What drives people to gather knowledge and become better educated? It is my belief that a person learns in stages that correlate to how the person makes choices. I have also determined that a person cannot efficiently learn a subject until they have achieved a state of flow i.e. a zen like trance that severs the ties to time itself. Today the study of epistemology tries to better understand how people seek knowledge. This process is commonly referred to as learning, but before we can understand how people learn, the question of why people learn must be answered.

Education starts first with motivation. But what motivates people? This is the essence of why people choose to learn. Daniel H. Pink wrote a book in 2009 called Drive, which picked apart the concept of motivation. Written from an economic (The study of choice) point of view, Pink determined that the status quo perception of what motivates people is broken, or rather, dated. Pink determined that our society has moved on to a new kind of motivation. Previous forms of motivation, which Pink calls Motivation 1.0 and 2.0, have lost meaning as society has evolved. Motivation 1.0 is what first drives people, that is to attain the necessities; food, work, and shelter. Motivation 2.0 is what Pink refers to as the carrot and the stick. In other words intrinsic things like money (the carrot) and negative reinforcement like being fired (the stick) drive people to act a certain way or do certain things. But today, we are moving on to Motivation 3.0, which is motivation to attain purpose. Pink sums up his view twitter style in 140 characters “Carrots & Sticks are so last Century. Drive says for 21st century work, we need to upgrade to autonomy, mastery, and purpose.”

The three incarnations of motivation match up perfectly with the three main educational theories of behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism. Motivation 1.0 deals with the basics and natural behavior of how we learn to survive as human beings; the primary parts of behaviorism. Motivation 2.0 deals with how we think and what we determine to have value on a mental level, which is the meat of cognitivism. Only after we have learned how to survive and how to determine value in things can we branch out to find our purpose. This cumulmatitng drive is Motivation 3.0, creating the purpose for the world around us, also known as constructivism.

Reaching Motivation 3.0 from an educational point of view is the best way to learn a subject. However to reach that point, one must achieve Motivation 1.0 and 2.0 first. Motivating the student to learn the basics of the subject first so that they can begin to explore and grasp more advanced concepts. Once a foundation is established in the subject, the next goal is to begin to motivate the learner to learn on their own. At first, the learner needs to be given incentives to learn, but once they reach a certain point, they will begin to motivate themselves to learn the subject; reaching a state of educational autonomy. Once the learner has both a foundation and a self sustaining thirst to learn, they will be able to reach Motivation 3.0, finding their own purpose for the subject.

Achieving Motivation 3.0 may seem like a hard and long process, and it was until recently. Today, the thought process of how people think is changing. As we understand more of why people learn, we are able to distinguish when and how we learn the best. This has led to the newest learning theory concept of flow. Flow occurs when a learner reaches a point of euphoric concentration, and a lost sense of time. This will happen when the learner realizes the purpose of the subject and strives to reach that purpose.

Flow is not strictly a modern occurrence however. There are tales of some of the most influential contributors working days at a time without stopping. Their only reward as well as motivation was the sense of purpose and mastery. Today, flow is easily achieved while playing an engaging video game. They only incentive in a video game is to beat the game; you do not get money, or any other reward. Only the satisfaction of completing and learning the game. This purpose and mastery is Motivation 3.0. If instruction that can be designed to induce flow in multiple learners, then the material will have reached the epitome of teaching ability.