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Drew Gilpin Faust uses the term “myopic” to describe American education today. Myopic meaning nearsightedness and/or narrow minded thinking. Faust and others believe that higher education and society currently fail to provide younger generations with full educations and experiences that teach students to question practices, find meaning in life as well as learn for personal growth not just training for job or career. In her article The University’s Crisis of Purpose, Faust writes “Human beings need meaning, understanding and perspective as well as jobs”. Two men seem to agree with Faust that American education (and American workers) has become myopic, but have differing views on what should be done to create a more “whole” education for everyone.

Anthony Kronman believes that it is up to colleges and universities to reexamine how and what they teach. In the article, Why are we here? Kronman writes “In a shift of historic importance, America’s colleges and universities have largely abandoned the idea that life’s most important question is an appropriate subject for the classroom. In doing so, they have betrayed their students by depriving them of the chance to explore it in an organized way, before they are caught up in their careers and preoccupied with the urgent business of living itself”. Kronman believes that colleges and universities need to offer and possibly mandate classes the push students to think about, reflect and question the meaning of life. Kronman writes, “The question of life’s meaning is a worry of the spirit. Our colleges and universities need to reclaim their authority to speak on the subject, in a conversation broader than any church alone can conduct”. In short Kronman believes that it is the responsibility of higher education to force students to ask hard questions about life, reflect on what they believe and don’t believe and attempt to find life’s meaning.

Matthew Crawford suggests that young people are almost forced into believing that they must go to college and hold a degree to find success and be happy. Crawford suggest that instead of as a society pushing young people straight into college we (society) give them time to live, work and experience both success and failure in life. Crawford believes that people need to “get their hands dirty” in both life and a job. Through these experiences some people may find that a career that requires a degree is what is right for them and fulfilling to them while others may find a job that is fulfilling to them and inspires them without a degree. Either way less people would be pursuing a degree just to have one and more people would be learning valuable lessons from life, about life that cannot be learned in a classroom. Whereas Kronman believes higher education and self reflection can lead to one wanting to learn more and question more, Crawford believes that a person must find something that inspires him or pulls him to learn more, question more and experience more.

While both men present grand ideas on how to help younger generations gain an education not just for a job, but for the pursuit of building upon oneself; neither man’s ideas solve the problem of what Faust refers to as “myopic” education. While Kronman’s theory may speak to one group of individuals, Crawford’s surely speaks to another. When society begins to encourage lifelong learning and learning in a way that is meaningful to the individual and not just the career market, society as a whole will benefit. Combined Kronman and Crawfords ideas as well a more open minded society about what education is, are key to helping society learn for a job or from a job, but also to find peace, happiness and be a productive member of society who continues to use learning throughout life. If this happens society as a whole will benefit.