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Why Study? (I)

The SCHOOLMEN'S invitational conference with philosophy students from Indiana University and the University of Illinois is a step in the right direction.

Too good to be true runs a well-known proverb.

But The SCHOOLMEN have shown that it is too good not to be ALWAYS true.

The conference should not be allowed to pass into memory without receiving due praise and an emphatic request to come again.

The whole idea of stimulating college students to a serious interest in studies deserves the warmest encouragement.

To some such a statement will seem tautological, and its implication will seem facetious.

As a matter of fact no statement could be more objective and realistic; and the proof of the implication can only too easily be found without leaving this campus!

Here, and on American campuses generally, too many "students" laugh off the intellectual life as they would a joke.

Too many "students" merely occupy rooms, play radios and waste time.

What is even more commendable (and heart-breaking), they squander parental money to which they have no reasonable claim unless they show themselves serious, self-sacrificing, appreciative students.

Only those will become deep, useful thinkers and cultured gentlemen who love the pursuit of wisdom, who discover the best philosophy of life and live according to it, and who live by an ordered day.

Students who cannot turn off the radio or fold up the bridge table when it is time to do some serious thinking in the sanctuary of their room or in the almost inexhaustible treasury of the university library do not deserve to take up the space which others would put to good use.

The school paper with its columns of jest; sports (intra-mural and varsity); and at Notre Dame even a few minutes a night for the Bulletin may all be worked into the college man's day.

But students are here primarily to study.

They are here not to get ready for life but to begin to live--to live their one life in the one best way.

Why study, but to develop all that is in them for their own best interests and for the sake of others?

This is all a commonsense question interesting and vital to every student whether skeptic or reasonable, theist or atheist, Catholic, Protestant, Jew.

One of the chief benefits deriving from a conference like The SCHOOLMEN'S on Wednesday night, dealing as it did with the philosophy of finality or of purposefulness in the world is to awaken the casual auditor to an active interest in the very foundations of life--philosophy; and to quicken within the lethargic student a zeal for study.

Another talking-point for more invitational conferences is the opportunity they offer students to oppose, on intellectual grounds, not the customary agreeable, respectful, ever-patient yes-men of straw (who exist in text-books and cannot retort) but live and capable students confirmed in another school of thought (or of highly refined sense-experience)--opponents who are ready and anxious to defend their position and disciple prospective converts.

Too, a conference like Wednesday's convinces the student that knowledge is useless, lacking in power, unless the student has made it his own.

For the real student there can never be any substitute for study--for personal investigation, analysis, comparison, deduction, affirmation or denial.

(To be continued in tomorrow's Bulletin.)