

Evolution by Learning

Nobody asked but ...

Remember, if you are making decisions about the education of the next generation, you are not just making choices for yourself, nor are you only selecting the outlooks of youth. You are taking part in the evolution of your species. You are putting in place binary options (two roads diverged in a yellow wood) that will lead to survival or non-survival of an element in the flow of this species' evolution.

It is well that we understand the process, the risks, and the stakes.

Any person has two sources of stimuli by which she gains knowledge, the experiential and the referential. And in both sources, there are granules of true or false information — code *versus* noise. Real education is built from the success rate in separating true from false by each individual learner. Real advancement in an evolutionary sense is built by the same dynamic. It is clear that these are compatible with the two foremost natural instincts with which we are endowed — self preservation and preservation of species.

Self preservation drives the search for knowledge from the moment of birth (and perhaps before that moment, we are each given DNA which contains vast amounts of information). Then over the next 5 years, we are each naturally tasked with making the most of experiential learning. We are also bound to first-remove, referential learning, from parents, siblings, and close associates of our family unit. If any of the players in this vivid drama are spreading falsity, then the amount of damage or advance in the trains of knowledge is dictated by the importance of the relationship between the learner and the player. Unfortunately, today, players that have too much influence are the television and the media. Isaac Newton pointed out, “if I have seen further it is by standing on the sholders [sic] of Giants.” Newton gives himself too little credit for separating the true giants from the pretenders, and he gives too little recognition of the randomness by which he was given the opportunity to select the shoulders.

As a society, humans honor random acts of kindness, but these acts are intentional — not random. The acts of kindness we should value are all of those where we make a choice that reflects in our own education, in the education of our network, and in the education of future players. Real acts of kindness consist of not littering the paths forward with falsities.

— Kilgore Forelle