

Contents

Preface	xi
Acknowledgments	xiv
1 Introduction	1
1.1 The plan of the book	5
2 The Knowledge Problem	8
2.1 Markets and why we trade	9
2.2 Hunter-gatherers in the Great Society	10
2.3 The rules of the Great Society	12
2.4 The division of labor and the division of knowledge	14
2.5 The roles of competition	15
2.6 Quality is not one thing	17
2.7 Why we cannot think ourselves toward better things	19
2.8 We can become experts on teaching but not on education reform	20
2.9 Why school vouchers and charter schools do not work	25
2.9.1 The process of improvements is different in a free system	26
2.9.2 Democratic decision-making is a particularly inappropriate method for improving schools	27
3 The Threats to Improved Education	29
3.1 Reforming “our” schools is impossible	29
3.2 Why we seek social conformity	31
3.3 The ever-present threat of paternalism	32
3.3.1 The species of the paternalists—the Anointed	35
3.3.2 How parents decide	36
3.3.3 Why parents and children will not find bad schools	36
3.4 School as a tribal ritual	37
3.5 Our urge to rationally plan prevents learning	39
3.6 It is not self-evident what education is	41
3.7 All-private schools are actually very affordable	42
4 School, Work, and Growing Up	47
4.1 Norberg’s assistants	49
4.2 How we grow up	51
4.3 Play and school	53
5 The Ethics of State Education	55
5.1 Government compulsion, government conformity	55
5.2 Using children as tools	59
5.3 Treating children as cattle	59
5.4 What is left for the state to do?	60
5.4.1 Maybe the government should verify that all become educated	61

5.4.2 Maybe the government should financially assist the education sector.....	62
6 The Rise of the Government School System	64
6.1 Sweden	66
6.2 Britain	71
6.3 The Third World today	74
6.4 New York State	74
6.5 The five-stage rocket of compulsory education	75
6.6 The flow of information stops	76
6.7 The hard and magnificent nineteenth-century government school system	77
7 The Art, Science, and Nonsense of Education	89
7.1 The art of education	89
7.2 The science of education	90
7.3 Folk “science”	91
7.4 Practice makes perfect	92
7.5 The delusions of education reformers and pedagogues	99
7.6 Why education must be tuned to the level of the student	103
7.7 Why education reforms almost always make things worse	106
8 Der Untergang—The Downfall of the Government School System	108
8.1 Overview of the decisions in Sweden	109
8.2 The social misdistribution of education	110
8.3 Against meritocracy and the high status of theoretical studies	113
8.4 Improving social skills	115
8.5 Abraham Lincoln’s dog’s tail	116
8.6 Empirical trials for the 9-year unity school	118
8.7 How education reform broke the back of the school system	120
8.8 All hell breaks loose	122
9 The Downward, Self-reinforcing Spiral of Death	124
9.1 The fall in quality of academic studies	125
9.2 The fall in quality for those who studied at the realskola but not at high school	127
9.3 The fall in quality for those who did not go to the theoretical realskola	127
9.4 Why don’t we return to the old system?	128
9.5 America, Britain, and the spiral of death of government systems	131
9.6 Comments on the Finnish school system	137
10 The Kind of Education We Never Had	141
11 The Negative Externalities of Government Education	146
11.1 Positive externalities from education	146
11.2 Idle minds—government school as a source of crime and angry music	147
11.3 State schools as a destroyer of exceptional talent	148
11.4 State schools as a source of irresponsibility and immaturity	149
11.5 State schools as a source of unequal opportunity	150
11.6 State schools as a source of social disintegration	151

11.7 On the unfairness of having parents of different wealth	151
12 The Private Origins of Science and Higher Education	153
12.1 Ancient Greece	154
12.2 China	156
12.3 India	157
12.4 The Lands of Islam	158
12.5 Medieval Europe	159
12.6 The repeated cycle of private initiative, government involvement, stagnation, and death of academic institutions	161
12.7 Kealey's three laws of the funding of civil research and development	163
13 An Educational, Socio-Economic Motorway Pile-Up	166
13.1 The unreflecting belief in the goodness of science	168
13.2 The politicization of science	170
13.3 Peer review and the balkanization of science	172
13.4 The mass production of graduates and PhDs	174
13.5 The spiraling cost of college	175
13.6 From primary education to college in a free system	178
13.7 A better, larger, and more diverse academy	181
14 Replanting the Beautiful Tree	183
14.1 Civil disobedience	185
14.2 Higher Education Unchained	185
14.3 Promoting freedom and democracy	187
Appendix A: Estimates of the Fall of Quality in Sweden	188
A.1 The fall in quality of the teachers	188
A.2 Chaos in the classroom	192
A.3 Measures of outcomes and some possible contributing causes	193
A.4 The early economic outcome	201
Appendix B: The Parable of the Citizen Vehicle	204
References	207