

ACT

Society pompously informs its youth, "The young and inexperienced have no right to question. Once one has entered society, then one may question responsibly."

The "establishment" somehow considers the academic environment as separated from the rest of the world. If this disassociation exists, the University has failed. From what better perspective than this, might one question? While the perspective is broadest it is most productive. To question from within is to act within a predetermined set of values. As students, we should examine. As members of society, we should participate.

If we can free ourselves of stereotypes, faulty axioms and prejudices without losing contact with reality, we stand in an excellent position to apply reason to our observations and to recommend better courses of action.

The "establishment" argues that youth's propositions are idealistic and impractical. In turn, youth charge that the establishment is blindly conservative. To write off the establishment as closed-minded or similarly to declare that youth is empty-headed is to make dangerously absolute value judgment. Of course such judgments are often made and at times with substantial reason, but this polarizing process operates to the detriment of understanding and progress. What is needed is the application of reason on both sides.

With regard to the liberal tendency of youth, it seems that the first step rests with us. We must act with reason to warrant the respect of the establishment. If the rationality of youth is recognized, then the propositions of youth will bear that much more credibility.

In order to apply reason one must first be fully aware of the issues involved. Consideration must be given to the various facets of the issue and to the opinions concerning the issue. This is learning . . . the gathering of information. Once the information has been collected and studied it is time to formulate opinions and, most important of all, to take action.

In general, there is no effective challenge to a conviction based in actual or supposed rationality other than another rational argument. Emotional appeals are ignored when one feels that suffering is merely a necessary evil in the achievement of a basic good. Of course, once a contrary opinion has introduced an element of doubt then the conviction is subject to attack on emotional grounds. But, there must be some predisposition to admit the emotional appeal before it can have an effect.

The peace demonstrator who is unable to rationally answer challenges of bystanders will do no more to change minds than the YAF'er who resorts to mockery. Such people serve only to reinforce existing opinion. The only results of such polarized opinions are barriers to communication. When we observe in terms of stereotypes and rationalize in terms of prejudice we accomplish absolutely nothing of a positive nature.

