

The University and Its Students

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A UNIVERSITY serves the primary purpose of providing higher education. Students are admitted on the understanding that they will do their best to acquire the "education" (knowledge, skills, and degrees) necessary to practice certain socially needed professions. Students pay fees and perform studies (i.e. work) in the expectation that the instruction will be competent and will effectively prepare them for subsequent professional activity.

The university is part of a surrounding community, and of many communities at large; it must earn a reputation in order to attract first-rate teachers, scholars, and students, and to obtain the funds needed to cover its huge and recurrent deficits. The various communities support the university as a resource to sustain and strengthen society.

A whole network of explicit and implicit contractual arrangements ties together the students, the faculty, the service departments (e.g. libraries), and the administration with public and private sources of finance.

The student enters the university for the purpose of making a remunerative and sat-

isfying career; his interest in academic and professional success coincides with the interest of society which needs professional people. The university admits students who meet certain pre-established standards evidencing the talents and behavior characteristics necessary for successful study. Most students are interested in practical professions, others aim at a life of searching for knowledge for its own sake. Accordingly, the university is both a school and a "center of learning," an "academy."

The social function of the university is (1) to conserve man's knowledge, (2) to train people to put this knowledge to use, and (3) to provide for the production of new knowledge. Thus, the university is the key institution which preserves and changes society.

I. Market Relationship

THE UNIVERSITY-STUDENT relationship is a normal market relationship in which the commodity described as "education" is offered for sale and is being sought by the student. But this market relationship is of a *special* kind. The student's buying

power, in most cases, is derivative—the payments are made by parents, foundations, and taxpayers. The price is artificial and below cost: If the commodity were offered at cost price or at profit, only one or two out of ten students and student families could afford to buy. To persevere with this sort of price regulation, foundation moneys are allocated to gifted students and most of the institutional deficits are covered by taxpayers, alumni, and friends of particular colleges. Many universities have original “endowments,” that is capital (and land) provided by a “founding father” or a public source. Finally, universities engage in business to cover residual deficits (which often are considerable). Business contracts contribute to knowledge, resources, and research facilities, and often provide practical training and jobs to students.

The deficit financing of *academia* means that substantial resources are transmitted, directly and indirectly, to each student in the expectation that the recipient will use those resources in good faith for the purpose the donors have in mind. On the other hand, the administrations are supposed to protect the students against capricious demands which would interfere with personal freedom. It is understood that the academic training will benefit the student personally in that it creates the basis of substantial earning power and often allows the recipient to rise socially. Nevertheless, the students are not in a position to do “their own thing” as they see fit, and they are not their own judge. The donors, including the taxpayers, are expected to continue giving but they will do so only as long as they are persuaded their money is used effectively for the social objectives to which they aspire, and not for activities they believe to be harmful to society.

The university does not serve an anonymous, unbiased, and unlimited market, but discriminates between prospective buyers,

and rejects most of them. The customers must be “qualified” by aptitude and preparation: This peculiar market operates to match “best buys” with “best buyers.” There is, moreover, competition between the various universities and institutional specialization. The student can pick the particular “brand” of a commodity he likes best, and he has second and third choices. But once he has “bought” himself in, he no longer has freedom of choice but must “consume” the product that is being offered; that is, he cannot go from one university to the next without suffering time penalties. (The U.S. system, unnecessarily, lacks the flexibility of the European system, so that in this regard European students enjoy more freedom than Americans.)

The student “buyers” are committed to a behavior code suitable to the pursuit of knowledge. They must not interfere with the education of their colleagues with whom they compete in order to continue their studies and to obtain preferments.

In other words, the market which is the university is necessarily highly regulated, perhaps too much so. For example, the question must be asked whether deficit financing has not been overdone and has not resulted in unnecessary overcrowding, and hence overregulation. Since education is cheap and a degree is a sesame to better jobs, while the university also serves as the best marriage broker for girls, the campus has been invaded by people who lack aptitude, interest, and seriousness of intent. Overregulation became inevitable because too many students do not really qualify and require constant guidance. Unfortunately, because these people are in the wrong place at the wrong time, they are inevitably frustrated, and hence potentially destructive. Some students seem to think that because they are financed publicly, they have been given a license to behave irresponsibly. Undisciplined and aggressive behavior

results in additional regulation and sometimes in chaotic mixtures of regulation and licentious freedom.

Overcrowding has lowered the quality of teaching. As usual, price manipulation, which is aimed at knocking down an unpleasant fact of life, generates new and more serious problems. In this instance, the rule that economics is the management of scarcity has taken its vengeance: There is not enough talent and motivation to staff mass education on a high academic level.

There is no reason why basic student financing should not be changed to long-term personal loans given on generous terms to good credit risks but withheld from poor risk persons. Students who are compelled to finance themselves may find methods of handling their "alienation" more effective than mayhem and revolution.

II. The Campus

THE UNIVERSITY is a social community of a peculiar kind. The American campus tends to be a small town, with all the required municipal services—this is not usually the case in Europe. This "town" is inhabited by a specially constituted population which, for reasons of age, "class," mental status, and interest, as well as self-centeredness or auto-tropism, does not represent a typical cross-section of the society at large. To the extent that the campus is a social organism, "political" tasks have to be solved, i.e. the whole set-up must be run according to certain ground rules. As elsewhere, the formulation of these ground rules is a political decision.

Harm may arise if the campus were used as base for criminal activity. Outside communities may be affected if the campus were to serve as an arena where emotional frustrations can be "abreacted" through aggressive actions. The experience of Berkeley includes the fact that the unrest on the

campus was accompanied, or followed, by a substantial increase in off-campus crime, criminality among students increased, and much of the off-campus crime was perpetrated by students. The campus is a community *sui generis* whose capabilities preserving law and order are underdeveloped. Furthermore, academic tradition has allowed merry pranks and has ruled out the hanging of collegiate Till Eulenspiegels. It is, however, a different matter when, in the hope that there could be 365 Halloweens every year, students are reaching out for executive and judiciary authority on the campus. Young observers tend to believe that student dictatorship would be just fine, whereas the "dead generation" (those over 30) are sure it won't work.

This particular debate raises the question of the political rights of students and illustrates one aspect of the modern debate on qualifications for voting. The trend has been to lower age requirements and to eliminate qualifying factors such as property. The whole problem is in theoretical disarray, especially with respect to so-called "student government." But this "government," which is based on the franchise of every student, is essentially consultative; it has a voice but no executive power; it has no constancy, constitution, or structure; source and scope of its authority are undetermined; and the position of "student president" is a bad anti-democratic joke. Student government does not ensure effective consultation but serves as an intermittent pressure group. Despite rhetoric to the contrary decisions are made for and not by the students.

Much of the current unrest among students appears to be due to the fact that there is uncertainty as to how, by whom, and why decisions are made, how they can be influenced by those who are affected by them, namely the students, and what the areas and limits of student influence should

be. This uncertainty has been perennial but the matter has become increasingly acute because (a) the campus societies have grown larger, (b) the tasks to be accomplished by the academic community have become more complicated, (c) the quality and pertinence of the education that is being offered is often questionable, (d) the administrations have become less accessible and more authoritarian, and (e) the students, possibly, have become more mature, but may be suffering from an imbalance between faster sexual and slower mental maturation.

Let us look at a trivial example. It is arguable whether it was advisable to put *academia* into the hotel business, and still keep it there. It may have been unavoidable to supply dormitories but there is no cogent reason for so-called "residence requirements," and no reason at all *not* to run the dormitories in the way Mr. Hilton runs his hotels. The practice by which college administrators presume to act *in loco parentis* is unacceptable to any person old enough to attend college. Perhaps, the relegation of an adult student to a "teenager" is one of the root causes of troublesome behavior. Administrations are unsuited to act as parents, the proxy parents tend to behave bureaucratically and capriciously, and they often oscillate between over-strictness (particularly in small matters) and over-indulgence ("amnesties" for wrong-doing). A tendency to subject students to continual administrative "hazing" sometimes is paired with cowardice in the face of rebellion. The parent role of the university should be abolished, and good riddance.

On the other hand, since the university exists as a community, it also is obligated to provide for law and order and this duty is not performed if, for example, the administration permits disturbances of teaching and threats to personal safety. The toleration of deviant student behavior, on

whatever grounds, is tantamount to granting special privileges to some students—privileges within the campus community *and* within the overall society. It is rarely pointed out that if university administrations fail to live up to their end of the contracts (e.g. by providing full courses and safety), they could be sued by those who were damaged by surrender to illegal pressure. Like any municipal administration, the university administrations are required to enforce laws which legislatures have enacted for the entire nation, and which a minority of students has no right to change.

III. The Educational Service

THE STUDENTS WHO are paying the university for educational service clearly are entitled to have their say on the service they are buying. During the past few years, curricula have become increasingly demanding and rigid, and the student's choice in selecting his own "educational package" has become ever more limited. There has been a trend to add more and more obligatory courses, to present courses that are too specialized, to leave many basic subjects uncovered, to overload students with assignments, to place undue emphasis on aptitude and achievement tests, to impose too many examinations, to over-value grades, to grade mechanically and severely, and in general to sacrifice quality of insight for quantity of "factual information." The pressure on the students often is too great—it is not true that the "truly gifted" have an easy time. This pressure may result in psychological effects, some of which have lasting deleterious impact. Such a set-up, which in large part is due to lack of professorial coordination, makes little sense and it does curtail the freedom to learn.

The faculties have insisted on academic freedom in the sense of freedom to teach. This is entirely justified, yet some absurd

interpretations of this principle have become fashionable. The professors are entitled to pick their subject matter and to develop their own theories, but the academic ethos is holding them to the tenets of objectivity and scientific methodology. Teaching is not indoctrination but involves the presentation of all pertinent viewpoints. It cannot limit the student's freedom to think—on the contrary, it should open his mind. Unfortunately, the mass expansion of education has resulted in a decline of this particular freedom. It is not that brilliant teachers are lacking, but there is a shortage, and there are fairly large numbers of poorly qualified instructors. Much teaching is done by graduate students. An increasing number of professors never lived outside the ivy curtain, and too many teachers are "alienated" from society. The information that should be presented often gets lost between survey courses, over-specialization, and seminar discussions that, in terms of student preparation, often are premature.

Some of these shortcomings should be avoidable but they have been growing worse. Although there are conflicting trends, the educational deterioration has entailed several consequences: Many teachers lack inner security and are afraid of more highly qualified "competition." Insecurity often leads to in-fighting which lowers the effectiveness of the faculty and affects faculty-students relations. The same insecurity is destructive of objectivity and makes for doctrinaire teaching. The worst effect has been that departments—not merely in the social sciences—often are selected for conformity of opinion rather than diversity of approach. Conformist teachers tend to reinforce each other's prejudices, they treat different views unfairly, and the faculty as a whole fails to present objective and complete presentations of the subject matter.

There have even been cases when politi-

cal and scientific differences led to clear-cut discrimination against students, through arbitrary grades and capricious rejections of dissertations. The students have little recourse against such arbitrary treatment. They may change mentors, but only at considerable cost in time and money.

Thus, the faculties often fail to live up to their obligations and they have not been exercising self-control. There have been few countervailing forces and no effective separation of powers. The faculties are dictatorial. Hence, in a personal sense, the "class" that refuses "to polish the professorial apple" may well be described as "oppressed."

The students possess an *inherent* right to protest against arbitrary power and inadequacies in the education that is being offered. They also are entitled to ask for instruction in subjects that interest them. It is, moreover, clear that education should provide information useful for the life that will be lived in future, as distinguished from information about life in the past and life of the spirit. But this does not change a basic fact: the production of knowledge and the purveyance of learning, which are the university's business, must be run according to certain rules, or else the objectives of the undertaking cannot be attained.

IV. Constitutional Crisis

A FREQUENT COMPLAINT has been that there is "depersonalization" among the students (because of overemphasis on competition), between the students and the administrators (and proxy parents), and between the students and the faculty. There also is "depersonalization" within the faculty, and between the faculty and the administration, and between both and the trustees. This complaint is justified, but the phenomenon is unavoidable in large institutions.

A more pertinent complaint is that the

campus has been the scene of an unending power struggle. The trustees abdicated long ago, the administrations withdrew into the field of logistics, and the faculties won dominance over all main areas of academic responsibility, with most professors running their fiefs as absolute rulers. Now, the students are reaching out for democratic power against professorial feudalism, not because they are moved by the ideas of liberty and equality, but because the princes of *academia* do not use their power properly and because the students need more protection. (This discussion is not concerned with the problems of black students, which have different roots and meanings. Analysis of the specific difficulties of black students requires separate treatment.)

The student protesters may not address themselves to specific deficiencies which exist on American campuses and they may have a mood rather than a program. By contrast, many complaints may be overdrawn; after all, quite a few students are smart enough to fool the professors and take advantage of their pomposity. But the students have justified grievances. Some faculty members either enjoy rebellion or they play the three monkeys act. The academic administrations do not show much initiative to rectify shortcomings and abuses, which they feign not to see, and if they do not pursue "hard" or "soft" policies which aggravate the situation, they like to withdraw into the cocoon of public relations, campus architecture, parking regulations, janitorial services, and registration. The trustees are concerned, but they can easily be diverted with fund drives, commencement ceremonies, football games, and reassuring talk. As the French have it, *c'est par la tête que le poisson pourrit*; and the students have indigestion because the fish they are expected to eat is no longer fresh.

There must be better procedures to allow the students, whether acting as a group

or as individuals, to voice their grievances and to obtain relief. Whether or not the students need "power," which would be elusive anyway, they need a redefinition of their rights and obligations. They need a system which provides more education in less time—they are ill served by a cockeyed system in which the PhD in the natural sciences requires an average of five-and-one-half years and in the social sciences, seven years. The university administrations should divest themselves of powers they do not require and which they usurped without title and authority, notably the power to meddle in private lives; while the faculty's powers also must be curtailed and its responsibilities properly defined. The administrators and the trustees, on the other hand, must reassert powers which they are supposed to exercise but which in many instances they allowed to lapse.

It should be self-evident, therefore, that the university crisis derives in large part from structural disorder. The university "constitution" necessarily calls for separation of powers, but the roles of the constituent groups are uncertain, there is too much and too little use of powers, imbalances of rights, and the structure as a whole needs overhaul. The *anomie* of the university structure often is wildly exaggerated but there are obvious defects.

Calls for academic reform could also be based on the notion that as knowledge advances by quantum jumps, progress in educational technique cannot be fast enough. The job is to integrate the "knowledge of the times" and to put it across during the short time available in college, and subsequently to enable post-graduates to keep up-to-date. Actually, pressure for meaningful reform is light, courses on new subjects are merely added not integrated, data handling and library services are inadequate; and talk about reform often serves as pretext for political agitation. The opponents of the

agitators and revolutionaries admit, platonically, that reforms are needed, but think in terms of palliatives and gadgets, and do not worry about the structural and logistics problems. The questions posed by the arbitrary powers presently wielded by the faculty and the *carence* of the boards of trustees and the administrations are safely hidden behind a smoke screen of pseudo-democratic verbiage.

V. The University as Active Political Agent

SOME DISCUSSIONS about reform really aim at the transformation of the university function. The students, we are told, demand the "participation of universities as active political agents for social change, particularly relating to race and ghetto problems," to use the wording of a Stanford report. This demand implies that the university be changed from an instrument of education and research into an instrument of political action, and that the search for knowledge be supplemented or supplanted by the quest for a better life or, more moderately, for improved social organization. Since politics deals in futures and, therefore, is beyond conclusive proof and disproof, it is necessarily meta-scientific. Politics would be admissible like other "metaphysical" endeavors as a matter of description and analysis. But if action is to be prepared and executed under the auspices of a university, then education, at least in part, must be subordinated to ideology.

Who is to decide which ideology is to rule? Would that decision imply that divergent ideologies must be excluded? If there is to be no dominance of ideologies, there still would be selection of action priorities. Some people, for example, may not feel that race and ghetto problems are of overriding importance or that their study in the context of immediate political action (e.g. voter registration) is particularly

meaningful. The underlying assumption of the suggestion is that "political action" by the university (i.e. by busy-body students who don't stay with the problem) would alleviate the ghetto problem. But perhaps more adequate solutions can be found in medicine and technology?

The nature of the solutions cannot be pre-determined. If there is predetermination, the university would become totalitarian. No one has title to prohibit the study of any problem but if so, who is to say on which political action program the university should concentrate? And if there are action programs, the politics around them, including the opposition, must be properly organized. Politics must be played according to certain rules, and it can become a university function only if all other university functions are changed. Business and love have both their own set of rules—the mixing of the two ends with a wholly undesirable product.

Note that concentration on a particular action program implies that scarce funds are withheld from other projects. If there is to be no voting on the subject, the decisions would be arbitrary. Who of the constituent groups would make those decisions? But if there is to be voting, must not *all* groups who are affected by responsibility, interest, or right, have a voice and a vote? Should the students vote alone, or perhaps together with the faculty? Should the vote come from the administration, and how should an intra-administrative vote be organized? Would the alumni, the trustees, and the financiers have a vote? Since political action rather than education is involved would the community at large be called upon to vote also, and would the voting be by popular vote, by curia, or in representative legislative bodies? Would the direction of the university be changed every time the electorate, however composed, changes its mind? What happens if

the desires of the various electoral groups cannot be reconciled? How would the debates preceding those votes be organized?

Suppose the notion that race and ghetto problems do have a particular urgency is accepted, why should persons whose interest lies in different areas be involved in tasks to which they will not devote themselves after they enter professional life? Would they be permitted to vote themselves "out"?

It would seem to be obvious that a proper marriage between education and political action is difficult and well-nigh impossible, while a shotgun marriage would intensify the internecine conflicts on the campus. Furthermore, political action would involve universities in politics. The parties which have the majority in the legislatures would quickly cut university budgets if they were opposed by institutionalized academic political action.

There is, to be sure, every reason to familiarize students with current problems—all of them. If this is granted and if the university remains a "knowledge factory" without becoming an action agency, the Stanford suggestion boils down to an implied proposal to establish an interdepartmental institute on race problems. Why not? I am all in favor of it though many other pressing problems need attention but are being ignored. Right now, "black studies" are popular and there soon will be too many institutes dealing with ghetto problems, but this would not mean more than that scarce resources are misused. Still, popularity is not a good guide for scientific and educational planning.

For that matter, let us not forget that in response to Nazism, raciology for many decades has been, and still remains, a taboo science. This very example illustrates the hazards of politicizing education, especially since in the prevalent intellectual climate it is most uncertain that race problems

would be studied objectively. The sad and easily documented fact is that the academic community is at present resisting the objective study of race (which is different from "black studies").

Political action by whomsoever should be preceded by study on the part of students (of all ages) and by research on the part of researchers. In this preliminary work of fact-finding and analysis, the university can help enormously. It is doing so and it should be doing more. But political action must be the mission of those who are in the political action business—political executive bodies, elected representatives, the courts, the parties, and the voters (including professors and students).

If "political action" were conceived as an activity distinct from legislation and government (broadly speaking), it would be nothing but debate, propaganda, agitation, and possibly rebellion—but those must be tasks of political organizations and public media, not of institutions of education and research.

The university has a distinct political function, but this function is to produce knowledge needed for the solving of political problems. It is precisely not an academic function to accept *Zeitgeist* slogans, nor to get involved in political or ideological controversies, let alone to speak with one totalitarian voice in such a controversy. On the contrary, as an institution the university must be the guardian of objectivity, rationality, and knowledge. Incidentally, the finances of all universities rest, with one foot, on tax exemption, and tax exempt foundations are not supposed to finance political activities. The distinction may sometimes be blurred, but political action remains factually and legally different from research.

The meaning assigned to the term "political action" varies according to ideology. One "new left" organ wrote: "The univer-

sities cannot be reformed. They must be abandoned or closed down. They should be used as bases for action against society. . . ." Acquiescence in this sort of action would put the university out of business or else be a fraud on those who finance the campus—if an administration consents that its university be used as a base of attack against society, then this campus would be opposed by society. Note that nowhere are the revolutionaries in the majority among the students. Acceptance of the close-down policy would violate the rights of the majority. But if there is to be no voting on such questions, who defines the actions which are legitimate? In Latin America the use of the university as a revolutionary base has included the printing of propaganda materials, storage of weapons, drills, target practice, the concealment of fugitives, etc. In one case, the "kids" tried to help the school of anatomy. The police chief who had been missing for several weeks was found in the formaldehyde tank where his body was being prepared for the dissecting table. If there are no firm ground rules, the defining would be done by those who bring the most power to bear. Whoever does the defining at the university level, the tax collector and the purveyor of funds ratify or reject the definition on levels above the campus. There is no real power behind the posturing of students, but the infusion of power symbolism into university business is inherently destructive of intellectual pursuits predicated on logic and evidence.

Research requires suspension of judgment until the facts are established and analyzed. So long as the university pursues knowledge and truth, it cannot become an "active political agent for social change": the facts are not "in" before the change has been accomplished. Naturally, the university might be captured by an activist group which would use the university as a political tool. This can happen if the legal and

contractual arrangements under which universities operate are not enforced or are changed; if society tolerates the substitution of propaganda for education and accepts the consequent reduction in the formation of national resources; or if the government becomes totalitarian and utilizes academic institutions as "weapons." In brief, the university is as unsuited to becoming a political action agency as a legislature or a party is unsuited to being transformed into an institution of learning.

VI. Political Discrimination

POLITICS PERVADES virtually all intellectual efforts. By the same token, politics influences education, inevitably and profoundly. Yet it has been a characteristic of social and intellectual progress that politics *per se* have been eliminated from a large number of activities. Doctors and hospitals do not discriminate between patients on political grounds; the anarchist and the reactionary are equal before the law; soldiers and civil servants are not allowed to engage in politics; and food is sold to faceless customers and—in this country—is not withheld from political enemies. Thus, the limitation of politics appears to be a *conditio sine qua non* of a functioning social order.

Political non-discrimination is one of the crucially important human rights. It is inherent in the concept of equality, in the notion that minorities must be protected, and it is an aspect of free speech, and of personal freedom and institutional liberty. Non-discrimination also is essential in education. Clearly, political discrimination—among students and among professors—would ruin education as a major social resource and as a chief tool of improving human ability just as, it should be noted, the abandonment of meaningful discrimination between teachers and students—which is based on the difference between knowledge

and ignorance—would destroy education.

Politics necessarily discriminates between friend and foe. The intellectual work preparatory to political action implies the same type of discrimination as well as preference choices between objectives. The "policy sciences," therefore, are in part meta-scientific. The university is not unaccustomed to dealing with this sort of thing. I call attention to the tradition of teaching theology which deals with meta-scientific ideas and concepts, and which involves the explicit recognition of different and irreconcilable systems of thought. The study of religion is, *inter alia*, concerned with the analysis of what all religions have in common, and parts of religion or theology can be taught even by an atheist. But there is no attempt to force, for example, Protestants to attend classes on the essence of Protestantism that would be taught by Catholics, let alone to have Catholic professors prepare students to become Protestant ministers. This system could be changed only if the differences in faith no longer were taken seriously.

In this case, objectivity is not based on the hypothesis that there is only one theology, that a competent theologian is qualified to teach all students, and that differences in doctrine are merely slight deviations from the one and only truth. Objectivity is observed by explicit recognition of the differences.

This precedent is applicable to the sociopolitical sciences, but not exclusively so. However, the tradition in the many branches of science in which splits by schools and methods are customary (in psychology, for example) has been to ignore the cleavage and proclaim the principle of unitary truth. The effect of this intellectual legerdemain is that departments often have dominant party lines, discriminate against the non-conformist professors and students, and even ignore the teachings of the schools

that "do not belong." The consequent teaching is incompetent because important aspects of the subject matter are concealed. In addition, the non-believer is either brainwashed or he does not get the enlightenment he is seeking. Discrimination inevitably violates the basic principle of scientific integrity.

VII. The University as Revolutionary Base

SOME STUDENT theoreticians trying to adapt Marx to modern conditions have argued that the university has replaced the factory as the *locus* from where the revolutionaries should be able to unhinge society. According to this interpretation, the proletariat has become corrupted by bourgeois society and the students have become the revolutionary class of our time.

The university, supposedly, has become society's focal point because it supplies the uninterrupted flow of knowledge which keeps industrial production and defense going, because it educates and conditions future leadership, and because it performs as opinion-maker and as formulator of "concepts" (for example, for political reorganization). One SDS writer asserted: "It is on our assembly lines in the universities that the leaders of U.S. society are molded into what they are now." He asked: "What would happen to a manipulative society if its means of creating manipulatable people were done away with?" Another revolutionary talked about a growing "new working class" produced by the university—technical and professional people, higher-level industrial and social service workers. This new class is "at the very heart of production" and "could have an immediate stake in radical social change." It may not "stop the wheels . . . but it can raise hell just the same and might be the spark that would get the working class moving." There is, finally, the elementary fact that

the "knowledge industry" accounts for a very large slice of the gross national product (about 30 per cent according to some probably highly inflated estimates). The notion that revolutionary conquest might be effected through the university, therefore, is not as fatuous as it would appear at first glance.

The university, indeed, is a basic institution. But is society vulnerable in the university? The university is not a "plant" like a power station whose conquest might enable the conqueror to put the authorities temporarily out of business. Revolutionary "conquests" of universities may have symbolic value and they may embarrass the "establishment" but since society can easily absorb a long disruption of university functions, they cannot, save for accidents, lead to "seizures of power." The students do not form a "class" if only because, as students, they are short-timers. They also lack unity of political purpose and interest. Most of them do have a clear-cut interest to finish their academic work and to keep the university going for their own private concerns; they cannot afford long disruptions, whereas society can wait till the "rebellion" fades away.

Students participate in every revolution, but the students are not a "revolutionary class." As a group, they are neither "manipulatable" nor "non-manipulatable," and the play-acting of revolution on the campus would not change their characteristics whatever they are. The SDS theoreticians overlook the fact that if the concept of the "manipulative society" were correct, today's students inevitably must become tomorrow's manipulators; and that those students are being manipulated today.

Nor are the professors a "revolutionary class." Some professors may become politicians and revolutionaries—a few may even excel at the business of politics—but as a group they lack uniform political interest

and those who participate in public administration or political struggle are not of one mind. There are a few professors in every political camp, but the "class" of professors won't be undertaking many political revolutions.

The hope that revolutionary students will remain revolutionaries in later life also is bound to be unfulfilled, except for a few. In the average person revolutionary enthusiasm is an adolescent phase, as even Lenin saw. Young ritualistic "liberals" often grow old as "liberals." By contrast, revolutionaries, beginning at 25 or so, gradually veer to conservative positions. To grow old as a revolutionary, one must become an organization man; one must change into something the young revolutionary does not want to be.

As a target system, the university is far too dispersed to be put out of action *in toto*. A few individual colleges may be attacked but none of those attacks has yet accomplished more than symbolic "noise." The overall national network of universities remains invulnerable to Malaparte's technique of the *coup d'état*, which is implicit in some of the "new left" doctrine. The purely Marxist approach does not work because the sociology does not fit. The Leninist approach is not promising because the university (or the students) cannot perform as combat organizations. There remains Mao Tse-tung's idea of the "mobilization of consciousness," but even if it be granted a certain potential, the success of revolutionary students is easily compensated by the "mobilization" of counter-revolutionary thinking and action, as the French events of 1968 demonstrated. In the strict Marxian sense, the university is "revolutionary" because it creates the knowledge required for the creation of new "productive forces." But this has nothing to do with "political revolution" which, in the deepest meaning of historical materialism, is an epi-phenom-

enon that is mostly either premature or unnecessary.

The "conquest" of universities presupposes tolerance of such exercises by the "establishment." Indeed, some radical spokesmen have come close to arguing that the rebels should have the privilege of revolution-making and that the authorities no longer possess the right to suppress riots and insurrections. This is fatuous: the authorities have been "permissive" because a few student rebels may damage university property but do not pose a real threat. Actually, so-called counter-actions largely were aimed at keeping instruction going—the rebels could be left "in possession," then be quarantined, and after a few days it would all be over. The revolutionary spook might be ended by cutting the university financing which has kept it going. There cannot be an arrangement by which the universities are transformed into bases of permanent revolution, if only because such a program would presuppose the impossible, namely that counter-action is permanently prevented.

No serious strategist would evaluate the situation otherwise. The function of student

rebellions is not to make revolution but to practice "propaganda of the deed" and political symbolism, or else the rebellion is just an oversized and costly prank. The truth which is gradually beginning to emerge, is that some radical student activities are manipulated by established political forces that pursue goals about which the students remain ignorant. (This does not imply that spontaneous revolutionary student activity does not exist.) The manipulators—they are not all of one color—have no illusions about the revolutionary potential of students, but they believe that student rebellions may create useful disorder. Communist wire-pullers expect that rebellions provide a recruiting ground and training for fledgling professional revolutionaries, facilitate the infiltration of the armed forces, and spread defeatism and "critical thinking." Lenin lambasted "left radicalism" as an infantile disease, but this finding does not mean that the *pubescentes* and their afflictions cannot be exploited to propagate the revolutionary virus.

Part II of Mr. Possony's discussion will appear in the Fall issue of *Modern Age*.