

On the Road to a Right Education



Send him mail.



“Insight for the Young and Unrestrained” is an original weekly column appearing every Thursday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Gregory V. Diehl. Gregory is a writer, musician, educator, and coach for young people at EnabledYouth.com. Archived columns can be found here. IYU-only RSS feed available here.

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We face a profoundly sad state of affairs in human civilization. What is called a conventional education today is little more than mass cultural training in a particular brand of patriotism, including enforced memorization of the current era’s arbitrarily acceptable ideas. The entire public school system operates under one goal: preparing every individual for entrance into a life of laboring as a functional member in the national work force. Large groups of people are prepared for a specific purpose and lifestyle through the process of indoctrination, and seldom does any real education occur through this process. Indoctrination and Education are entirely opposite concepts.

Education is the process of a rational mind coming to healthy maturity, during which the individual adopts accurate conceptions of the world and its various functions. It is a process of self-empowerment, where each new piece of knowledge can be independently verified and remain logically consistent with all other information obtained earlier. It is a voluntary process, fueled only by the individual learner’s inclination toward intrigue and choice to pursue understanding of the unfamiliar.

Indoctrination is a process of externally enforced self-degradation. Subjects are commanded exactly what to think. They are never taught how to rationally differentiate truth from illusion. Each new piece of information obtained is potentially a major danger to the subject, for the student is at the mercy of whoever happens to be the information enforcer for the day. The subject’s scope of reality only narrows further with the passage of time. As the external programming solidifies, curiosity withers, sacrificing the greatest blessings of human individuality; the student comes to reject all notions of existence counter to what has been adopted from the prevailing authority. This process is repeated and strengthened with each new generation.

Education is the engine of progress for humanity while indoctrination is its greatest hindrance. We live in a world where educational institutions no longer function to empower the individual man, woman, or child to think for themselves and develop rational facilities in critical thinking for examining reality. The greatest hope for humanity lies in the undoing of fallacious beliefs and the implementation of a right concept of education.

The most defining features of our species, those traits that separate us most broadly from the so-called “lower” animals, are our capacity for reason, our curiosity to learn, and our physical dexterity for shaping our environment with the utmost precision. The synergistic combination of these traits has enabled us to become a new kind of specialist in the animal kingdom. We are not homo sapien the runner, the climber, the swimmer, nor the flier. We have always and almost exclusively been homo sapien the toolmaker. The tools an individual makes are a direct result of our mental reasoning applied to our naturally curious observations of the world made through the windows of our five senses. Through the application of our hands upon the natural resources available, these new, continually updated, ideas form our technology and livelihood.

In the course of evolutionary events, our tools have taken a variety of forms, ranging from incredibly simple to elaborately complex. Bone clubs, spearheads, fire starters, knives, animal skins, mud huts, stone grinders, plant and animal domestication, agricultural, husbandry, dairy farming, written and spoken language, printing presses, books, bread, mined metals, body armor, swords, gunpowder, cannons, dynamite, log cabins, governments, factories, opera houses, cities, computers, television, digital networks, trombones, internal combustion engines, airplanes, freighters, freezers, microwave ovens, cheeseburgers, frozen microwavable cheeseburgers, recorded music, schools, psychological counseling, hydrogen bombs, hydrogen bomb shelters, mansions, vaccines, nanobots, satellites, and spaceships have all appeared at some time in man’s ascent as the peak of his technology for different functions. Each of these tools, whether used for beneficial or destructive purposes, was made possible by the emergent ideas of individuals in every new era, and the transmission of those ideas to others who are able and willing to understand them.

The first and foremost purpose of a true educator then, is to ignite the natural curiosity found in all people, young and old, to explore the fullest rational capacity of their own minds and the furthest accessible reaches of the universe. Learning is an inherent part of life itself, and education is a personal evolutionary process which is never finished until an individual’s moment of expiration. Only when this natural inclination for learning is understood and catered to can new concepts and skills be effectively explained and demonstrated in meaningful ways to individuals who want to know.

Education is an exciting process for everyone involved when executed correctly. For this to happen, it must always be done with the consent and enthusiasm of both student and

teacher. Past concepts of education have almost universally been flawed, if for no other reason than the fact that they have been compulsory. As all major cultures have accepted and believed the false idea that learning is unnatural to a child, ruling classes have felt that their duty and the security of society rested in the creation of institutions which would force children to learn in spite of their perceived natural aversion to it. This fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of human curiosity has been one of the most destructive ideologies to plague the human race, and even today its effects permanently defile the intellectual and emotional health of children and adults in mass quantities all around the world.

Personal discretion, i.e. an individual's ability to choose for themselves what they want and ought to learn as they mature in their own unique way, is crucial to the development of one's particular values, preferences, skills, and interests. Healthy education, which in every regard is an extension of healthy parenting, must occur in such a way that it is focused and driven at the discretion of each student. For any real learning to occur and be retained for practical use in the world, it must happen through the inspiration, not the enforcement, of new ideas in learners. The bonds that form between mentors and apprentices in this process can be some of the most beautiful and meaningful relationships in a child's life, perhaps second only to the child's connection to its biological parents and guardians. This task of inspiring curiosity and planting right knowledge into willing young minds is so profoundly fragile and important that for the sake of building a sustainable civilization, it cannot remain relegated to the whim of the state and backed with force any longer.

The education revolution, which is occurring with accelerating speed in small groups everywhere, will result in some of the most dramatically beneficial advances for humanity in history. Human understanding of natural phenomena has only just begun, and it is in the minds of the curious and intellectually liberated that the future progress of humanity rests. Our true hope for an indefinitely sustainable civilization lies in the creation of a new kind of educational tool, one which obsolesces and effectively replaces in its entirety the old way, which operated under a fundamental ignorance of human nature. The advancement of our technologies in food creation, transportation, and communication have altered the very structure of society for the better, but will be dwarfed by the advancing overhaul in schooling technology that is about to occur.

People in America today have more choice and freedom to spare their children from the detrimental effects of public schooling than people anywhere else in the world. While no one can legally avoid paying the taxes that fund the state's compulsory school system, there are other options concerned parents can take to avoid subjecting their vulnerable offspring to these mentally abusive conditions. Various incarnations of homeschooling, some more successful than others, have been gaining popularity in America for many decades. Private schools are an expensive but popular alternative, although most of them

are likely to employ many of the same flawed and destructive coercive tactics upon the students as the state. While perhaps being improvements over the state-run schools, none of these alternatives begins to reach the potential of how a truly voluntary and efficient educational institution will function in the future for students of all ages when the paradigms of enough people have been changed to allow them to exist.

I urge parents who are aware and concerned about the state of the education technology around them to consider these options very carefully regarding their own children. Take your children out of public schools as soon as possible; rest assured that whatever benefits they may gain from access to state accredited teachers, textbooks, and peer-based social settings can easily be matched and outdone in every aspect through other common and inexpensive technologies at your disposal. The bond you form with them by remaining their primary intellectual influences in the early years of life will be highly rewarding for both of you, bringing you closer and forming connections that will not easily be undone in their later years of life. There is absolutely nothing your five-year-old needs to learn that you are incapable of teaching them. When the time comes that their desire to learn exceeds your knowledge and capabilities, there is a whole world of people and tools waiting to teach and shape their knowledge in whatever path their natural passion and curiosity may take them. Teach your children to reason first. The rest is just details.

Observation and reason are the absolute adjudicators of truth, and the constant verification of this truth must be practiced through the encouragement of free inquiry and independent analysis. When enough people understand this, new, entirely voluntary educational institutions will begin to develop that cater to these principles. These new voluntary educational institutions will meet and exceed the current level of education technology in every regard, granting their students access to new social influences, tools for examining reality in greater detail, and guidance from minds which have already traversed the intellectual path being laid before the new learners. General knowledge will no longer be shaped by the arbitrary standards of the state representatives in power or by the goal of impressing officials at an accredited university, but by the interests of the students and professional educators' ability to meet the market demand for that particular interest. The worth and intelligence of individuals will cease to be perceived by the costs of their universities, the number of years attended, or the letters that follow their name, but by the abilities they can demonstrate and the reputation of the individuals and institutions who endorse them. Intellectual honesty will become the keystone to a right concept of education, and no truth should be kept hidden or privileged above anyone else with an earnest desire to learn and make ethical use of the principles of reality.

In the long run, the sharp dividing line between teachers and students becomes blurred and removed as we all become knowledgeable on some subjects and remain vastly ignorant on a large proportion of others. However many years we may currently have,

however far along we are in our paths to physical maturity, whatever part of the world we come from, whatever our native culture may be, whatever language we speak, however our genetic coding has shaped our appearances and personalities, whatever stories we may believe about the nature of existence outside the observable universe, we are all just human individuals experiencing our lives together on the same planet and passing along our acquired knowledge and technology to our children. We are all learning new things about ourselves and the rest of the universe in every conscious moment, if we seek it. We remain both teachers and students our entire lives.

An individual's greatest source of self-esteem and value lies in the mastery over their own life, and such mastery can only be accomplished through the cultivation of a mind capable of grasping the world as it really is and in taking purposeful action which achieves the ends sought. The education revolution will create a civilization where all individuals have access to the tools necessary to become the masters of their own lives and shapers of their own destinies. It will be a civilization that allows for the optimal existence of peace, prosperity, happiness, and human ingenuity. It will forever remain free from the intellectually and emotionally destructive influence of the counterproductive and compulsory schooling system we know today.