What Does It Mean to Be Well-Educated? (**)


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The standard retort from the "bunch o' facts" contingent is that no one thinks in a vacuum, that cognitive skills are necessarily employed with respect to particular items of knowledge. You need facts to analyze, a storehouse of information on which to base inferences, and so on. Moreover, the value of knowing a certain body of information is ineluctably rooted in time and place. It is misleading and even dangerous to justify our own pedagogical values by pretending they are grounded in some objective, transcendent Truth, as though the quality of being well-educated is a Platonic form waiting to be discovered. In any case, no single test is sufficiently valid, reliable, or meaningful that it can be treated as a marker for academic success.

Regarding the question of the relationship between knowledge and wisdom, it may be that "well-educated" people know a lot, but wise people have learned to understand the limitations of their knowledge. For example, one could argue that wisdom is the ability to recognize when one does not know something, whereas "knowledge" is the ability to identify the limit of what is known. Wisdom, therefore, would involve the recognition of the limits of knowledge and the ability to admit ignorance.

In conclusion, the concept of well-educated is complex and multifaceted, and the definition of education is subject to change over time and across cultures. The ideal of well-educated is to be a lifelong learner, someone who is open to new ideas and willing to challenge their own assumptions. The pursuit of knowledge is important, but the process of learning and questioning is equally important. The goal of education is not just to accumulate knowledge, but to develop critical thinking skills and the ability to apply that knowledge in a meaningful way to the world around us.