



Beyond the Icarus Factor: Releasing the Free Spirit of Boys

Richard, Ph.D. Hawley

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A call to reconsider the place of boys in the family, schools, and community institutions that rob them of their inborn vitality and creativity

- Argues that boys have a unique free-spirit nature and that efforts to alter or suppress it lead to profound unhappiness, pathology, or startling compulsions
- Demands another approach to societal expectations, one that values and promotes the daring creativity of boys

Richard Hawley's many years as headmaster of a boys' school have convinced him that boys do indeed have a unique, intrinsic, and inalienable free-spirit nature. He sees deep flaws in the way we--as parents, educators, and community members--alter or suppress that true nature in order to turn boys into men that fit our societal template. Hawley argues that the "model man" in our society, while seemingly successful in his role, may yet be unhappy in his life. The very elements that we strip away from a boy's natural tendencies are the sources of spirituality and vitality that can give his life both meaning and satisfaction. Without these, he is lost to his essential nature.

A new approach is needed, says Hawley, and he goes to the roots of Western theology and philosophy to locate what has gone wrong and how those consequences might be addressed. He sounds the clarion call to unleash, promote, and celebrate the seemingly dangerous pursuits that reflect the creativity and daring nature of boys. Fantasy and imagination must trump cognition and problem solving. We must not hold our boys back with our fears of failure but give them the tools and support they need to create wings good enough to fly wherever they wish to go.

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