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Danielle Allen

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American education as we know it today—guaranteed by the state to serve every child in the country—is still less than a hundred years old. It's no wonder we haven't agreed yet as to exactly what role education should play in our society. In these Tanner Lectures, Danielle Allen brings us much closer, examining the ideological impasse between vocational and humanistic approaches that has plagued educational discourse, offering a compelling proposal to finally resolve the dispute.

Allen argues that education plays a crucial role in the cultivation of political and social equality and economic fairness, but that we have lost sight of exactly what that role is and should be. Drawing on thinkers such as John Rawls and Hannah Arendt, she sketches out a humanistic baseline that re-links education to equality, showing how doing so can help us reframe policy questions. From there, she turns to civic education, showing that we must reorient education's trajectory toward readying students for lives as democratic citizens. Deepened by commentaries from leading thinkers Tommie Shelby, Marcelo Suárez-Orozco, Michael Rebell, and Quiara Alegría Hudes that touch on issues ranging from globalization to law to linguistic empowerment, this book offers a critical clarification of just how important education is to democratic life, as well as a stirring defense of the humanities.

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