



\* On Learning to Be—Variously \*

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Descriptive Abstract for:

Learning to Be—Variously

On Education, Individuality, and Schooling the Self  
in Pluralistically Egalitarian Culture

\* An Archetypal Analysis of Educating Individuality \*

**A Dialectic of Socialized and Individualized Identities**

This work investigates how concepts of individuality relate to those of education, schooling, and selfhood in a society overtly dedicated to pluralistic and egalitarian social values. Thus the first concern is seeking clear understanding of what concepts are associated with notions of education and schooling. Secondly a thorough reflection upon what constitutes the selfhood of ‘an individuated person’ is explored from various perspectives. Subsequently, individuality is elaborated as a status of ‘developed self-complexity’ that is resisted by both social conformity and a reflexively simplistic egoic ‘sense of self.’ Individuation does not appear to occur inherently nor simply as a matter of conscious choice. Individuals are thus understood to be ‘made’ rather than simply ‘happen.’ Persons must be educated to ‘know their selves’ as well as ‘posses specific knowledge’ in order to become autonomous individuals capable of contributing their particular qualities of intelligence and creativity to society.

Society that values individualism is thus confronted with a contradiction: it needs to conform persons to standards of identity and behavior in order to preserve its order. Yet if it is to promote individuation, it must condition persons to resist standardized conformity, as that is one of its basic values. Thus a primary importance emerges for the diversification of individual sense abilities and intelligences as the basis for developing more responsible citizenship in pluralistic society. However, it becomes clear in this analysis that formalized schooling tends to reflexively serve the purpose of conforming

persons to social standards more than foster a goal of developing individuality. An inherent conflict between educating individuality and schooling social conformity emerges as a primary concern for configuring educational practices. Acknowledging this intrinsic conundrum of education in a pluralistic society is posed as the basis for an ‘honest education.’ Educating individuality thus becomes an intricate interplay or dialectic of socialized and individualized identities.

This investigation of socialized identity versus individualized selfhood enables a radically complex perspective on educating. Concepts of individuality and egalitarian pluralism are related to primary established qualities of education, schooling, and economic society to reveal surprising complexities about their relations that are typically ignored. These are illustrated by developing contrasts between education described as ‘leading toward’ social conformity in contrast to that which ‘leads out’ individual character and intelligence. This examination shows how cultural values promoting the importance of individuality are frequently subverted by actual schooling practices.

### **The Roles of Reductive and Non-Reductive Understanding in Educating Individuality**

Understanding the conflict between hierarchical, mechanistic aspects of social order in modernity and egalitarian pluralism provides the background for understanding how individuality and social diversity are repressed by systematic schooling practices. Foregrounding awareness of how contrasts between reductive and non-reductive understanding configure basic attitudes of Western thought emerges as crucial to educating individuality. Attention to the interplay of idealistically reductive and non-reductively analytical methods in Western intellectual history provides insight into how educational processes and expectations have evolved—often in unacknowledged ways. An intrinsic bias for reductive understanding that resists individualizing thought is associated with the pervasive influences of systematic, mechanistic orders in religion, social philosophy, science, technology, and economics. The ways in which these factors have influenced the formalization of schooling in Western societies thus becomes an essential concern for anyone seeking to promote individuality and intelligently autonomous citizenship capable of establishing pluralistically egalitarian society.

These issues are eventually contexted here in relation to notions of a shift from modernist intentions to seek an ‘ideally organized society,’ based on economic efficiency, toward accepting concepts of a more radically complicated, discontinuous context of post-modern relations with self and others. Considerations of such a historical and cultural shift indicate the value of poststructuralist-style critiques of the status of

knowledge, truth, identity as a philosophical basis for educating genuinely autonomous individuals capable of forming conscious bonds in commitment to a pluralistic social order.

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