Critical Analysis Of Articles Written By David Foster Wallace And Mark Edmundson

In “Who Are You and What Are You Doing Here” written by Mark Edmunson, the purpose of education is discussed as the idea that education is something worth fighting for. Edmunson proposes that it is the student’s responsibility to work hard for the pursuit of an education that is meaningful to them. Higher education is not something to be taken lightly. Edmunson talks about how most students only come for things like the social aspect, or just so they can get a high paying job later on. These students do not see the importance of higher education as they go through it not paying attention to what it can really teach them. Students that do care, and find what they are passionate about must study to fully understand the interests and the concerns that come with it. Students that work hard for an education that reflects their interests see how the importance of becoming who they can and want to be is far more important than getting a degree that will provide wealth. Edmunson talked about this in a story with his father. At the start of his college career, his father encouraged to use the one time he has in college to study something that he was interested in. “Education is about finding out what form of work for you is close to being play- work you do so easily that it restores you as you go” (Edmunson 31) I like this quote because as a future primary teacher, I am working towards a degree I know will not make me wealthy, but I am doing it because I am passionate about the education of young children. Edmunson’s essay was very thought-provoking and inspiring for me to really consider what the purpose of furthering my education is. Students that work hard to study their passion and interests will succeed far more than those who are after a different definition of success.

David Foster Wallace who wrote “In His Own Words” discusses his idea that how we think shapes our worldview. The way a person thinks can have the biggest effect on how they live their life. Higher education should teach students how to think and change their thinking. Through this, and experiencing the freedom to think and choose what to think, a person can change their own perspective of the world as well as that of others around them. This results in freedom. “That is real freedom. That is being educated, and understanding how to think” (Wallace 21). Living in the “natural default setting” Wallace talks about, people unconsciously do and think what is expected of them and don’t often learn from and experience the world in a free and true way. People do need to learn to think, and it should be up to higher education to help people apply this to their lives. Understanding how to control what one thinks leads to learning how to think. Practicing this opens up different possibilities for a person. Wallace feels that true education is more about learning to guide one's thoughts and being aware of the world than learning facts and academic knowledge.

Works Cited

1. Edmunson, Mark. “Who are you and What Are You Doing Here?” Writing on the River, Chattanooga State Community College, Fountainhead Press, 2016, pp. 23-32
2. Wallace, David. “David Foster Wallace: In His Own Words.” Writing on the River, Chattanooga State Community College, Fountainhead Press, 2016, pp. 15-22