching forward in American educational, economic, and civic value, Gatto argues. To get back what has largely been lost or left behind, we must abandon the ongoing “trophy” approach to schooling, along with its anti-entrepreneurial, feel-good leveling effects.

Government schools have failed. They are in any case not designed to deliver authentic education. If we

are sincere about regaining coherence and preserving our free society, we must arise from complacency and train young people not in “subjects,” but rather in lessons of personal integrity, self-responsibility, and self-control. Homeschooling is the best means of achieving that objective, and Carl Watner’s book *Homeschooling: A Hope For America* offers a collection of essays, analyses, and perspectives on education inside and outside of government-run schools. The book serves as a broad introduction to an array of freedom-oriented education topics and provides an interesting and valuable section of references. Readers will find discussions appropriate for new homeschooling families; for those considering homeschooling but who need some history, a rationale, or a track record to present to skeptical friends and family; and for seasoned homeschoolers as well.

Other than its status as a personal alternative to government education, there is no single “right” model for homeschooling. Indeed the broad outline of what is legally possible is the province of each individual state and sometimes also of local school authorities. Homeschoolers need to know the legal landscape. Once past the legal considerations, homeschooling offers a virtually infinite assortment of possibilities and thus its appeal to and fit with the individualist, the freedom-minded, the creative, the educationally unorthodox as well as the very orthodox, the patriot, the libertarian, the anarchist, and any number of unique configurations of civic, religious, social, ethnic, family, economic, political, or other personal circumstances or styles.

Most readers probably will not read the book cover to cover. Instead they will find within each of its six sections a collection of articles that cover fundamental ideas in that area. A majority of the articles are authored by the editor and originally appeared in his publication, *The Voluntaryist*. Many read like conversations and are in fact parts of larger conversations on the subject.

Section I, “Homeschooling!” is an initiation into the what and why of homeschooling. Titles reflect typical areas of concern: the legal defense of homeschooling, an intellectual and moral justification, and parental rights and responsibilities. For families thinking of getting their feet wet in homeschooling, the articles

included give a brief idea of what the water is like, who is already in that water, some of what has drawn them (and their children) to that shore, and how a free society requires that children receive a genuine education.

The next two sections of Watner's volume offer essays that recount the history of government schools and take the reader through critiques of government schools' operations and effects. In those sections the reader encounters comments on morality, propaganda, the development of the intellect, and the poor outlook for freedom as products of the government schooling system.

The role of parenting and family values is the focus in "Family—Why Parenting Matters" and "A Potpourri of Hope for America" (sections IV and V, respectively). From Bryce Christensen's essay, "Abolish the Family?" we get this explanation for the hostility toward homeschooling among "liberals": "Individual freedom counts for little, but traditional family autonomy counts for even less, since the family is an obstacle to social engineering."

A short catchall section ("Aphorisms") concludes the book.

In sum Watner's book lays out some of the reasons for which families have taken their children back from the State, back into their homes to educate them. The topics and conversations ask parents to examine what they believe and why. As Gatto writes, "We need, I think, to reach backwards in time to the better open-source educational way America enjoyed when we dominated the inventiveness of the world; back to the time before the rigid, militaristic procedures of universal schooling foreclosed our imagination."

That journey backwards in time is the journey to America's best hope for individual freedom—back to homeschooling. **FEE**

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The Cultural and Political Economy of Recovery: Social Learning in a Post-Disaster Environment

by Emily Chamlee-Wright

Routledge • 2010 • 240 pages • \$145

Reviewed by Daniel J. D'Amico



Emily Chamlee-Wright's latest book, *The Cultural and Political Economy of Recovery*, has been awarded the F.A. Hayek Prize from the Atlas Economic Research Foundation, and rightly so.

A professor of economics at Beloit College, Chamlee-Wright draws insights from a variety of disciplines to explain the processes of recovery endured in the Gulf Coast region after Hurricane Katrina. She synthesizes insights from social network theory, Austrian economics, cultural economics, and the growing literature on natural disasters to make meaningful this complex mix of human decisions and social behaviors that will forever be a part of American history. In the process she makes a valuable contribution to refocusing the social sciences on their proper object of inquiry: people as individuals and in groups.

In *The Counter Revolution of Science*, Hayek described why and how the physical sciences purged humanism from their disciplines. Presuming that physical phenomena operate like people acting intentionally can lead to serious error. Thunder does not result from the anger of the gods.

Hayek explained that this purging unfortunately also affected the social sciences. Positivism, scientism, formal modeling, and empirical measurement became the dominant techniques to assure objectivity in economics and most other social disciplines. But to purge the human element from social science is to ignore the essence of the very subject matter we seek to understand—real human behavior and decisionmaking.

Nobel laureate Vernon Smith coined the term "contextual rationality" to describe behaviors that, although seemingly costly and/or irrational, are on closer reflection effective reactions to unique environmental constraints. The ability of outside observers to recognize rationality is restricted by their own limitations in rec-

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