

University Life As An End In Itself

Dr. Konstantin Kolenda, author of the concluding article in this year's Faculty Sound-Off series, is a well-known campus figure.

A 1950 Rice graduate, Dr. Kolenda received his Ph.D. from Cornell and is now Associate Professor of Philosophy.

He is a resident associate of Will Rice College and has served as faculty adviser to several student organizations including the 1961-62 Senate.—Ed.

By KONSTANTIN KOLENDA
Philosophy Department

A student's life is full of insistent pressures. Classes, assignments, examinations, papers make their incessant successive claims on one's time, energy, emotion.

And if a college prides itself on being tough, demanding—as Rice is—one may soon fall into a mood of a warrior fighting off a relentless enemy. To be sure, one keeps in mind the rewards at the end of the battle: an honorable discharge from the pursuit of higher education, a sheepskin, perhaps a calling.

AND YET the day will come when a student—by then an alumnus—will realize that these four years in college were an exciting and colorful time in his life. For this was the threshold of manhood, of womanhood.

This was a period during

which one moved, imperceptibly, from being a high school kid to a bread-earner, head of a family, a professional man, with many serious responsibilities facing him daily. Only then one may be able to see those moments of college days which were not merely a preparation for life but also revealing glimpses into life itself.

In fact, the joys of college life are many. They are of different kinds: intellectual, moral, aesthetic.

ALONG WITH giving much routine, pedestrian information, the contact with intellectual discipline does have its high points. Suddenly and unexpectedly one is drawn into an admiring wonderment—of a historical personage, an extraordinary human event, an ingenious flight of fancy, a brilliant mathematical proof, a daring scientific hypothesis.

An awareness may dawn upon us that by contemplating the adventures and achievements of other minds, many of them dead long since, we are actually looking into the deeper reaches of our own humanity. A failure to experience pleasures of this

kind while in college is a major deprivation, perhaps never to be made good.

The very fact of sharing the learning experience with other students and teachers gives it a special dimension of communal, moral joy. The reminiscences of years to come will be mainly anchored in the faces of classmates, buddies, friends, "campus characters."

ONE WILL remember projects undertaken, problems faced, pranks executed—in the spirit of mutual co-operation and loyal solidarity. "Togetherness" need not always be a sociologist's category; it can name a real joy.

And there is the physical surrounding which, because of scholarly and social pressure, largely remains unnoticed (and unheard, except when a Dr. Davies misses the sound of chimes) . . . until one returns to visit his Alma Mater.

Our "gnomes" are a fair game for campus humor, but in a moment of fairness we should grant them (and those who employ them) that their efforts to keep the campus beautiful are not in vain. There are times when our "oasis of South Main" does look beautiful, especially when adorned by morning freshness or by the setting sun, reflected in the blazing windows of Lovett Hall.

In short, college life has its moments worth having for their own sakes. Would it not be wiser to recognize, acknowledge, and absorb these moments while they occur, and not merely in nostalgic retrospect? If Plato is right, time is the moving image of eternity, and why should a college student be unaware of this possibility?