The Purpose of Education

This essay, written sometime during King's junior year at Morehouse, may be an early draft of the article of the same name published in the Maroon Tiger. He suggests that education should not only "teach man to think intensively" but also provide "worthy objectives upon which to concentrate."

Last week we attempted to discuss the purpose of religion. This week our attention moves toward education. I will attempt to answer the question, what is the purpose of education?

To my mind, education has a two-fold function in society. On the one hand it should discipline the mind for sustained and persistent speculation. On the other hand it should integrate human life around central, focusing ideals. It is a tragedy that the latter is often neglected in our educational system.

Education should equip us with the power to think effectively and objectively. To think is one of the hardest things in the world, and to think objectively is still harder. Yet this is the job of education. Education should cause us to rise beyond the horizon of legions of half truth, prejudices and propaganda. Education should enable us to "weigh and consider," to discern the true from the false, the relevant from the irrelevant, and the real from the unreal. The first function of education, therefore, is to teach man to think intensively. But this is not the whole of education. If education stops here it can be the most dangerous force in society. Some of the greatest criminals in society have been men {who} possessed the power of concentration and reason, but they had no morals. Perhaps the most dangerous periods in civilization have been those periods when there was no moral foundation in society.

Education without morals is like a ship without a compass, merely wandering nowhere. It is not enough to have the power of concentration, but we must have worthy objectives upon which to concentrate. It is not enough to know truth, but we must love truth and sacrifice for it.

ADS. MLKP-MBU: Box 118, folder 6.