



ADVANCE SHEET– AUGUST 21, 2020

President's Letter

In this issue, we attempt to provide some perspective on recent civil disturbances by recalling some of the reactions to the disruptions of 1968.

The young historian John T. Taft in his book *May Day at Yale: A Case Study in Student Radicalism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1976) had nothing good to say about the protagonists at Yale or the university administration except for some kind words about a black moderate, the young Kurt Schmoke.

The University of Chicago's President Edward Levi, later Attorney General of the United States, spoke about college disorders and their causes in a speech entitled "Values in Society: Universities and the Law" delivered to the American Law Institute in May 1969. The speech appears together with other talks from the same period in *Point of View: Talks on Education* (Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1969). It may also be found in the A.L.I. Proceedings for 1969.

The diplomat and scholar George F. Kennan wrote an article entitled "Rebels Without a Program" which appeared in the New York Times Magazine for January 21, 1968, which appears here. It called forth a barrage of letters from critics and commentators, 39 of which, together with a reply by Kennan, were included in G. Kennan, et al, *Democracy and the Student Left* (Boston: Little Brown, 1968). The first part of Kennan's reply with its trenchant observations on civil rights is reproduced here.

Finally, we reproduce a true period piece, the philosopher Bertrand Russell's reflections in 1959 on how universities should look, composed "before the flood" and reproduced in *B. Russell, Fact and Fiction* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1961).

As always, we solicit letters and columns from our readers on the subjects of this issue or on other subjects.

George W. Liebmann

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A member of the Library recently came to me with a request for help. They needed to use a room, or out of the way location in the Library, for a zoom presentation on Saturday morning. It seems the wi-fi in their home was a little iffy and they needed a location they could depend on with a certain degree of reliability. An honest individual, they let me know that they had already been turned down by another law library and that the zoom presentation was not related to the law. You see, the individual was a referee and they were responsible for providing an incoming class of referees their next lesson. Well, we had the space, and a member with a need, so, what reason did I have to say no? The Library in fact is a place that tries, whenever possible, to say yes, to be something more than a faceless pre-programmed corporation that cannot see the totality of the individual that we strive to serve. I always refer to the Bar Library family and I truly do mean it. So, whatever you need, let us know and we will see what we can do. Take care, be well and we hope to see you soon.

Joe Bennett

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Values in Society: Universities and the Law

A talk given to the American Law Institute, Washington, D.C.
23 May 1969

As with all crises, the turbulence in our universities tells us about ourselves. It reveals the odd position which universities occupy. It portrays something of how law is regarded and reflects what law has been doing. It underscores traits, beliefs, and conditions of our society. In this conflict the universities are attacked not only because they are available and easy targets, but in part because they are regarded as among the controllers of values. They are viewed as instruments of power in the service of the social order—involvement in the disbursement of public funds, the exercise of the royal privilege of defining the public good, the control over the lives of the young by shaping their minds and channeling careers. A chief tactic against them has been an aberrant form of civil disobedience which feels less need to confirm its witness to an injustice by welcoming or accepting punishment. Perhaps this is because the tactic finds its greater meaning in a generalized protest against society and the coercion of its laws. Some people find comfort in this because they regard acts of aggression against institutions of learning as particularly offensive. They would prefer an explanation which shows the real target elsewhere.

Universities are not the major controllers of value in our society. Law, itself, for better or worse, and including the public's view of its operations, is per-

haps the chief educational force. An older civilization recognized this primary purpose and power. "Legislators make the citizens good by forming habits in them," Aristotle wrote, "this is the wish of every legislator, and those who do not effect it miss the mark, and it is in this that a good constitution differs from a bad one; the things that tend to produce virtue taken as a whole are those of the acts prescribed by the law . . . with a view to education for the common good." The compulsion of the law was important, "for most people obey necessity rather than argument and punishments rather than the sense of what is noble."

Admittedly this is a broad view of the law which also emphasizes its administration. Both the broad view and law in its specific application seem particularly relevant when issues of policy concerning civil disorder or civil disobedience are determined. It is particularly distressing, therefore, to find that the commissioner of education and the attorney general publicly differ in their view of campus disorders—the commissioner stressing his concern for underlying causes and linking his praise for the younger generation with a forecast of "growing unrest on the campus" for some time to come; the attorney general strongly condemning some of the participants and their disruptive behavior. The commissioner explains that this difference is not important because the attorney general is only looking at the matter from the point of view of enforcing the law. This split approach—if that is what it is—is not helpful to the thoughtful and effective administration of justice or to the understanding of campus disruptions, which probably have their greatest significance because they result from and help to create an attitude toward the legal sys-

tem, and which, if they are not understood in this way, can have widespread effects upon that system and throughout our society.

The protests do mirror various aspects of the larger society. They reflect historic tendencies in American culture. They imitate, in their own way, recent events—sometimes literary events—which have made an impact. The protests have now gone on long enough so they have developed something of a culture and style of their own. It should be possible, despite the ambivalence which many share, to describe in a sketchy way what the prototype looks like.

The protests, as befits the inheritors of the American way, are frequently conducted with great technical skill and energy, building upon what appears initially to be very little support, and yet finally achieving a large event. Committees are formed. Issues are found and tried out. Symbolic action, frequently involving some kind of confrontation and perhaps a certain vituperation, is used to build support. It is a time of testing. Doctrines and slogans have already been accepted. They gain strength by being linked to national or international issues where there is injustice or frustration, or to something which happened at some other university. The institution is viewed as an imperialist power. There is close cooperation with the public communications media. The pace quickens. The oratory sometimes has a resemblance to speaking in tongues. It is a kind of canting. Picketing or similar events are arranged to keep things moving. If the issues seem right, nonnegotiable demands are presented. If possible, a building is seized. It is viewed as liberated. Endless meetings and activities are now held in it.

The entire event is seen as enormously important, and there is much excitement. Within the building there may be a feeling of unity and new comradeship. There is some fear the police may be called, and perhaps a few of the participants desire they should be. A negotiating committee has been appointed. The issues now begin to change somewhat. The list grows longer. Items on the list disappear, or it is said they are no longer to be taken seriously. The point is made that there may be a reasonable argument for some of the items. The institution is told it ought to be listening and at the same time be sufficiently understanding not to take what is said literally. Distinctions are now made as to appropriate and more inappropriate conduct. The seizure is described as peaceful and nonviolent. Amnesty has been demanded. The labor union negotiation analogy is pushed. Mediation is suggested. There may be some kind of escalation of conduct later regarded as particularly unfortunate. Most such protests come to an end in one way or another. The building is returned. Sometimes a special effort is made to clean it up. The variations in the prototype are enormous. The police may have been called. Injunctions may have been obtained. There may be court cases. There may be discipline within the institution. There may be a combination of all three and added possibilities. There may be nothing but utter confusion. It is probable that there is a demand the university be restructured. The scars are much deeper than one might imagine. And, of course, there are other consequences. Meanwhile, there are many expressions of gloom or comfort to the effect that with the prob-

lems of the world the way they are, this kind of activity must be expected to recur.

I have purposely understated the dangers, the harm, the immediate traumatic and the long-term searing effects. There is no single rule for the best handling of these events. But I think this much can be said. Particularly because these festivals are built upon a conception of the world ruled by coercion and corruption, the university's response must exemplify the principles which are important to it. The university must stand for reason and for persuasion by reasoning. Reasoning of this kind requires a most difficult honesty—an intellectual discipline which is self-critical. It is most unfortunate and in the long run disastrous for a university to exemplify expediency which avoids or solves conflicts by the acceptance of ideas imposed by force. So the university must show that it values and respects the individual mind, that discussions can always proceed, but that a threat to the disciplined freedom of the university is a threat to its very existence and purpose. This approach requires candor, consistency, and openness, but also effective discipline. The discipline will be difficult. But the university owes this much to itself, and it also owes this much to the larger society.

The disruptions must be seen against the background of not only what has happened in our colleges and universities, but also in the larger society. There are more young people. More of them are going to college. More of them intend to go to graduate and professional school. There is a long road of what appears to many of them as confinement in education ahead of them if they are not drafted. They

view themselves as quite a separate generation—quite different from the days of World War II when Churchill could speak of the same generation being involved in two world wars; a generation now has a span of four or five years. They have been told and they believe they are members of a most affluent society—a society which has failed to do its duty in the correction of social evils. There is a special reason why two failures seem very close to them. The undeclared Viet Nam war is seen not only as a catastrophe of foreign policy, but also as a peculiarly generational war—their generation—because so much of our society is not involved in it at all. There is no passion of shared sacrifice within the larger community. Many of the colleges and universities are in cities. The urban crisis is a reminder of racial inequality. Steps to correct this have increased the awareness of injustice. They are reminded of past unlawful conduct under the cover of the legitimacy of law. Both the Viet Nam war and the continuing inequalities appear to them as examples of power and coercion where civil disobedience, if one feels sincerely, can be justified.

They have been brought up under the barrage of new forms of communication which have surrounded them with images which replace, block out, and substitute for experience. They believe a great deal of what they have been repeatedly told. They think the generation of their parents was only interested in material matters. They believe their own awareness is a first step to the solution of problems, although in the strange rhythm of history many of the means which they are willing to employ were used in a prior time by people and in movements they would find

most hateful. One hopes that Burke's comment in his essay on the French Revolution will not be applicable: that those who think they are waging war with intolerance, pride, and cruelty . . . are authorizing and feeding the same odious vices. They have been told, as the commissioner of education stated, "This is the finest young generation we've ever had. . . . The young people are capable, they're bright, they're knowledgeable, they know more than any generation." But in a protective society where they see only errors and not the reality of choice, their experience in doing has been long delayed. The colleges have found it difficult to build upon common experiences; they have not given these students, by and large, a training in the liberal arts. Students often have not yet developed the intellectual skills to solve the problems which concern them. Many of them are possessed by a sense of collective guilt. They are not living up to their own standards, which are high, and they have been denied—again one wonders at this rhythm of history—the terrible but complete experiences of depressions and wars in which one had to prove oneself. For many the disruptive experience is symbolic of what is sought.

In a real sense, a catastrophe or an overwhelming collective and personal experience is sought. Many of these sentiments are shared with or encouraged in them by the various ministers of the churches and synagogues which surround the universities. Love is opposed to power and reason. The natural sciences do not offer "means of understanding what are essentially human problems"—do not show the causes of what went wrong—so that mankind is burdened with an "evil past legacy"; but the humanities and

the social sciences also do not give to us a "ruthlessly honest analysis of existing social evils, but a framework in which problems are defined in terms of the existing culture." This is what many read and this is what many feel. In another day religious orders might have provided an avenue for service. Despite the Peace Corps, Vista, and the interest of the churches, insufficient avenues of this kind have been created.

The struggle, then, is over the nature of the university. I have mentioned the odd position which universities now occupy. The position is a precarious one. The normal complaints about the academic performance of universities, the preoccupation with research, the neglect of teaching, the large classes—these usually are not that important, at least for many places where the protests have arisen. There is no doubt that education should be greatly improved. The required years of study ought to be shortened. They can be. We should reduce the number of years made standard for higher education—years which are stultifying and delaying for so many—and we should do this in part in recognition that education is a continuing process which should be renewed in various ways throughout the adult years, and also because it is sinful to waste educational resources when they are so badly needed at the preschool, primary, and secondary school levels. There is no reason why entrance to law school, for example, should be postponed until after graduation from college. The three years required for law school, as an optional matter, could be reduced to two. We could take much more drastic steps than that with benefit to all. We should search for more points of entrance

and exit with honor from the system so that we would not be removing from society for so long a sustained period a substantial segment of the population. A great deal of graduate work should be curtailed by making a doctor's degree less necessary for teaching.

The struggle, I think, will not be so much over these matters, but over the basic freedom of these institutions to pursue their work as they determine it, and as teaching institutions to give training to students in the disciplines of thought, the appreciation of cultures, the criticism of reason. Whatever their origin, whatever their peripheral activities, whatever the reason for giving support to them may have been, it is these qualities and this freedom, sometimes—usually—hard won, which have given to our universities their basic quality and their true value. But now the universities find themselves urged, almost compelled, to engage in increasing service activities—to act as agencies for the restoration of cities, to give one example. The euphoria is catching. The possible appropriateness of a subject for research, its importance for discussion, is confused not only with the actual accomplishment of significant research, which does not happen so often, but also with superior ability and the institutional power to solve and manage social problems and to determine national policies. And so the protesters say, "Why not act for us to compel the adoption of a different foreign policy?" The universities see themselves viewed as necessities, if not for the education of all youth, then at least as channels and screens through which all must pass. They hear themselves described as "the central institution of the next hundred years"

because of their role "as the source of innovation and knowledge." It is doubtful if institutions so regarded will be able to retain their freedom. The current controversy over the governance of universities is probably only a pale image, if not already the doorway, for what is likely to come. If the universities are to become a kind of mirror image of the political order, then we will have to develop new institutions weak enough to be free, but in which ideas can be developed which are strong enough to change the world.

But law, as I have suggested, is the greatest educational force. It teaches through its administration of justice. It teaches—for better or worse—through the police, through the conditions of the cities, of the public schools, and of the courts themselves. It teaches through its sometime neglect of civility and its occasional endorsement of apparent cruelty. It teaches through example, compulsion, and the effective concern to create institutions, to perfect measures, to get jobs done—which is the organizing special noble responsibility of the bar. Today, more than in any recent time, there is great importance that these jobs be done. The trust in the fabric of law needs to be restored. The message of a jurisprudence that works needs to be conveyed. Whatever the meaning of these disruptions, here is the answer which will make the most difference.



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George Kennan comments on the radical left on campus Rebels Without a Program

By GEORGE F. KENNAN

THERE is an ideal that has long been basic to the learning process as we have known it, one that stands at the very center of our modern institutions of higher education and that had its origin, I suppose, in the clerical and monastic character of the medieval university. It is the ideal of the association of the process of learning with a certain remoteness from the contemporary scene—a certain detachment and seclusion, a certain voluntary withdrawal and renunciation of participation in contemporary life in the interests of the achievement of a better perspective on that life when the period of withdrawal is over. It is an ideal that does not predicate any total conflict between thought and action, but recognizes that there is a time for each.

No more striking, or moving, description of this ideal has ever come to my attention than that which was given by Woodrow Wilson in 1896 at the time of the Princeton Sesquicentennial.

"I have had sight," Wilson said, "of the perfect place of learning in my thought: a free place, and a various, where no man could be and not know with how great a destiny knowledge had come into the world—itself a little world; but not perplexed, living with a singleness of aim not known without; the home of sagacious men, hardheaded and with a will to know, debaters of the world's questions every day and used to the rough ways of democracy; and yet a place removed—calm Science

GEORGE F. KENNAN, former Ambassador to Russia, is a professor at the Institute for Advanced Study. This article is adapted from an address delivered last month at the dedication of the Thomas B. and Jeannette L. McCabe Library at Swarthmore College.

seated there, recluse, ascetic, like a nun; not knowing that the world passes, not caring, if the truth but come in answer to her prayer. . . . A place where ideals are kept in heart in an air they can breathe; but no fool's paradise. A place where to hear the truth about the past and hold debate about the affairs of the present, with knowledge and without passion; like the world in having all men's life at heart, a place for men and all that concerns them; but unlike the world in its self-possession, its thorough way of talk, its care to know more than the moment brings to light; slow to take excitement, its air pure and wholesome with a breath of faith; every eye within it bright in the clear day and quick to look toward heaven for the confirmation of its hope. Who shall show us the way to this place?"

THERE is a dreadful incongruity between this vision and the state of mind—and behavior—of the radical left on the American campus today. In place of a calm science, "recluse, ascetic, like a nun," not knowing or caring that the world passes "if the truth but come in answer to her prayer," we have people utterly absorbed in the affairs of this passing world. And instead of these affairs being discussed with knowledge and without passion, we find them treated with transports of passion and with a minimum, I fear, of knowledge. In place of slowness to take excitement, we have a readiness to react emotionally, and at once, to a great variety of issues. In place of self-possession, we have screaming tantrums and brawling in the streets. In place of the "thorough way of talk" that Wilson envisaged, we have banners and epithets and obscenities and virtually meaningless slogans. And in place of bright eyes "looking to

heaven for the confirmation of their hope," we have eyes glazed with anger and passion, too often dimmed as well by artificial abuse of the psychic structure that lies behind them, and looking almost everywhere else but to heaven for the satisfaction of their aspirations.

I quite understand that those who espouse this flagrant repudiation of the Wilsonian ideal constitute only a minority on any campus. But tendencies that represent the obsession of only a few may not be without partial appeal, at certain times, and within certain limits, to many others. If my own analysis is correct, there are a great many students who may resist any complete surrender to these tendencies, but who nevertheless find

them intensely interesting, are to some extent attracted or morally bewildered by them, find themselves driven, in confrontation with them, either into various forms of pleasing temptation, on the one hand, or into crises of conscience, on the other.

If I see them correctly (and I have no pretensions to authority on this subject), there are two dominant tendencies among the people I have here in mind, and superficially they would seem to be in conflict one with the other. On the one side there is angry militancy, full of hatred and intolerance and often quite prepared to embrace violence as a source of change. On the other side there is gentleness, passivity, quietism — ostensibly a yearning for detachment from the af-

fairs of the world, not the detachment Woodrow Wilson had in mind, for that was one intimately and sternly related to the real world, the objective, external world, whereas this one takes the form of an attempt to escape into a world which is altogether illusory and subjective.

WHAT strikes one first about the angry militancy is the extraordinary degree of certainty by which it is inspired: certainty of one's own rectitude, certainty of the correctness of one's own answers, certainty of the accuracy and profundity of one's own analysis of the problems of contemporary society, certainty as to the iniquity of those who disagree. Of course, vehemence of feeling and a

conviction that right is on one's side have seldom been absent from the feelings of politically excited youth. But somehow or other they seem particularly out of place at just this time. Never has there been an era when the problems of public policy even approached in their complexity those by which our society is confronted today, in this age of technical innovation and the explosion of knowledge. The understanding of these problems is something to which one could well give years of disciplined and restrained study, years of the scholar's detachment, years of readiness to reserve judgment while evidence is being accumulated. And this being so, one is struck to see such

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massive certainties already present in the minds of people who not only *have not* studied very much but presumably *are not* studying a great deal, because it is hard to imagine that the activities to which this aroused portion of our student population gives itself are ones readily compatible with quiet and successful study.

The world seems to be full, today, of embattled students. The public prints are seldom devoid of the record of their activities. Photographs of them may be seen daily: screaming, throwing stones, breaking windows, overturning cars, being beaten or dragged about by police and, in the case of those on other continents, burning libraries. That these people are embattled is unquestionable. That they are really students, I must be permitted to doubt. I have heard it freely confessed by members of the revolutionary student generation of Tsarist Russia that, proud as they were of the revolutionary exploits of their youth, they never really learned anything in their university years; they were too busy with politics. The fact of the matter is that the state of being *enragé* is simply incompatible with fruitful study. It implies a degree of existing emotional and intellectual commitment which leaves little room for open-minded curiosity.

I am not saying that students should not be concerned, should not have views, should not question what goes on in the field of national policy and should not voice their questions about it. Some of us, who are older, share many of their misgivings, many of their impulses. Some of us have no less lively a sense of the dangers of the time, and are no happier than they are about a great many things that are now going on. But it lies within the power as well as the duty of all of us to recognize not only the possibility that we might be wrong but the virtual certainty that on some occasions we are bound to be. The fact that this is so does not absolve us from the duty of having views and putting them forward. But it does make it incumbent upon us to recognize the element of doubt that still surrounds the correctness of these views. And if we do that, we will not be able to lose ourselves in transports of moral indig-

nation against those who are of opposite opinion and follow a different line; we will put our views forward only with a prayer for forgiveness for the event that we prove to be mistaken.

I am aware that inhibitions and restraints of this sort on the part of us older people would be attributed by many members of the student left to a sweeping corruption of our moral integrity. Life, they would hold, has impelled us to the making of compromises; and these compromises have destroyed the usefulness of our contribution. Crippled by our own cowardice, prisoners of the seamy adjustments we have made in order to be successfully a part of the American establishment, we are regarded as no longer capable of looking steadily into the strong clear light of truth.

IN this, as in most of the reproaches with which our children shower us, there is of course an element of justification. There is a point somewhere along the way in most of our adult lives, admittedly,

when enthusiasms flag, when idealism becomes tempered, when responsibility to others, and even affection for others, compels greater attention to the mundane demands of private life. There is a point when we are even impelled to place the needs of children ahead of the dictates of a defiant idealism, and to devote ourselves, pusillanimously, if you will, to the support and rearing of these same children—precisely in order that at some future date they may have the privilege of turning upon us and despising us for the materialistic faint-heartedness that made their maturity possible. This, no doubt, is the nature of the compromise that millions of us make with the imperfections of government and society in our time. Many of us could wish that it might have been otherwise—that the idealistic pursuit of public causes might have remained our exclusive dedication down into late life.

But for the fact that this is not so I cannot shower myself or others with reproaches. I have seen more harm done in this world by those who tried to storm the bastions of society in the name of utopian beliefs, who were determined to achieve the elimination of all evil and the realization of the millennium within their own time, than by all the

humble efforts of those who have tried to create a little order and civility and affection within their own intimate entourage, even at the cost of tolerating a great deal of evil in the public domain. Behind this modesty, after all, there has been the recognition of a vitally important truth — a truth that the Marxists, among others, have never brought themselves to recognize; namely, that the decisive seat of evil in this world is not in social and political institutions, and not even, as a rule, in the ill will or iniquities of statesmen, but simply in the weakness and imperfection of the human soul itself, and by that I mean literally every soul, including my own and that of the student militant at the gates. For this reason, as Tocqueville so clearly perceived when he visited this country 130 years ago, the success of a society may be said, like charity, to begin at home.

SO much, then, for the angry ones. Now, a word about the others: the quiescent ones, the hippies and the flower people.

In one sense, my feeling for these people is one of pity, not unmixed, in some instances, with horror. I am sure that they want none of this pity. They would feel that it comes to them for the wrong reasons. If they feel sorry for themselves, it is because they see themselves as the victims of a harsh, hypocritical and unworthy adult society. If I feel sorry for them, it is because I see them as the victims of certain great and destructive philosophic errors.

One of these errors—and it is one that affects particularly those who take drugs, but not those alone—is the belief that the human being has marvelous resources within himself that can be released and made available to him merely by the passive submission to certain sorts of stimuli: by letting esthetic impressions of one sort or another roll over him or by letting his psychic equilibrium be disoriented by chemical agencies that give him the sensation of experiencing tremendous things. Well, it is true that human beings sometimes have marvelous resources within themselves. It is also true that these resources are capable, ideally, of being released and made available to the man that harbors them and through him to others, and sometimes are so released. But it is not true that they can be released by hippie means.

It is only through effort, through doing, through action—never through passive experience—that man grows creatively. It is only by volition and effort that he becomes fully aware of what he has in him of creativity and becomes capable of embodying it, of making it a part of himself, of communicating it to others. There is no pose more fraudulent—and students would do well to remember this when they look at each other—than that of the individual who pretends to have been exalted and rendered more impressive by his communion with some sort of inner voice whose revelations he is unable to describe or to enact. And particularly is this pose fraudulent when the means he has chosen to render himself susceptible to this alleged revelation is the deliberate disorientation of his own psychic system; for it may be said with surety that any artificial intervention of this sort—into the infinitely delicate balance that nature created in the form of man's psychic make-up—produces its own revenge, takes its own toll, proceeds at the cost of the true creative faculties and weakens rather than strengthens.

The second error I see in the outlook of these people is the belief in the possibility and validity of a total personal permissiveness. They are

misjudging, here, the innermost nature of man's estate. There is not, and cannot be, such a thing as total freedom. The normal needs and frailties of the body, not to mention the elementary demands of the soul itself, would rule that out if nothing else did. But beyond that, any freedom from something implies a freedom to something. And because our reality is a complex one, in which conflicts of values are never absent, there can be no advance toward any particular objective, not even the pursuit of pleasure, that does not imply the sacrifice of other possible objectives. Freedom, for this reason, is definable only in terms of the obligations and restraints and sacrifices it accepts. It exists, as a concept, only in relationship to something else which is by definition its opposite; and that means commitment, duty, self-restraint.

Every great artist has known this. Every great philosopher has recognized it. It has lain at the basis of Judaic-Christian teaching. Tell me what framework of discipline you are prepared to accept, and I will attempt to tell you what freedom might mean for you. But if you tell me that you are prepared to accept no framework of discipline at all, then I will tell you, as Dostoevski told his readers, that

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you are destined to become the most unfree of men; for freedom begins only with the humble acceptance of membership in, and subordination to, a natural order of things, and it grows only with struggle, and self-discipline, and faith.

TO shun the cruelty and corruption of this world is one thing. It is not always unjustifiable. Not everyone is made to endure these things. There is something to be said for the cultivation, by the right people, and in the right way, of the virtues of detachment, of withdrawal, of unworldliness, of innocence and purity, if you will. That, as a phase of life, is just what Wilson was talking about. In an earlier age, those who are now the flower children and the hippies would perhaps have entered monastic life or scholarly life or both. But there, be it noted, they would very definitely have accepted a framework of discipline, and

“If you find a system inadequate, it is not enough simply to demonstrate anger . . . if the student Left had a program, many of us could view its protests with respect.”

it would normally have been a very strict one. If it was a monastic order, their lives would have been devoted to the service of God and of other men, not of themselves and their senses. If it was the world of scholarship, their lives would have been devoted to the pursuit of truth, which never comes easily or without discipline and sacrifice. They would have accepted an obligation to cultivate order, not chaos; cleanliness, not filth; self-abnegation, not self-indulgence; health, not demoralization.

Now I have indicated that I pity these people, and in general I do. But sometimes I find it hard to pity them, because they themselves are sometimes so pitiless. There is, in this cultivation of an absolute freedom, and above all in the very self-

destructiveness with which it often expresses itself, a selfishness, a hardheartedness, a callousness, an irresponsibility, an indifference to the feelings of others, that is its own condemnation. No one ever destroys just himself alone. Such is the network of intimacy in which every one of us is somehow embraced, that whoever destroys himself destroys to some extent others as well. Many of these people prattle about the principle of love; but their behavior betrays this principle in the most elementary way. Love—and by that I mean the receiving of love as well as the bestowal of it—is itself an obligation, and as such is incompatible with the quest for a perfect freedom. Just the cruelty to parents alone, which is implicit in much of this behavior, is destructive of the purest and most creative form of love that does exist or could exist in this mortal state.

And one would like to warn these young people that in distancing themselves so recklessly not only from the wisdom but from the feelings of parents, they are hacking at their own underpinnings—and even those of people as yet unborn. There could be no greater illusion than the belief that one can treat one's parents unfeelingly and with contempt and yet expect that one's own children will some day treat one otherwise; for such people break the golden chain of affection that binds the generations and gives continuity and meaning to life.

One cannot, therefore, on looking at these young people in all the glory of their defiant rags and hairdos, always just say, with tears in one's eyes: "There goes a tragically wayward youth, striving romantically to document his rebellion against the hypocrisies of the age." One has sometimes to say, and not without indignation: "There goes a perverted and willful and stony-hearted youth by whose destructiveness we are all, in the end, to be damaged and diminished."

THESE people also pose a problem in the quality of their citizenship. One thing they all seem to have in common—the angry ones as well as the quiet ones—is a complete rejection of, or indifference to, the political system of this country. The quiet ones turn their backs upon it, as though it did not concern them. The angry ones reject it by implication, insofar as they refuse to recognize the validity of its workings or to respect the

discipline which, as a system of authority, it unavoidably entails.

I think there is a real error or misunderstanding here. If you accept a democratic system, this means that you are prepared to put up with those of its workings, legislative or administrative, with which you do not agree as well as with those that meet with your concurrence. This willingness to accept, in principle, the workings of a system based on the will of the majority, even when you yourself are in the minority, is simply the essence of democracy. Without it there could be no system of representative self-government at all. When you attempt to alter the workings of the system by means of violence or civil disobedience, this, it seems to me, can have only one of two implications: either you do not believe in democracy at all and consider that society ought to be governed by enlightened minorities such as the one to which you, of course, belong; or you consider that the present system is so imperfect that it is not truly representative, that it no longer serves adequately as a vehicle for the will of the majority, and that this leaves to the unsatisfied no adequate means of self-expression other than the primitive one of calling attention to themselves

and their emotions by mass demonstrations and mass defiance of established authority. It is surely the latter of these two implications which we must read from the overwhelming majority of the demonstrations that have recently taken place.

I would submit that if you find a system inadequate, it is not enough simply to demonstrate indignation and anger over individual workings of it, such as the persistence of the Vietnam war, or individual situations it tolerates or fails to correct, such as the condition of the Negroes in our great cities. If one finds these conditions intolerable, and if one considers that they reflect no adequate expression either of the will of the majority or of that respect for the rights of minorities which is no less essential to the success of any democratic system, then one places upon one's self, it seems to me, the obligation of saying in what way this political system should be modified, or what should be established in the place of it, to assure that its workings would bear a better relationship to people's needs and people's feelings.

If the student left had a

program of constitutional amendment or political reform—if it had proposals for the constructive adaptation of this political system to the needs of our age—if it was *this* that it was agitating for, and if its agitation took the form of reasoned argument and discussion, or even peaceful demonstration accompanied by reasoned argument and discussion—then many of us, I am sure, could view its protests with respect, and we would not shirk the obligation, either to speak up in defense of institutions and national practices which we have tolerated all our lives, or to join these young people in the quest for better ones.

But when we are confronted only with violence for violence's sake, and with attempts to frighten or intimidate an administration into doing things for which it can itself see neither the rationale nor the electoral mandate; when we are offered, as the only

argument for change, the fact that a number of people are themselves very angry and excited; and when we are presented with a violent objection to what exists, unaccompanied by any constructive concept of what, ideally, ought to exist in its place—then we of my generation can only recognize that such behavior bears a disconcerting resemblance to phenomena we have witnessed within our own time in the origins of totalitarianism in other countries, and then we have no choice but to rally to the defense of a public authority with which we may not be in agreement but which is the only one we've got and with which, in some form or another, we cannot conceivably dispense. People should bear in mind that if this—namely noise, violence and lawlessness—is the way they are going to put their case, then many of us who are no

happier than they are about some of the policies that arouse their indignation will have no choice but to place ourselves on the other side of the barricades.

These observations reflect a serious doubt whether civil disobedience has any place in a democratic society. But there is one objection I know will be offered to this view. Some people, who accept our political system, believe that they have a right to disregard it and to violate the laws that have flowed from it so long as they are prepared, as a matter of conscience, to accept the penalties established for such behavior.

I am sorry; I cannot agree. The violation of law is not, in the moral and philosophic sense, a privilege that lies offered for sale with a given

price tag, like an object in a supermarket, available to anyone who has the price and is willing to pay for it. It is not like the privilege of breaking crockery in a tent at the county fair for a quarter a shot. Respect for the law is not an obligation which is exhausted or obliterated by willingness to accept the penalty for breaking it.

To hold otherwise would be to place the privilege of law-breaking preferentially in the hands of the affluent, to make respect for law a commercial proposition rather than a civic duty and to deny any authority of law independent of the sanctions established against its violation. It would then be all right for a man to create false fire alarms or frivolously to pull the emergency cord on the train, or to do any number of other things that endangered or inconvenienced other people, provided only he was prepared to accept the penalties of so doing. Surely, lawlessness and civil disobedience cannot be condoned or tolerated on this ground; and those of us who care for the good order of society have no choice but to resist attempts at its violation, when this is their only justification.

NOW, being myself a father, I am only too well aware that people of my generation cannot absolve ourselves of a heavy responsibility for the state of mind in which these young people find themselves. We are obliged

to recognize here, in the myopia and the crudities of *their* extremism, the reflection of our own failings: our smugness, our timidity, our faint-heartedness and in some instances our weariness, our apathy in the face of great and obvious evils.

I am also aware that, while their methods may not be the right ones, and while their discontent may suffer in its effectiveness from the concentration on negative goals, the degree of their concern over the present state of our country and the dangers implicit in certain of its involvements is by no means exaggerated. This is a time in our national life more serious, more menacing, more crucial, than any I have ever experienced or ever hoped to experience. Not since the civil conflict of a century ago has this country, as I see it, been in such great danger; and the most excruciating aspect of this tragic state of affairs is that so much of this danger comes so largely from within, where we are giving it relatively little official attention, and so little of it comes, relatively speaking, from the swamps and jungles of Southeast Asia into which we are pouring our treasure of young blood and physical resources.

For these reasons, I do not mean to make light of the intensity of feeling by which this student left is seized. Nor do I mean to imply that people like myself can view this discontent from some sort of smug Olympian detachment,

as though it were not our responsibility, as though it were not in part our own ugly and decadent face that we see in this distorted mirror. None of us could have any justification for attempting to enter into communication with these people if we did not recognize, along with the justification for their unhappiness, our own responsibility in the creation of it, and if we did not accompany our appeal to them with a profession of readiness to join them, where they want us to, in the attempt to find better answers to many of these problems.

I am well aware that in approaching them in this way and in taking issue as I have with elements of their outlook and their behavior, it is primarily myself that I have committed, not them. I know that behind all the extremisms—all the philosophical errors, all the egocentricities and all the oddities of dress and deportment—we have to do here with troubled and often pathetically appealing people, acting, however wisely or unwisely, out of sincerity and idealism, out of the unwillingness to accept a meaningless life and a purposeless society.

Well, this is not the life, and not the sort of society, that many of us would like to leave behind us in this country when our work is done. How wonderful it would be, I sometimes think to myself, if we and they—experience on the one hand, strength and enthusiasm on the other—could join forces. ■

DEMOCRACY and the STUDENT LEFT

BY GEORGE F. KENNAN

and students and teachers from:

BARNARD BRANDEIS BROOKLYN CALIFORNIA
COLUMBIA CORNELL DARTMOUTH
HARVARD ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY NOTRE DAME
OHIO STATE PRINCETON ROCHESTER RUTGERS
SYRACUSE TORONTO WESLEYAN
WEST VIRGINIA WILLIAMS YALE



When I agreed to say some words at the opening of the new library at Swarthmore College on December 11, 1967, I had no thought of opening a personal polemic with, or about, the radical Left on the American college campus. The occasion was the opening of a new library. I tried to picture this new library in my imagination. In doing so I dredged up from memory certain architects' drawings I had once seen of other new academic libraries: clean, austere, modern structures, with the accent on the horizontal—spacious, sunny terraces—one or two inked-in student figures, laden with books and sauntering, deep in meditation, across the sunny terraces—the whole impregnated with the spirit of serenity and repose. It seemed to me that these drawings reflected the concept of the university as a quiet place, a place of withdrawal and contemplation and learning, that had lain at the foundation of the establishment of so many of our colleges and universities—Swarthmore included, I dare say—and was reflected in their gothic or classical architecture. And I was struck at once by the contrast between this concept of the place of learning and the state of mind, as reflected in appearance, utterance and behavior, of so many of the present inhabitants of these campuses. This contrast, surely, had something important to say to us about the problems of higher education in our country and in our day. It might, therefore, be worth notice, and a bit of comment, on such an occasion.

I proceeded accordingly. To illustrate the earlier ideal of academic detachment I fell back on Woodrow Wilson's words, spoken at the Princeton Sesquicentennial, which I recalled once reading. (I cited them: I did not, as so many students supposed, espouse them.) The opposite pole of outlook and feeling was something I was obliged to evoke out of what I had seen or read of what was going on in the minds of the radical element among the student population. I had no pretensions, and certainly did not mean to assert any, to being an authority on the feelings and reactions of these people. That is not my business. But few of us—and few of us, in particular, who frequent academic campuses in whatever capacity—are permitted to remain entirely oblivious to these things; the students themselves see to that. And on this meager but, I think, not wholly inaccurate fund of impression, I made so bold as to draw.

I came away from the podium, that December afternoon, feeling that I had done my best to speak honestly about matters that might be presumed to be on the minds of other people present. But no sooner had I emerged from the stage door of the College's auditorium than I was made aware—by the presence there of a group of angry young men, mostly bearded, who hissed their disagreement and resentment at me like a flock of truculent village geese—that I had stepped on some tender nerves. And when, some weeks later, the speech was printed in the *New York Times Magazine*, and letters from aroused students and their adult sympathizers began pouring in by the score both to the editor and to myself, it was made quite clear that I had spoken casually about things which it was not to be forgiven to me for speaking about in this manner; that in doing so I had raised more questions than I had answered; and that I was to be held strictly to account.

What I am now writing is, as nearly as I can make it, this accounting. It is not addressed directly to those who wrote the letters. They are too varied in their views for anything of that sort. The great majority were students and teachers, ranging all the way from the most favorable to the most negative—from a lady prepared to support me for the Presidency to the professor of philosophy whose indignation was so great that he called on me to stage a personal breakdown in front of my children (as a gesture of contrition, I gather) and then went on to challenge me publicly to a duel.* What I have in mind to do here is simply to comment on some of the implications of this formidable body of literature—letters and published articles together—that the speech unleashed. And the comments are intended for whoever, young or old, cares to read them. If students find in them responses to some of the points they raised in their letters, so much the better.

I should like, however, to reassure the student letter-writers on one point: they have at least been heard. I have read, pondered and made notes on every single one of their letters as well as those of the adults who spoke for them or about them—to a total of over two hundred. I have also read, where I could find it, the published or circulated literature some of them thought I ought to read in order to understand their feelings. To all of them who have said—and this

* I do not mean to make light of the proposal that I stage a breakdown before my children. The writer meant it in all seriousness, I am sure, as something to apply symbolically to my entire generation. I include it only to illustrate the violence of negative feeling which my observations aroused in some quarters. I cannot believe, actually, that my own children are so unaware of my own awareness of my faults that they would be greatly enlightened by such a spectacle, however much they might enjoy it for its unexpected dramatic aspects.

was the keynote of many letters—"Nobody listens to us," I can truthfully say: "I, at least, have listened."

I believe, furthermore, that I got the message. I think I could write a composite letter listing the sources of student discontent and frustration. I know, now, that the state of the American Negro—initially in the South but more recently in the Northern urban ghettos—has troubled their consciences and has caused many of them to feel they must "do something about it." I am aware that what many of them have already done in this respect took great courage and idealism and fortitude of spirit. I know that the students are immensely upset by the combination of Vietnam and the draft: that they view our military effort in Vietnam as a wicked, immoral war against the Vietnamese people; that they feel their own consciences to be engaged in the question as to whether they should permit themselves to be drafted for participation in such a war. I understand that they find this question, notwithstanding the fact that it does not have to be answered until they complete their undergraduate years, to be so harrowing and to harbor such apocalyptic implications that it is silly to suggest they should have their minds primarily on their studies while this looms before them. I further understand that they find intolerable to their sensibilities the fact that industrial firms which supply our armed services, not to mention the Marine Corps itself, should be permitted to recruit on campus; that they see in this, as well as in the fact that universities accept research contracts from the government, evidence that the universities have placed themselves at the service of American "imperialism"; and that they wonder whether they, the students, by consenting even to be students in such places, are not being contaminated with a share of the attendant guilt. I understand that they feel frustrated and desperate because, although

they have tried to make their views known, the Administration has showed no signs of paying attention to them. Therefore, they feel, no adequate means of expression are open to them but noise, demonstration, and—some would say—revolution.

I also know that the regular means of political self-expression in such a country as our own, and particularly the electoral channel, seem to these students wholly inadequate; anything of that sort, they consider, would take too long; besides, the country isn't really run by the ostensibly elected government—it is run by something called the "establishment" or the "power structure," to which students have no access and could have no access by honorable means. I understand, finally, that they consider themselves to be adults and therefore entitled to use college property and facilities for whatever purpose suits them—sexual, alcoholic, narcotic, or what you will—without being subjected to a demeaning restriction at the hands of college authorities.

One more thing. May I reiterate that I know myself to be dealing here largely with the left wing of the American student population, and I am aware that this is only a small proportion of the total. I said this in the speech. It was printed in the magazine. But many failed to notice it. If I choose, here again, to deal at such length with this one element, it is because it includes many fine and valuable people, who deserve attention for their own sakes, but also—as I said in the speech—because to some extent the impulses these extremists embody make themselves felt in other segments of the student population as well. It is obvious that students, like Marxists, acutely dislike the feeling of being outflanked to the left. There is always something impressive and disturbing about the fellow who is just a bit more desperate, more flamboyant, more defiant of authority, further out,

than yourself. I am speaking here, therefore, not just to the entire intellectual and emotional personality of certain students on the extreme radical fringe, but also to worries, doubts, attractions, and uncertainties that are experienced in one degree or another much further afield.

ii

First, some general observations.

One of the points most often thrown up to me, by faculty members and students alike, in rebuttal to my piece, is that the members of the campus left, far from being poor students, are often the most brilliant and talented and alert of the lot. This is not impossible.* I know many brilliant men who are also very confused. The two qualities do not preclude each other.

One cannot help but note how strongly and unfavorably the use of language by students has been affected by what I think of, and can only describe as, the "social science" style: that learned gobbledygook evolved by their betters on faculties as a means of talking about the nature and activity of human beings

* Here, the evidence seems to be confusing. Mr. Jack Newfield, in his anything but unsympathetic study of the New Left (*A Prophetic Minority*, New York: Signet Books, 1966), states (p. 87): "There is an appalling anti-intellectualism among the newer S.D.S. (Students for a Democratic Society) members. Not only do they read few novels and almost no scientific or philosophical literature, they have read little within the radical tradition."

In this respect, I may add, these radical American students differ sharply and unfavorably from the radical Russian students of the Tsarist period whom in other respects they so strongly resemble. These latter read extremely widely in precisely the categories Mr. Newfield mentions.

in a jargon suggesting scientific detachment, as though the writer stood on some Archimedian platform outside the boundaries of his own subject matter and was, like the exact scientist, neither here nor there. For an example of the effect on the youth of this persistent attempt to talk about the human predicament in inhuman terms, one has only to consult the document which I suppose is the nearest thing to a programmatical statement of the views of the Students for a Democratic Society: the so-called *Port Huron Statement*. Here we are told, in what appears to be one of many such efforts to express the simple in the most complicated way, that "the political order should serve to clarify problems in a way instrumental to their solution," and that "channels should be commonly available to relate men to knowledge and to power so that private problems from bad recreation facilities to personal alienation are formulated as general issues," etc. In this, as in much of the student writing, we see, I regret to say, the clear influence of a certain contemporary style of faculty writing; and we can realize that in their confusions of mind, if not in other respects, these students are the products of the influence of people older and no less confused than themselves.

A second thing that stands out in these letters is the lack of humor and of any *joie de vivre*. This factor has far more than a casual relationship to the sources of their malaise. When a thoughtful mother, disturbed over the drifting away of her son into the fixations of political extremism, noted in her letter to me that "his other interests and sense of humor have vanished," she was noting a symptom central to the phenomenon that concerned her. The politics, like what one suspects to be the love life of many of these young people, is tense, anxious, defiant and joyless. No wonder their view of the country fills them with desper-

ation. The inability to see and enjoy the element of absurdity in human behavior carries with it the inability to see what is pathetic and appealing and reassuring in what other people do—the inability, also, to detect one's self in the behavior of others. In these circumstances, human forces easily take on a dark, sinister and repellent aspect. One learns to deal with partial manifestations of the individual personality rather than with its human totality—to see people in the impersonal mass rather than as individuals.

I must note, further, that in all these outpourings of personal feeling, many of them related in the most intimate way to the possibilities for satisfaction and self-realization in later life, not once is there the slightest recognition of nature as a possible compensating or sustaining factor in the face of social or political frustration. To none of the student writers does it seem to occur that such frustration might conceivably be alleviated by the enjoyment of nature: by a proximity to animals and wildlife or by an occupation with growing things. I realize, of course, that gardening and all forms of soil-tilling tend generally to be the solace of older people. But this is not true of the wild outdoors. I have the impression that the students who write these protesting letters are almost exclusively people of urban background, that student radicalism, in fact, is primarily an urban phenomenon. If this is true, it is in itself a very interesting fact, and one which might well be taken into account when it comes to the question of how to meet the unrest that drives them.

The counterpart of this lack of interest in nature as a possible sustaining and healing factor in their own lives is an equivalent lack of interest in the protecting and preserving of it. I am struck, as I read these letters, with the fact that whereas my own concern

over the course of our American civilization is scarcely less than that of most of the writers, one of the main sources of it is the reckless corruption and destruction of natural environment that our present way of life involves. This is, actually, a process from which they, the younger generation, who are going to have to face the effects thirty or forty years hence, stand much more to suffer than I do. Yet with one very fleeting exception, not a single mention of this occurs in any of the letters. The minds of their authors are absorbed with the problems of man's encounter with man, not with his encounter with nature. And this, too, I fear, increases the difficulty of their problem. For in their preoccupation with man's treatment of man in the social setting, they ignore the possibility that a concerted effort to restore something of the balance and purity and strength of natural environment might be one of the ways in which men could work together without invoking those aspects of political and commercial competition which lead to wars, or fears of wars, and to exploitation, or suspicions of exploitation.

This obliviousness to nature as an object of interest and as a potentially helpful factor in men's lives is connected with another characteristic of this generation of students that is of even broader significance and presents a particularly sharp contrast to the student population of my own day. This is the lack of interest in the creation of any real style and distinction of personal life generally. While this often finds its expression most strikingly in dress, it goes much deeper and enters into manners, tidiness, physical environment and even personal hygiene. The idea that life could be made richer, more tolerable and enjoyable, and even perhaps more useful socially, by an emphasis on the being as well as the doing, by a

cultivation of the amenities, by the creation of a dignified and attractive personal environment; the recognition that if great masses of people are to be elevated out of degradation or vulgarity it is important that some people should set an example of graciousness and good taste; the thought that one might even gain strength as an individual and communicate some of it to his intimate entourage by lending to his personal life qualities that sustain confidence in the very possibility of a rich, wholesome and unsordid human experience: all this seems to be quite foreign to the writers of these letters.

Theoretically this is explicable, I suppose, by the fact that—as we shall note shortly—their concerns often relate, most nobly and commendably, to the plight of people other than themselves. But even here (and this is largely a question of the civil rights and anti-poverty movements) one is struck by the absence of any feeling for the power of example. What others are to be emancipated from is reasonably clear. What they are to be emancipated *to* is more puzzling, particularly when the emancipators pursue a mode of life and appearance not noticeably superior to their own.

Another explanation, frequently heard, is that the studied cultivation of ugliness and disorder is a reaction to, and rebellion against, the sterile pretension and conventionalism of the parents' lives. The impression is conveyed of a generation of parents cultivating idle luxury and pretense, disdainfully aloof from the sufferings and problems of the remainder of mankind.

To anyone born before World War I, this explanation has a most curious ring. If anyone had a right to such feelings, it was the student population of my day and earlier ones. *Then*, there really was such a thing as a wealthy "establishment." There was, then, real ostentation, stuffiness, snobbery. What does this gen-

eration of students know about these things? What they profess to be rebelling against is only the palest afterglow of what they are talking about. It cannot really be a parental style of life they are opposing, because this scarcely exists. If an arrogant, stuffy "power structure," composed of people cultivating a spiritually shallow, selfish and extravagant mode of life for their own personal satisfaction, is really necessary to the members of this student generation as a foil to their own inner need for rebellion and self-assertion, then they are going to have to create it themselves. The belief that it exists in the person of their unfortunate parents—servantless, hounded by the tax collector, enchained to the suburban automobile, the filling station and the supermarket—is a figment of their imagination.

I would like to note, finally, the shrill indignation that runs through most of these letters over the suggestion that students might, while at college, do well to have their minds rather on their studies than on contemporary political affairs. The terms in which I am put in my place for this suggestion, both by letter-writers and by students I have talked to, run the full range of rejection from scorn to pity. This, I am told, is just silly; the idea of noninvolvement is foreign to the spirit and atmosphere of the present campus; the very utterance of such a thought shows that I understand nothing of the present-day student and his problems.

Very well; so be it. I shall examine, a bit further on, some of the reasons for this feeling. What I was concerned to point out in the article, and what I would like now to emphasize once more, is the conflict that exists between this outlook and the academic tradition that inspired the establishment and development of a great many of our centers of learning.

I don't mean to say that a passionate involvement in contemporary affairs is necessarily reprehensible. As an extreme, it is probably preferable to its opposite, which would be a total indifference to public problems. But it does suggest a conflict of some seriousness. If one were replying individually to many of these letters, one would feel like saying: "Very well. We understand the passionate quality of your interest in contemporary affairs—the depth of your concern, the agony of your conscience. We accept your statement that you have learned more from one thing or another that you have done by way of participation in the excitements of the present political scene—demonstrations, work in the ghettos and whatnot—than from all your professors and textbooks. We agree that this is all very selfless, very high-minded, very courageous. But what in the hell—if we might be so bold as to ask—are you doing on a university campus?"

I come away from the reading of these letters with the feeling that if we are going to insist that young people spend four years at this particular stage of life in some place having nominally to do with education, then we need two kinds of universities. One, designed presumably for the majority, would consist of institutions devoted to what I might call the breathless and backgroundless preoccupation with, and action upon, the passing scene. Its curriculum would be one uninterrupted current affairs course, consisting primarily of off-campus field work, participation in demonstrations, social work, political organizational activity, etc., punctuated occasionally by reading periods devoted to the pages of daily newspapers and weekly news magazines and to seminars on the burning problems of the day and the techniques of mass political action. Attention of both students and professors

would drift collectively, here, with the excitements of the time; it would be frowned upon, as in Russia, to go to the library and ask to see the pages of a newspaper more than five years old; and the student would be prepared to take his place, as a member of the crowd, in the uncritical pursuit of various mass-emotional causes.

But side by side with these places (though not too close to them) I think we ought perhaps also to have a few institutions of another sort—humble, inconspicuous, unassuming ones—for the instruction of that smattering of young people who might be curious about life in its wider and more permanent aspects and might want to take these particular years of their life to tap something of the accumulated wisdom of the ages about the nature of man and his predicament. These could be regarded, if you will, as queer ones, as oddities of our civilization, like devotees of various curious hobbies; but they should not be disturbed in their pursuits.

I am serious about this. If the respect for intellectual detachment, and for learning in the true sense, is really as small as it would seem to be from these letters and from other students' reactions, then the contemporary campus is no place for the odd man who might like to devote himself to the acquisition and furtherance of knowledge. Conversely, if an educational establishment is going to cling to the theory that it is a place for the calm study of man and nature and thought, then it is no place for the student whose general interest and concern is for the contribution he can make now, right away, while a student, to public causes beyond the campus.

In attempting to understand the unhappiness of these young people, it might be well to start with the ostensible objects of their concern. Leaving aside for a moment the draft, these are outstandingly three: the state of the American Negro and the underprivileged generally; Vietnam; and the disciplinary constraints of the college campus.

In its involvement with the civil rights movement in the South, and with efforts to relieve the plight of the Negro in the large urban centers, the radical student Left is following a course that has strong parallels with that of the young Russian Populists of the 1860's and '70's. As in the case of these latter, it is not their own plight these people are concerned to alleviate. All evidence suggests that they are largely the children of middle-class, even upper-middle-class, families. Neither they nor their families have suffered inordinately, as a rule, from poverty, lack of status, or lack of civil rights. (The fact that they have not done so is, incidentally, something they take entirely for granted, and for which they experience no sense of appreciation. They are mindful only of the problems their society has *not* solved, not of the ones it has.) Their grievance against American society is not that it has mistreated *them* but that it has not treated others equally well. And so, like their Russian forebears, the object of whose indignation was the treatment of a Russian peasantry to which they did not belong and of which they had little real knowledge, these American idealists "go to the people," in the sense of the Negro community, endeavoring not only to bring them enlightenment and comfort but to support them in movements of protest for which, in some instances,

the people concerned have little interest or stomach. And like these Russian counterparts, once again, they often get small thanks for their pains, finding themselves misunderstood, rejected and mistreated by the very people they are attempting to help.*

One wonders about the reasons for this. The phenomenon of concern by intellectuals for miseries they do not share but which they take as offenses to their conscience is of course a familiar one in the history of Western civilization. Hardship and injustice are real phenomena; but revolutionary protest against such things is usually the product of stimulus from outsiders with a comfortable background. By and large, that is the history of the entire Marxist-socialist movement.

Yet this impulse to defend not one's own interests but those of others is not experienced—or at least not in the same degree—by every generation of student youth. In Russia, Kropotkin's generation experienced it; Pushkin's generation, by and large, had not; and this—although the situation of the peasantry was in many respects worse in Pushkin's time than it was in the 1870's. Similarly in this country: my generation of students—that of the 1920's—felt no need to exert itself on behalf of the Southern Negro or the urban poor (of whom even at that time there was no lack). Why the difference?

It would be easy to reply that this present generation is a particularly wonderful one—idealistic and courageous in a degree we were not. Perhaps. But then, why? Whole generations are not born one way

* In his treatise on the radical student Left, referred to above, Mr. Jack Newfield states, in relation to the work in the ghettos, that "many project workers have been beaten up, and a few of the girls have been almost raped. Almost all the projects have been robbed repeatedly" (p. 102).

or another just by accident. Does the answer really lie just in this—in the obvious misery and degradation of the objects of their attention? Or does it represent the expression of some inner need, to which the objects have only a casual relevance? If these particular objects of concern, compassion and indignation did not exist, would the students search for others?

Proof is lacking; the question is hypothetical. But it seems to me that the presumption lies with an affirmative answer. The speed with which the focus of student concern has switched from the Negro of the rural South to the Negro of the urban North, and then to Vietnam, and then to the disciplinary regime of the college campus, suggests strongly to me that the real seat of discomfort lies not in the objects that attract these feelings but in some inner distress and discontent with contemporary society that would find other issues to fasten to as points of grievance against the established order, even if the present ones did not exist.

It is worth examining in somewhat greater detail the view of the Negro problem that emerges from much of the literature of the New Left.

First of all, the students tend to attribute the Negro's plight, whether in the South or in the Northern urban ghetto, exclusively to the cruelty and indifference of the white community now alive. No account is taken of the complex and stubborn historical roots of this problem. In the case of the South, custom, culture and inheritance are less than dismissed: they are not even noted. In the case of the Northern ghettos, there is no trace of a recognition of the fact that cities in question did not invite the enormous influx of Negro residents that has occurred in recent decades; that they were not prepared for it and could scarcely have been expected to be; that it is not easy for any community to absorb into its life in a short

space of time great masses of people of a cultural background different from that of its regular inhabitants; that all this takes time and patience.

Nor is there any evidence of a recognition that the Negro has had any part in the creation of his own problem, or is to have any part in its solution. The idea that he could improve his situation in any degree, either by his own effort or by his electoral action, appears to be strange to this cast of thought. He is seen only as the helpless ward of public authority. One gains from the reading of these letters the impression that in the view of their writers, the American Negro is to be held to no standards—that all qualities on his part, whether laziness, dishonesty, irresponsibility and violence of behavior or their opposites, are to be rewarded alike.

In entertaining this view, the students are only reflecting, of course, the prevailing climate of American opinion with relation to social problems—a climate in which such terms as thrift, honesty and industry (in the personal sense) have disappeared from the vocabulary, and the discussion of the emoluments people might properly receive is never—but really never—connected in any way with the measure of initiative, integrity, and hard work they are prepared to put forth. And in defense of such an outlook the students would point, of course, to the handicaps the Negro labors under: to the continued denial of civil rights in many parts of the South, to the inferior educational facilities available to him there and elsewhere, to the limitations on housing and employment existing in a great many communities.

In all of this, they would be right insofar as these conditions really prevail—but only so far. Yet their letters show no evidence of a willingness to consider any such gradations. The pattern is wholly without shading. Such progress as *has* been made in the treat-

ment of the American Negro gets as short shrift from them as it does from the Negro leaders. To read these letters, no one would ever dream that there were any American Negroes who *did* enjoy civil rights, who *did* attend school with white children, who *did* receive higher education or advance in business, government, and the professions. The whole great fund of good will and helpfulness that has been forthcoming from parts of the white community disappears completely from this picture, as does every suggestion of a responsibility on the side of the Negro himself; and the image is left only of a cold, heartless, cruel white society, encumbered with total guilt and total power, facing a Negro population marked only by helplessness, innocence, and nobility of spirit.

I say these things with great reluctance, because I know they will be distorted and interpreted as evidence of an outlook I do not really entertain. I yield to none in my admiration for many of the qualities I see in the American Negro. Aside from the distinction of his contributions to music and the drama and humor, he has an exceptionally high sensitivity to people and situations. He has a gift for casual social intercourse that many of us could envy, and one made all the more impressive by the respect and solicitude for the dignity of the other person that underlie it. When not upset by painful racial reactions or demoralized by the various strains and artificialities of urban life, he tends, accordingly, to have better natural manners than a great many American whites. To anyone who believes, as I do, in the overriding importance of good form as an essential of civilized living, these are formidable qualities, and our country, in my opinion, would be distinctly poorer without them. I am perfectly willing, furthermore, to recognize that the responsibility for the present situation of

the American Negro is considerably greater on the part of the white community than it is on his.

But the simplistic character of the view of the Negro problem that comes through in these letters alarms me, because it bodes no good for the future. The frustration these students are now experiencing in the face of this problem is not going to be relieved in the manner they are demanding. The American Negro is not going to be aided by an approach which treats him only as object and not at all as subject. Nor will the nature of the problem itself ever be understood from an approach that treats it so extensively as a moral one. Of course, the instances of individual injustice, heartlessness and brutality have been legion, and each in itself inexcusable. But when great masses of people react in the same way, as masses of American whites have done in their confrontation with this problem, the serious student must put moral judgment aside and search for deeper, more elementary, and less conscious causes. Either the radical student view of this problem mellows and matures, or the frustration that now eats on its bearers and poisons their relation to their own national society is bound to increase.

University Education (1959)*

By Bertrand Russell

Education is a vast and complex subject involving many problems of great difficulty. I propose, in what follows, to deal with only one of these problems, namely, the adaptation of university education to modern conditions.

Universities are an institution of considerable antiquity. They developed during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries out of cathedral schools where scholastic theologians learned the art of dialectic. But, in fact, the aims which inspired universities go back to ancient times. One may say that Plato's Academy was the first university. Plato's Academy had certain well-marked objectives. It aimed at producing the sort of people who would be suitable to become Guardians in his ideal Republic. The education which Plato designed was not in his day what would now be called "cultural." A "cultural" education consists mainly in the learning of Greek and Latin. But the Greeks had no need to learn Greek and no occasion to learn Latin. What Plato mainly wished his Academy to teach was, first, mathematics and astronomy, and, then, philosophy. The philosophy was to have a scientific inspiration with a tincture of Orphic mysticism. Something of this sort, in various modified forms, persisted in the West until the Fall of Rome. After some centuries, it was taken up by the Arabs and, from them, largely through the Jews, transmitted back to the West. In the West it still retained much of Plato's original political purpose, since it aimed at producing an educated élite with a more or less complete monopoly of political power. This aim persisted, virtually unchanged, until the latter half of the nineteenth century. From that time onwards, the aim has become increasingly modified by the intrusion of two new elements: democracy and science. The intrusion of democracy into academic practice and theory is much more profound than that of science and much more difficult to combine with anything like the aims of Plato's Academy.

Universal education, which is now taken for granted in all civilized countries, was vehemently opposed, on grounds which were broadly aristocratic, until it was seen that political democracy had become inevitable. There had been ever since ancient times a very sharp line between the educated and the uneducated. The educated had had a severe training and had learnt much, while the uneducated could not read or write. The educated, who had a monopoly of political power, dreaded the extension of schools to the "lower classes." The President of the Royal Society in the year 1807 considered that it would be disastrous if working men could read, since he feared that they would spend their time reading Tom Paine. When my grandfather established an elementary school in his parish, well-to-do neighbours were outraged, saying that he had destroyed the hitherto aristocratic character of the neighbourhood. It was political

democracy—at least, in England—that brought a change of opinion in this matter. Disraeli, after securing the vote for urban working men, favoured compulsory education with the phrase, “We must educate our masters.” Education came to seem the right of all who desired it. But it was not easy to see how this right was to be extended to university education; nor, if it were, how universities could continue to perform their ancient functions.

The reasons which have induced civilized countries to adopt universal education are various. There were enthusiasts for enlightenment who saw no limits to the good that could be done by instruction. Many of these were very influential in the early advocacy of compulsory education. Then there were practical men who realized that a modern state and modern processes of production and distribution cannot easily be managed if a large proportion of the population cannot read. A third group were those who advocated education as a democratic right. There was a fourth group, more silent and less open, which saw the possibilities of education from the point of view of official propaganda. The importance of education in this regard is very great. In the eighteenth century, most wars were unpopular; but, since men have been able to read the newspapers, almost all wars have been popular. This is only one instance of the hold on public opinion which authority has acquired through education.

Although universities were not directly concerned in these educational processes, they have been profoundly affected by them in ways which are, broadly speaking, inevitable, but which are, in part, very disturbing to those who wish to preserve what was good in older ideals.

It is difficult to speak in advocacy of older ideals without using language that has a somewhat old-fashioned flavour. There is a distinction, which formerly received general recognition, between skill and wisdom. The growing complexities of technique have tended to blur this distinction, at any rate in certain regions. There are kinds of skill which are not specially respected although they are difficult to acquire. A contortionist, I am told, has to begin training in early childhood, and, when proficient, he possesses a very rare and difficult skill. But it is not felt that this skill is socially useful, and it is, therefore, not taught in schools or universities. A great many skills, however, indeed a rapidly increasing number, are very vital elements in the wealth and power of a nation. Most of these skills are new and do not command the respect of ancient tradition. Some of them may be considered to minister to wisdom, but a great many certainly do not. But what, you will ask, do you mean by “wisdom”? I am not prepared with a neat definition. But I will do my best to convey what I think the word is capable of meaning. It is a word concerned partly with knowledge and partly with feeling. It should denote a certain intimate union of knowledge with apprehension of human destiny and the purposes of life. It requires a certain breadth of vision, which is hardly possible without considerable knowledge. But it demands, also, a breadth of feeling, a certain kind of universality of sympathy. I think that

higher education should do what is possible towards promoting, not only knowledge, but wisdom. I do not think that this is easy; and I do not think that the aim should be too conscious, for, if it is, it becomes stereotyped and priggish. It should be something existing almost unconsciously in the teacher and conveyed almost unintentionally to the pupil. I agree with Plato in thinking this the greatest thing that education can do. Unfortunately, it is one of the things most threatened by the intrusion of crude democratic shibboleths into our universities.

The fanatic of democracy is apt to say that all men are equal. There is a sense in which this is true, but it is not a sense which much concerns the educator. What can be meant truly by the phrase "All men are equal" is that in certain respects they have equal rights and should have an equal share of basic political power. Murder is a crime whoever the victim may be, and everybody should be protected against it by the law and the police. Any set of men or women which has no share in political power is pretty certain to suffer injustices of an indefensible sort. All men should be equal before the law. It is such principles which constitute what is valid in democracy. But this should not mean that we cannot recognize differing degrees of skill or merit in different individuals. Every teacher knows that some pupils are quick to learn and others are slow. Every teacher knows that some boys and girls are eager to acquire knowledge, while others have to be forced into the minimum demanded by authority. When a group of young people are all taught together in one class, regardless of their greater or less ability, the pace has to be too quick for the stupid and too slow for the clever. The amount of teaching that a young person needs depends to an enormous extent upon his ability and his tastes. A stupid child will only pay attention to what has to be learnt while the teacher is there to insist upon the subject-matter of the lesson. A really clever young person, on the contrary, needs opportunity and occasional guidance when he finds some difficulty momentarily insuperable. The practice of teaching clever and stupid pupils together is extremely unfortunate, especially as regards the ablest of them. Infinite boredom settles upon these outstanding pupils while matters that they have long ago understood are being explained to those who are backward. This evil is greater the greater the age of the student. By the time that an able young man is at a university, what he needs is occasional advice (not orders) as to what to read and an instructor who has time and sympathy to listen to his difficulties. The kind of instructor that I have in mind should be thoroughly competent in the subject in which the student is specializing, but he should be still young enough to remember the difficulties that are apt to be obstacles to the learner, and not yet so ossified as to be unable to discuss without dogmatism. Discussion is a very essential part in the education of the best students and requires an absence of authority if it is to be free and fruitful. I am thinking not only of discussion with teachers but of discussion among the students themselves. For such discussion, there should be leisure. And, indeed, leisure during student years is of the highest importance. When I was an undergraduate, I made a vow that, when in due course I became a

lecturer, I would not think that lectures do any good as a method of instruction, but only as an occasional stimulus. So far as the abler students are concerned, I still take this view. Lectures as a means of instruction are traditional in universities and were no doubt useful before the invention of printing, but since that time they have been out of date as regards the abler kind of students.

It is, I am profoundly convinced, a mistake to object on democratic grounds to the separation of abler from less able pupils in teaching. In matters that the public considers important no one dreams of such an application of supposed democracy. Everybody is willing to admit that some athletes are better than others and that movie stars deserve more honour than ordinary mortals. That is because they have a kind of skill which is much admired even by those who do not possess it. But intellectual ability, so far from being admired by stupid boys, is positively and actively despised; and even among grown-ups, the term “egg-head” is not expressive of respect. It has been one of the humiliations of the military authorities of our time that the man who nowadays brings success in war is no longer a gentleman of commanding aspect, sitting upright upon a prancing horse, but a wretched scientist whom every military-minded boy would have bullied throughout his youth. However, it is not for special skill in slaughter that I should wish to see the “egg-head” respected.

The needs of the modern world have brought a conflict, which I think could be avoided, between scientific subjects and those that are called “cultural.” The latter represent tradition and still have, in my country, a certain snobbish pre-eminence. Cultural ignorance, beyond a point, is despised. Scientific ignorance, however complete, is not. I do not think, myself, that the division between cultural and scientific education should be nearly as definite as it has tended to become. I think that every scientific student should have some knowledge of history and literature, and that every cultural student should have some acquaintance with some of the basic ideas of science. Some people will say that there is not time, during the university curriculum, to achieve this. But I think that opinion arises partly from unwillingness to adapt teaching to those who are not going to penetrate very far into the subject in question. More specifically, whatever cultural education is offered to scientific students, should not involve a knowledge of Latin or Greek. And I think that whatever of science is offered to those who are not going to specialize in any scientific subject should deal partly with scientific history and partly with general aspects of scientific method. I think it is a good thing to invite occasional lectures from eminent men to be addressed to the general body of students and not only to those who specialize in the subject concerned.

There are some things which I think it ought to be possible, though at present it is not, to take for granted in all who are engaged in university teaching. Such men or women must, of

course, be proficient in some special skill. But, in addition to this, there is a general outlook which it is their duty to put before those whom they are instructing. They should exemplify the value of intellect and of the search for knowledge. They should make it clear that what at any time passes for knowledge may, in fact, be erroneous. They should inculcate an undogmatic temper, a temper of continual search and not of comfortable certainty. They should try to create an awareness of the world as a whole, and not only of what is near in space and time. Through the recognition of the likelihood of error, they should make clear the importance of tolerance. They should remind the student that those whom posterity honours have very often been unpopular in their own day and that, on this ground, social courage is a virtue of supreme importance. Above all, every educator who is engaged in an attempt to make the best of the students to whom he speaks must regard himself as the servant of truth and not of this or that political or sectarian interest. Truth is a shining goddess, always veiled, always distant, never wholly approachable, but worthy of all the devotion of which the human spirit is capable.

* Bertrand Russell, "University Education," *Fact and Fiction*, 1961 First published as "The Great Intrusion: Democracy in Higher Education," *Arkansas University Alumnus*, 1959

Am I Missing Something?

Have any or all of you seen the new Amazon commercial where they talk about efforts being undertaken to eliminate their carbon footprint? By going to their web page you find that "The Climate Pledge was founded in 2019 by Amazon and Global Optimism. The Pledge calls on signatories to be net zero carbon across their businesses by 2040, a decade ahead of the Paris Agreement goal of 2050."

The commercial begins with what I hold to be one of the most beautiful sounds there is, birds singing and chirping. St. Francis himself would be in a state of glory. Although I had four years of the Franciscans in high school, much of which was dissipated by four years of the Jesuits in college, as I grow old I find that only love of family surpasses my affection for this planet and the creatures that inhabit it.

So, kudos to you Amazon. What's that on the screen? A field of wind turbines? Another trip back to the Amazon web site shows that part of how they intend to accomplish their noble mission is through the use of wind projects, and that there were currently thirty-one "large wind and solar projects in the same energy grids as our electricity use."

Oh my! Do you suppose that the folks at Amazon are unaware that according to the American Bird Conservancy web site (abcbirds.org), hundreds of thousands of birds and bats die every year when they accidentally collide with fast-spinning turbine blades. That number grows with each turbine built. "The annual loss of birds from wind turbines was estimated as high as 573,000 in 2012. However, vastly more turbines are in operation now, and more than 1.4 million bird deaths are projected by 2030 or earlier if the United States meets its goal of producing 20 percent of electrical energy with wind. If that figure reaches 35 percent, as new Department of Energy projections suggest, up to 5 million birds could be killed annually. These estimates do not include birds that are killed by collisions with associated power lines and towers, which could be in the hundreds of thousands or even millions annually."

I know, I might not be smart, but do in fact accomplish being a "smart guy." I do not know what the answer is and do in fact laud Amazon for realizing that something should be done to make the air and water just a little cleaner, and the planet a little more livable. What I find problematic is that the identification of a problem, even one as dramatic as the destruction of the planet, should not result in actions that are not thought out as to the consequences they will produce. It seems today that the more extreme a problem is, the less thought that goes into its resolution; coming up with a catch phrase such as "a green planet is better than a warm planet" vitiates the need for a clear headed consideration of options.

"In each action we must look beyond the action at our past, present, and future state, and at others whom it affects, and see the relations of all those things. And then we shall be very cautious" - Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*. In this instance, as with so many others today, it appears that caution has been thrown to the wind.

Joe Bennett