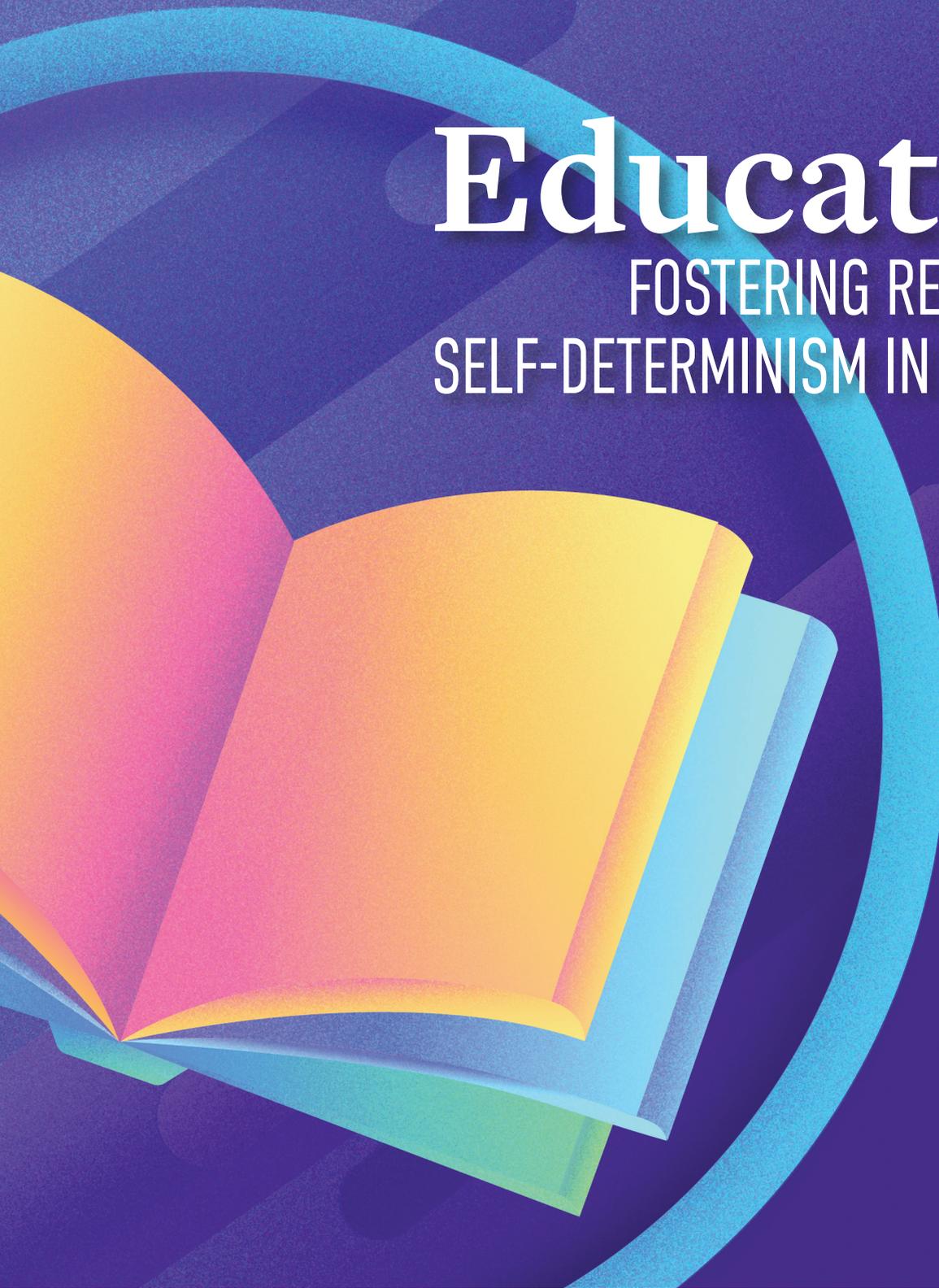


Based on the works of L. Ron Hubbard

# Education

FOSTERING REASON AND  
SELF-DETERMINISM IN STUDENTS



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# Self-Determinism and the Ability to Reason

(1951)

## INTRODUCTION

By their very nature basic principles, every time they are examined, tend to become more basic. Critical exploration uncovers simple underlying fundamentals. Yet, in spite of this fact, the tendency of the greater number of people is to complicate a subject in relaying it. Rarely does one try to advance knowledge by making it simple. The usual fate of a new postulate<sup>1</sup> is building it up into something so complicated it would confuse even the original creator of the postulate!

Original thinkers of the stature of Newton, for example, presented their ideas very simply. Newton stated that there are three laws of motion: inertia, interaction and acceleration. In relaying these laws some struggling scientists feel that if everybody understands the information as well as they, their prestige is thereby lowered. Many individuals are upset, evidently, by going “backwards” in a subject toward simplicity, and insist on going “forwards” toward incomprehensible complexity and confusion. This reaching back for earlier simplicities is, however, the direction that any seeker after truth must take. The moment earlier simplicity is reached, complex data falls apart and becomes simple.

Unfortunately, when people have been taught scholastically by authoritarian teaching methods—a mass of facts forced down the student’s throat on threat of failing—they find themselves confused when a new fundamental appears because they have to reevaluate everything they know about the subject. It took years to accumulate, memorize and study the ideas they’ve acquired, and just as it is difficult to coax people to give up some of their possessions, so it is very

---

1 **postulate**: a proposition or idea assumed as true for the purposes of further reasoning. Also, to assume (something) to be true, real or necessary, especially as a basis for reasoning; put something forth.

trying to them to be asked to give up some of their facts and ideas. Robbing a person of money is no more difficult than robbing a person of such a collection of ideas and facts.

A complicated mass of doctrine has made students who have learned it feel important. They have not tried to resolve problems with the newfound knowledge, but have assumed that they know all that is necessary to be known about the subject. A new simplicity is an attack upon this self-assuredness. They will resist.

Thus it is that progress in the field of physics or chemistry is met usually not with acclaim but with suspicion. What is acceptable to people is something within their frame of reference fitting a majority of their facts. Something which puts new facts into the field and removes old facts is usually combated.

In approaching the principles presented here, one should decide what one is trying to do with a student and evaluate all theory in this light. The information is not tender and fragile; it does not have to be approached with the awe and reverence which is demanded in some fields. All the information here, both theory and technique, should be submitted to these tests: Does it help teachers teach? Does it help students learn?

## TEACHING STUDENTS TO REASON

So we begin with a simplicity, which is the statement that education can lie along two lines: The first is to give students data. The second is to teach students to reason with the data they have.

Much modern education hardly recognizes the second method—developing the ability to reason in the student. When we ask why a person needs reason, we find that reason is the ability to extrapolate new data from the existing data. Knowing “all there is to know” about a subject is not enough. The individual must have the ability to know, as the necessity arises, the things that are not known by extrapolating them from the data that is known.

There is a difference between memorizing and reasoning. Knowledge is more than data; it is also the ability to draw conclusions.

It takes brilliant reasoning power to be happy in this world. If all children were taught to *reason* as they learned a few facts, they would have what nature intended them to have, a better castle for their defense.

## SELF-DETERMINISM DEFINED

In order to discuss reason, we first need to define the word self-determinism.

Self-determinism refers to one's ability to direct oneself. A self-determined person can reason things out and make good decisions about what to do rather than just react. When one is self-determined, one is not merely a puppet dancing on the strings of the environment; one can control oneself or, when appropriate, choose to accept control from another.

As a note, when we say control, we simply mean willingness and ability to start, change and stop one's activities, body and environment. However, you are stating a greater truth when you say that control is *predictable change* because start and stop are necessary to change. You might say the thinking or philosophic definition of control would be predictable change.

We all strive to be as self-determined as possible.

Self-determinism is sometimes confused with refusal to cooperate or willfulness in non-survival directions. There is a difference between self-determinism and what we might call "selfish determination" where an individual acts only in terms of his or her own irrational desires with no broader view. As self-determinism increases, an individual increasingly uses the data available to think about the effects of an action on self and others, reasoning and directing self rationally toward beneficial goals.

## SELF-DETERMINISM AND REASON

Reason, the ability to extrapolate, goes hand-in-glove with self-determinism. As soon as individuals feel that they have a right to reason, to extrapolate from data, they will do so. As this right to reason is inhibited, self-determinism is inhibited in direct ratio. As self-determinism is inhibited, not only do they feel they have

no right to move where they wish or do what they wish, but they feel that they cannot use the data they observe.

To increase a person's self-determinism is to increase the person's ability to reason. They are almost the same thing.

A student whose self-determinism has markedly improved but who has not learned "all the information" of his or her schooling is a worthy result. A student who has learned "all the information" but experienced a reduction in self-determinism is an unworthy result.

### ADAPTING THE ENVIRONMENT VERSUS ADAPTING TO IT

It is unfortunate that many schools of thought propagate the theory that the purpose of human life is to adapt and that the person who does not is maladaptive<sup>2</sup>.

Human life does not seem to know that it is supposed to adapt to the environment: it keeps trying to adapt the environment to itself! The quickest way to estimate the survival potential of an individual is by that individual's relationship with the environment: Are they adapting it or adapting to it?

In order to survive, an organism must be more than an object, it must have the force of life in it. It must be a causative agent. Individuals who can reason can change their environment. If they cannot reason, they cannot change their environment.

The better individuals can reason, the better they can improve their survival potential in their own environment. If one wanted to control human beings like animals, or objects, one would only need to convince them that they have no need to use reason, that they only have to adjust to their environment. The essential difference between an object and a successful organism is the ability to reason, the ability to keep the environment under control and adjust the environment to self.

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2 **maladaptive**: showing inadequate adjustment to the situation or environment.

## INTERRUPTION OF SELF-DETERMINISM

Any education which is done on an authoritarian basis is an effort to control and dominate the student. It may succeed in something but not in increasing the ability of the student to reason.

How would one go about destroying the ability to reason? It would be by prohibiting students from reaching their own conclusions. It would be by inhibiting them from acting upon their own data and causing them to act upon arbitrary data which is forced upon them. The result is confusion and indecision, a condition in which the student can be taken control of and directed by another person for that person's own ends. The less self-determined people are, the more they can be controlled against their rational will by others in their vicinity.

In training a dog, a person extends his or her own influence over the dog, and the dog becomes merely an extension of the person. The dog accepts its subordinate and dependent position, its dog's life. A cat or a human being will not accept such a position. A cat is an independent hunter and must make its own decisions. If children are trained in such a way that much of their self-determinism is interrupted, they will not be successful human beings. They will not even be acceptable to the people who were so careful to train them into this apathy.

Human beings cannot be trained successfully like dogs, no matter how many authoritarians there are in the world who think they can be or should be. A human being who is trained in an authoritarian manner will either succumb or retaliate. The trainer will have either a case of complete apathy to deal with or an angry rebel or, worse yet, a covertly hostile rebel.

*Human beings have to be reached with reason.*

To make people irrational it is only necessary, then, to interrupt their reasoning process and force arbitrary conclusions on them. They are then owned and must be moved and motivated by their "owner" to survive. If not so moved and motivated, once their ability to reason has been interrupted, they will not survive. Parents who train their child this way are training the child *not to survive*.

## EMOTIONAL TONE OF EDUCATION

It will be of interest to the educator that education has its own position on the emotional tone scale<sup>3</sup> and will therefore raise and lower an individual in emotional tone.

Education designed to inhibit and restrain, to create conformity in the individual to the social order,<sup>4</sup> has the unfortunate effect of reducing the individual in emotional tone. This would be authoritarian education and would be from antagonism down.

Education which invites and stimulates reason and seeks to accelerate the individual toward a successful and happy level of existence and has enough faith in individuals to assume the good usage of the education, raises the individual in emotional tone.

One can, by reviewing the education of any individual, discover much supportive evidence for this, since it will be found that those subjects in which the individual is able will be those which were taught by methods above the tone of antagonism. And those subjects in which the individual is poor, lacking accuracy or self-determinism and failing in the ability to reason with them, were taught by methods which would be found from antagonism down on the tone scale.

As a society declines, it more and more resorts to authoritarian teaching and attempts increasingly to impress upon individuals that they must adjust to their environment and that they cannot adjust their environment to them. The educational process becomes one of semihypnotically receiving doughy masses of data and regurgitating them upon examination papers. Reason and self-determinism are all but forbidden.

3 **emotional tone scale:** (also *tone scale*) a scale of emotional tones (levels) ranging from the highest to the lowest. These are in part: enthusiasm, cheerfulness, conservatism, contented, boredom, antagonism, anger, fear, grief, apathy. This scale can be found in chapter 22.

4 **social order:** the institutions, customs and social structures of a given society, particularly in the sense of protecting and preserving a way of life.

## CONCLUSION

Successful living depends basically upon a person's ability to reason. A person's best weapon is knowledge.

Any new discovery or simplification is valid and useful directly in ratio to its enlargement of one's ability to reason with the knowledge one has.

For this increases the person's self-determinism.

And that is the goal.



# Solutions

## WILLINGNESS TO LEARN

The self-determinism of the individual must, above all things, be left as intact as possible. The student should not be asked to work or study because somebody else decrees it. The moment exterior force is applied, the student combats that force and is distracted from the principal purpose, in education, of learning.

If the individual is unwilling to follow a vital course of study, the error does not lie with the individual. A child or an adult is thirsty for knowledge. A person will drink knowledge at great gulps. The unwillingness stems from (a) a failure to observe the necessity or use of the course or (b) mental blocks against studying that thing or that course. The moment the necessity of the learning is realized the student will pour in wattage on the subject. In a very young child little can be done about the mental blocks, but much can be done in changing the method of address to the subject so that it does not cause a reaction; i.e., if a child will not “set the table” try “lay out the plates.”

## EXERCISING THE MIND—THE IMPORTANCE OF GOALS

All training must have first a goal. Unless the student understands the purpose thoroughly and the intended use of the information, the data is unaligned and therefore relatively useless. True, an individual reevaluates data when a new purpose is at hand and will align data after it was received. But the delivery of data without first giving the purpose fails because the recipient of the information, having no assigned use for it, is much less interested in it than he or she would be and so does not compute with it, only records it. Thus the process is one of memory, and the mind is not exercised into deriving new data from the information it receives.

The actual training of an individual is an automatic process so long as purpose and use precede information. The individual's mind is busied in weighting values and doing computations to derive new data and when it fails by one method of computation it will learn or discover another one to make up the lack.

As with muscles, from the youngest infancy to death, the mind must be active, and it is active so long as it has goals. An individual uses his or her mind to accomplish something in the desire to enjoy it and then contemplates the accomplishment for a breath of space and unless there is an immediate new goal, becomes dissatisfied. Happiness can be considered the act of accomplishing, over not unknowable obstacles, new goals. Happiness is not the goal. It is the act of reaching toward and progressing toward the goal. It lies, in the briefest instant, in contemplating the accomplished. It lies for a brief time in contemplating what is to be accomplished before beginning upon it, but the main body of it lies in the field of active endeavor.

Whether one is teaching someone to eat with a fork or training someone in calculus, the principles are the same. There must be a good reason, first, before the person will use the fork and the person must understand that reason. There must be an equally good reason and use for calculus *as calculus*, not a grade or degree, before the person can be expected to derive much from it.

## TEACHING THE STUDENT TO THINK WITH AND USE THE INFORMATION

How, in education itself, would we go about relaying information? Here we've got a complete problem of communication from beginning to end. It is not possible to relay to people data which they are going to use on any other level than a parity of levels.

You want data to get to people in such a way that they can get at it again, and if necessary, reevaluate it. In other words, you don't want data that would be hung up on the order of "You've got to believe this, and this is the way it is and it is this way because it is this way, and you're never going to be able to change your mind about it being this way, and it's going to be this way from here on out."

If a person was being educated in the field of engineering, for instance, and was unable to reevaluate all of this information, then fifteen years from now this person would be lucky to hold on with these young whippersnappers coming in who have more data, newer data.

So our problem then is to teach people to derive from the information we're teaching them the future information they will need, to give them information in a state where it can be reevaluated at any time, and to keep uninhibited their individual purposes and interests with regard to that information so that they can think with and use it.

## COMPARISON TO THE REAL WORLD

Which leads us to another factor: The education which a person is receiving must have been consistently compared, step by step, to the known world. You can't step into an abstract in education and never compare it to things which can be actually sensed, measured or experienced.

In other words, education would not best be conducted in a school where the real world was very far away indeed.

An engineering education would probably best be conducted by engineers in the process of engineering. If you want to teach a person to build bridges, it would be all very well that he or she has the basic fundamentals of those textbooks—they contain a lot of fine information. But let's also see him or her out there walking around with people who build bridges.

I one time encountered somebody teaching calculus in this abstract, purposeless fashion. It didn't say in the textbook what you used calculus for. The instructor didn't say what calculus was or what it was for, and I noticed that everybody in this class—it was my calculus class, by the way—was just studying away and they were differentiating<sup>1</sup> and they were integrating and, boy, they were having a fine time. I sat back and wasted about two weeks. I was trying to figure out what you did with calculus before I let myself open to a barrage of calculus.

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1 **differentiating/integrating:** terms used in calculus, which measures motion, change (differentiating) and accumulation (integrating).

I asked the instructor two or three times and he looked embarrassed and looked away hurriedly. It suddenly came to me that he didn't know too well either. He was a mathematician but he had never been through engineering, so he didn't know how an engineer used calculus. I finally found a little book by a fellow named Thompson,<sup>2</sup> and it started out with an example of what you did with calculus. I looked this and other things over for a while and then was perfectly willing to get down and study calculus.

## DEFINING THE PURPOSE OF THE SUBJECT

The defined purpose then becomes a very important factor in education: “What is this information going to do for me in my business of survival? What sector does it cover? How important is it?”

And the individual has a right to look it all over, and when done, be able to say, “That doesn't look important to me,” and after that leave it alone. Because there is no reason to try to force pieces of information into heads that are not going to do anything with them. And if they don't know what it's for, they're not going to do anything with it.

## TEACHING WITH PARITY

How *should* students be taught so they can absorb information and learn data for their own use?

They should be taught on a parity basis, where *parity* refers to two or more people or things being on an equal level. In other words, “this is between friends,” something like that—between acquaintances, fellows, teammates, where the teacher is not some “great authority” to be worshiped or feared and does not talk down to students, but is essentially on an equal level with the student, where the student feels comfortable approaching the teacher, questioning the data, and so on.

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2 **Thompson:** Silvanus Phillips Thompson (1851–1916), author of *Calculus Made Easy*.

## SAFEGUARDING THE STUDENT'S RIGHT TO THINK

The one thing that must be completely safeguarded in the human being in the process of education is that he or she must be permitted to think.

People can be taught the basic fundamentals of any subject.

And they can be taught to derive further information they may need on the subject.

And they should also be taught that they have a right to use this information, to think about it, figure out new things about it and execute with relationship to it.

If those things are safeguarded, you could then and only then call the person well educated.

## INTRODUCING THE IDEA OF AN EDUCATIONAL ETHIC<sup>3</sup>

So we get another point in education which is very important: In the process of education, those things which are not known exactly must be labeled as such. If it's an inexactly known subject, let's teach it as an inexactly known subject; i.e., let's tell the student we're teaching it as such.

That would be educational honesty and it is something which should be part of the educational ethic. And all of these points being stressed here as desirable would form, when amalgamated, an educational ethic. It could be considered astonishing how lacking our culture is in any agreed upon educational ethic along these lines.

After all, what is the responsibility of the teacher and the institution to the person who is being educated? The kingpin around an institution is the person who is being educated, not the person who is doing the educating.

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3 **ethic:** framework, system or set of principles concerning right and wrong, especially as accepted by an individual or a particular group; code of conduct.

## DON'T PENALIZE STUDENTS—HELP THEM

Reduction of altitude would include the idea that people don't feel they have to take data just because somebody said so. They take data if it makes *sense* to them when they compare it to the real world, if it makes their *thinking* clearer, if it makes things better for them.

But nothing should be forced off on the student—*nothing*.

Furthermore, if there are some misunderstandings, help students clear them up. Students should not be penalized for misunderstandings. In other words, don't give them trouble because they have the wrong answer—try to help them so they can get a right answer.

That's a big difference. That's a complete reversal on the examination system, isn't it?

## SUMMARY

The story of the growth of knowledge is the story of individuals, not the story of societies. Individuals make societies, societies only modify and moderate or warp individuals. All education is the education of individuals, not the education of the masses.

Pertinent to this last, in the days since Jefferson the theory has grown largely held that philosophers and conquerors came into being as products of an age and a society, and if one had not occupied their boots another would have done so. An examination of history disproves utterly such a tenet. Humankind goes on from the milestone of one individual to the milestone of the next. Human history is the track along which men and women, here and there, have been strong or brilliant and have changed the complexion of the road.

This tenet has colored all modern education, which then found an excuse to assembly-line individuals, making them conform like so many dolls.

Actually this piece of error, raising up a false standard of groupism, has through the policies of education spoiled perhaps thousands of individuals who would have been of considerable worth to the society. The paintings, plays, compositions

of music, cathedrals and states which might have been, had not bad education stepped in the way, are a real and not imaginary loss to humankind.

Aristotle was a great man, but scholasticism has bled our minds and drained our energies through the collapse of the Roman Empire, through the Dark Ages, through the American university and to the H-bomb.

An educational system which slaughters genuine capability has a wide effect. Social leveling to the arithmetic mean and to the mediocre sets up the sheep society as the model, and sheep can be stampeded because they are easily frightened and are not particularly rational. Only highly rational individuals who are the product of excellent individual educations can stay a stampede.

An educational program which begins with the child's parents, progresses through kindergarten and grade school, through high school and into college and preserves at every step the individuality, the native ambitions, intelligence, abilities and dynamics<sup>4</sup> of the individual, is the best bastion against not only mediocrity but any and all enemies of humankind.

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<sup>4</sup> See chapter 10, section "The Eight Dynamics."