

TRUE EDUCATION

An Oration

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From "A New Philosophy of Service," commencement Address at Rutgers University, 1947.
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Education is not measured by the number of years spent in school. Not by the courses completed. Nor by the credits acquired. Education begins at the cradle and is still incomplete at the grave.

There are more significant marks of an educated man than the diplomas and degrees he holds. True education is measured by four distinctive characteristics.

First, an educated man is distinguished by his open-mindedness. The ignorant man closes his mind, and thus shuts out much more than he shuts in.

In a world of constant change, only the open-minded person can keep abreast of the march of time. The open-minded man goes on learning. Education never ceases so long as the mind is open. The curtain of further enlightenment falls the moment self-satisfaction closes the mind. Schooling has failed if it has not opened the mind to the satisfactions and delights of never-ending quest for new knowledge and truth.

The second mark of an educated man is his tolerance.

The snobbery of race, creed, nationality or collegiate degree has no place in the qualities of a truly educated man.

An educated man appraises an idea for its truth, regardless of the source of the idea. A wise man has said that "most people, when they think they are thinking, are merely rearranging their prejudices."

In a world that is filled with intolerance, educated people must set an example of tolerance. Blind adherence to tradition, to prejudices and to selfish feelings will never make a better world.

The third mark of an educated man is his fidelity to truth.

A truly educated man is not swept off balance by appeals to emotions, selfish interests, or class-consciousness. He develops convictions based upon facts and straight thinking. He sees through the protestations of selfish groups, parties and organizations.

An educated man disciplines himself to the rule of deciding and acting on the basis of "what's right, not who's right."

The fourth mark of an educated man is a highly developed sense of his social responsibility.

Those who have been more fortunate in the acquisition of knowledge and skills have a higher responsibility for leadership--a higher obligation to serve society.

Civilization cannot rise above the caliber of its leadership. No matter how much technical knowledge a man may acquire, if he does not use this knowledge for purposes that serve society, his so-called education may be a menace rather than a good. Mere technical and scientific education reached its highest levels in Germany. But, it was unbalanced education, because it lacked the sense of social responsibility. Knowledge can be dangerous in the mind which disregards its obligations to society.

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