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Class: Critical Thinking

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**Part One**

**Take more time to introduce your topic at the start; that will give you a more complete introduction.**

The author claimed on the 17th and 18th paragraphs of his article, “The Disadvantages of an Elite Education.” [capitalize the main words in a title] that elite education creates numerous opportunities for their students and graduates, including the opportunity to be rich, while shutting down another, which is the “opportunity not to be rich”. In other words Deresiewicz claims that the opportunity “Not to be rich” is the best opportunity a student can have because it gives them the options and ability to successfully engage in any career they like without any doubts, and that, is the opportunity elite schools fails to give their students. The author backed his claim by using good evidences, Reasoning, and language to convince his audience. [Is this Deresiewicz’s main conclusion in his essay? What are the other primary ‘disadvantages’ he sees in an elite education?]

**Conclusion and Evidence:**

In the 17th and 18th paragraph of the article, the author argued that elite education shuts down a student’s opportunity not to be rich. He backed his claim by using careers such as, school teacher, community organizer, civil rights lawyer and artist jobs which elite students considers to be decent wage jobs that’s beneath their standard of education, as evidence to show how people in these fields (decent paying jobs) live happy and comfortable lives even if they have to sacrifice, “*to live in an ordinary house instead of an apartment in Manhattan or a mansion in L.A.; you have to drive a Honda instead of a BMW or a Hummer; you have to vacation in Florida instead of Barbados or Paris,”* (Deresiewicz, paragraph 17) The author compared the extravagant lifestyle that these careers (Big paying jobs) give, to the decent lifestyle that careers such as teaching gives, as evidence to show how people with decent wage jobs can still engage in the same activities that rich people engage in. This Deresiewicz’s way of using evidence and examples to inform elite students and graduates that decent paying jobs can give them a very comfortable life, and support his claims that reads, “Yet the opportunity not to be rich is one of the greatest opportunities with which young Americans have been blessed.” [Hmmm . . . but has Deresiewicz proven that teachers or community organizers can actually afford Hondas and Florida vacations? And has he proven that students at elite universities actually think these jobs are beneath them?]

The author made another argument that, “the opportunity not to be rich is one of the greatest opportunities with which young Americans have been blessed.” The author backed this argument by using evidence such as the wealth of the U.S and how, “it can afford to provide a decent living to whole classes of people.” In other words, the author’s evidence shows that the U.S is wealthy enough to provide jobs with decent wages to their citizens regardless of class, meaning you don’t have to be rich to be comfortable and happy in the U.S. [I’m not clear what evidence Deresiewicz has provided on this point] Another evidence the author used to back his claim can be seen in his statement, “to live in an ordinary house instead of an apartment in Manhattan or a mansion in L.A.; you have to drive a Honda instead of a BMW or a Hummer; you have to vacation in Florida instead of Barbados or Paris,” (Deresiewicz, paragraph 17) The evidence in the statement is that, even without being rich one can still engage in the same activities rich people engage in, but maybe not as extravagant. [awkward to discuss this quote twice in two different paragraphs]

**Reasoning and Language:**

In the 17th and 18th paragraph of Deresiewicz article, the author explained how and why elite-schools shut down their students opportunity not to be rich, and how the opportunity not to be rich, “is one of the best opportunities young Americans are blessed with. These two conclusions is a revelation of the author’s ability to use ideas conceived from the process of thinking critically of how to justify his claims and convince his audience, using reasons. For example the author’s first conclusions reads, “An elite education gives you the chance to be rich—which is, after all, what we’re talking about—but it takes away the chance not to be.” Right after the first conclusion, he added the second conclusion, “Yet the opportunity not to be rich is one of the greatest opportunities with which young Americans have been blessed.” This second conclusion in addition to the examples he used is a logical way of justifying his claims and telling his audience that elite education gives you the opportunity to be rich but shut down the opportunity for them to live decent lives, which he describes as the opportunity not to be rich. [This is definitely what Deresiewicz wants to tell us, but how is he attempting to prove this conclusion is true and correct?]

Another great use of the author’s thought process can be seen on the 18th paragraph of his article. The author used several questions and language as reasons to convince his audience of his claims. For example, he reads,

*“How can I be a schoolteacher—wouldn’t that be a waste of my expensive education? Wouldn’t I be squandering the opportunities my parents worked so hard to provide? What will my friends think? How will I face my classmates at our 20th reunion, when they’re all rich lawyers or important people in New York? (Deresiewicz, 18th paragraph)*

The great thing about the author’s way of thinking, in an effort to convince his audience, is that, he used language with the tone of doubt in his questions, to show the fear that prevents elite students from taking decent jobs such as teaching. [Ah – good. Here you’re analyzing how Deresiewicz is attempting to persuade his reader.] The fear of wasting an Ivy League education on a teaching job and the fear of taking a job that is less respectful compared to friends that have high respected jobs are reasons why elite educated students refuse jobs with decent pays, such as a school teacher. These fears close a whole universe of opportunities, and they miss their true calling. In other words, the author is saying that, even if these students want to take decent paying jobs, they can’t, because of the fear of what people will think or say about them, this is why the author said, “Universe of opportunities closes,” and they miss their, “True calling.” The author’s ability to use language and questions as reasons to convince his audience of his claims, shows that the author applied a great deal of thoughts before deciding on the right question, words, language and emotion to use, in an effort to appeal to, and convince his audience.

The author made good use of language using reasons to appeal to his reader’s emotion by saying; one can be a school teacher, a community organizer, a civil rights lawyer or an artist and still live a very comfortable happy life. The language used in this statement, is a brilliant thought process, Deresiewicz used to expose and convince elite students (audiences) that jobs such as teaching and community organizing can provide decent wages and living. [I’m not sure how Deresiewicz would be convincing these students simply by telling them that he thinks this is true.] The statement is also a logical strategy Deresiewicz is using to appeal to the emotions of non-elite students (audiences) letting them know that they are blessed with the opportunity and ability to accept these jobs without any fear of what friends will say. The author did an amazing job using language and reasons to appeal to the emotions of all types of audiences, because his thoughts and statements are well organized in such a way that it’s a win-win for anyone that reads it, be a school teacher, an elite student/graduate or a non-elite student/graduate, parents, or a non-educated individual, there is something positive for everyone to take away from the 17th and 18th paragraph, as well as the whole entire article.

Part Two

My main reason for pursuing a college degree is to be able to learn skills required to secure a good job after graduation. My decision to attend college came from the experience I had working as a receptionist at a doctor’s office. Making minimum wage was good enough for me at the time, until I became friends with a guy that works in the IT department. Becoming friends with the IT guy exposed me to his lifestyle, that is, becoming his friend gave me the opportunity to learn that he was making three times what I earn, and he seemed to live a very comfortable life. After learning that his skills and his college degree was the reason why he earned more money, I decided to enroll into college, with the hope of learning the skills required to earn more money in the future. When I saw Deresiewicz’s topic, “The disadvantages of an elite-education,” I became very curious to know why an elite education would have any disadvantage not to mention disadvantages, because I always thought that elite students are blessed with all the opportunity a higher education can give.

When I started reading Deresiewicz’s article, I read it from the view that students that went to elite schools get better jobs than non-elite schools and they live a richer and happier life. I also read this article from the view that Ivy League students have more career opportunities than someone like me who went to a non-Ivy League school, but my curiosity of why an elite school would have disadvantages persisted until I got to the 17th and 18th paragraph of Deresiewicz’s article, I began to appreciate the opportunities I have as a non-elite student. The opportunity not to be rich whom I as a non-elite student have taken for granted, is what Deresiewicz called one of the disadvantages of an elite education. [good – so part of Deresiewicz ‘s argument changed the way you think about your own educational opportunities] For example, Deresiewicz, changed the lens, I brought to this article, when he asked,

“How can I be a schoolteacher—wouldn’t that be a waste of my expensive education? Wouldn’t I be squandering the opportunities my parents worked so hard to provide? What will my friends think? How will I face my classmates at our 20th reunion, when they’re all rich lawyers or important people in New York? And the question that lies behind all these: Isn’t it beneath me? So a whole universe of possibility closes, and you miss your true calling.” (Deresiewicz, 17th paragraph)

After reading the above statements, I started to realize that my experience as a non-elite student have not led me into such thoughts, because my aim for going to school is to learn skills that will help me earn decent wage, and not to worry of what my friends will think of me if I become a helpdesk technician or search for jobs that only matches up to my elite education standards. After reading Deresiewicz’s statement I began to appreciate the opportunities I have as student of a non-elite school, which is the freedom of the mind to engage in any decent paying career I choose without the mental restrictions elite students have in terms of the freedom of spreading their career options regardless of the income.

In conclusion, the view I held about pursuing a higher education, which is earning decent pay with an IT career, did not change after reading Deresiewicz’s article, as a matter of fact it reinforced my goals to earn a degree from the school I’m enrolled regardless of its Ivy League status. The only way the article affected my view on non-Ivy League school is that, it helped me realize the opportunities I have taken for granted as a student of a non-Ivy League school, an institution where minds are built not careers, where opportunities and freedom to work in any field and be contented without any regrets, is given, and where the ability to communicate with anyone regardless of class is taught.

Emeka,

I think you may have slightly misunderstood this assignment, and I’d like to give you the opportunity to revise this project before I grade it. After you read my comments, send me an email and we can discuss.

You did give your project a focus – but too narrow a focus. You only wrote about two paragraphs of the text and only one of Deresiewicz’s conclusions (and not one of his main conclusions). As a result, part I of your project becomes repetitive, and that makes it very hard to demonstrate what actual evidence Deresiewicz provides for his point.

Expand your focus a bit. What are the main conclusions Deresiewicz argues for in the essay as a whole? What does he believe are the main disadvantages of an elite education? State his conclusions, and then analyze 2 or 3 ways he tries to support those conclusions. That will allow you to analyze more than one passage from the article, and that will lead you to a more complete and specific analysis of Deresiewicz’s argument.

I’m willing to grade this version, but I’d like to give you the opportunity to revise the project first if you like. Send me an email and we can discuss.

Grade = possible revision