

## ETHNIC AND CULTURAL FACTORS IN NATIONAL DEFENSE

Mr. Max Lerner

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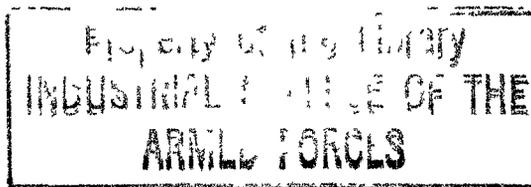
ETHNIC AND CULTURAL FACTORS IN NATIONAL STRENGTH

16 November 1962

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COLONEL INGMIRE: Admiral Rose, Gentlemen:

As a part of our overall examination of human and natural resources, so far this week we have looked at agriculture, water, iron, and steel.

Today we will consider some of the intangible factors that influence human resources. More specifically, we will devote our attention to the ethnic and cultural elements as factors of national strength.

To discuss this subject with us we are fortunate in having a distinguished scholar, journalist, teacher, and author who has devoted many years of study and writing to the American civilization.

Gentlemen, it is my pleasure to introduce to you Dr. Max Lerner, a syndicated columnist of the New York Post, and Professor of American Civilization at Brandeis University.

Dr. Lerner.

DR. LERNER: Gentlemen:

A great contemporary poet, W. H. Auden, has said that we are all double men, and in a sense that's true of all of us in America today. We live on two levels. On one level we have our own plans, our hopes, and our fears. On another level we are aware that there are forces in the world outside which at any moment can pick up this little private universe of ours and crush it like an eggshell.

The whole American Nation now has this feeling of carrying on its existence on the edge of an abyss, and it shares with the Armed Forces the sense of danger which in the past it has not always shared during peacetime. In that sense the distinction between the Armed Forces and the Nation has been wiped out so far as the edge of danger is concerned. So far as the conscious responsibilities go, however, the distinction has not been wholly wiped out.

I believe we live in a heroic time in this sense, one in which not only is American survival quite literally in the balance but the survival of the whole city of man. The city of man has become the beleaguered city. The citadel of defense within that city has become part of the campaign of history. It is within this framework that I talk to you this morning.

I owe it to you, I think, although I am told that you have some outlines of my misspent life, to tell you a little about my basic approach. I think the most important thing, actually, that one can get from a speaker-- because you can always find out what he has written and read what he has to say in a factual, substantive way--the basic thing you can perhaps get from a speaker, is his approach, the way in which he approaches almost any problem. I want to spend a few moments first on that.

No. 1--I recognize relatively few determinisms in history, that is, I recognize relatively few areas in which we can say that certain things are inevitable. Notice I say "few." I don't say "none." I also recognize very few guarantees that are given to a nation, to a people, in history, very few blank checks. In fact, I know of no blank check that has been signed by whatever forces that shape

history, no blank check that has been signed for our American Nation and for its future.

I have put on the blackboard to guide us a bit during some of this a formula which I got from a very great thinker, one of the people who have done more to shape my thinking than most people in the history of political/ <sup>thought.</sup> That formula comes from Machiavelli. As you know, Machiavelli wrote one of the great books of modern times, The Prince, which was a kind of guide for the head of state in the city states of Renaissance Italy in the 15th century. He also wrote the discourses on Livy, the great Roman historian, in which he developed some of his views.

Within his frame of thinking there were three elements that counted in history. One was *necessita*, the second was *fortuna*, and the third was *virtu*. *Necessita* is obviously necessity or determinism. I will try to indicate what seem to me to be the determinisms that we must recognize. There is the march of technology, human invention as applied to the resources--the forces of nature, and the resources that are available. Second, there is the fact of available resources, which you evidently have already been discussing. Third, there are what I call the very intangible forces which are loose in the world outside and which we must recognize as existing. This doesn't mean that we can allow them to crush us. It is simply that we must recognize their nature.

What I have indicated to the right of *necessita* is obviously my own. This is my own reading of what seemed to me whatever framework of necessity there is.

I said a while ago that there are few determinism that I recognize. These

are the only ones, so far as I know. When I speak of resources, by the way, obviously I speak of them in the sense both of the natural resources and of the human resources. These are what the French call *donnée*. They are the givens with which we work.

I want to come back soon to that scheme, but let me here say that there is a tendency on the part of a large number of Americans today to give much more credence to determinism than I am willing to give. We are living under the shadow of two nightmares. One is the nightmare that our world will become a mound of radiated ashes. The other is the nightmare that our world will become a totalitarian ant colony, with America part of it. You will find that perhaps far more people than you are willing to admit are living under the spell of one or the other or both of those nightmares. As far as I am concerned, when I am told that we have to make a choice between them, obviously, instead of accepting the "either or," either we will become a mound of radiated ashes or a totalitarian ant colony, I say "neither nor." I do not accept the inevitability of either of these events. I see nothing in the course of modern history to indicate that one or the other of them has to happen.

As you probably know, there is considerable discussion in American university circles about this, and sometimes it is put in terms of "either red or dead," and my answer is "neither red nor dead." I elaborate, neither a world of radiated ashes nor a world which is a totalitarian ant colony. But let me then go on to say that there are no guarantees on either, also. I know of nothing in the contemporary world which will insure us against our world becoming a mound of

radiated ashes. It may well happen, and I know of nothing in the contemporary world which will insure us, which will guarantee us, against a totalitarian world. That may well happen, too.

In other words, what I am suggesting is that the first of those three parts of the Machiavellian formula for history is an open-ended one. We don't know about it.

Perhaps I can put this best by saying that when I am asked whether I am an optimist or a pessimist when I look toward the future I say that I am neither of them--I am a possibleist. I believe that certain things are possible, that there are no guarantees and no determinisms, but certain things are possible. I believe that the task of everyone of us--your task in the performance of your functions and my task in the performance of my functions--is to stretch the edge of possibility.

Machiavelli believed in fortuna. He believed that there were certain convergences of chance, chance and luck and destiny, in the world. I believe that it is not in our stars but in ourselves that we are going to shape the future of our American civilization and of the free world. In that sense I find the second of those three factors of his of relatively very slight importance. At least it is to me very incalculable, if indeed it does operate, as it does. It operates, but it is incalculable for us. We are not able to manipulate it in any way.

I have spoken now of determinisms and guarantees. I have spoken of my possibleism. Let me add one other factor in telling you of my basic point of view. Here I want to go back to what William James once said. He said that

the important distinction between people is not the distinction between liberals and conservatives, or Republicans and Democrats, or rich and poor, or colored and white, or Christian and Jew, but the important distinction is between the tough-minded and the tender-minded. A tough-minded person, if you place some very unpleasant situation in front of him, will not avert his gaze from it. He will confront it, no matter how horrible it is to behold. The tender-minded person, when you place the same kind of unpleasant situation in front of him, will either avert his gaze or he will see not that situation but a picture of it that he has brought inside of his own head to console him and to mediate between him and reality.

In that sense obviously this is a time for tough-mindedness. The Greeks had a great myth. It was the myth of the Medusa head, or the Gorgon head. It was a coil of wild serpents so horrible to behold that when you looked at them they turned you to stone. For many in our world today the world outside is a Medusa head. It is so horrible that if we look at it we are in danger of being turned to stone, and so we avert our gaze. I need scarcely mention the elements that constitute this. Let me, however, indicate very briefly what I am speaking of.

I have just finished a book which is coming out soon, called The Age of Overkill. I took the phrase "overkill," of course, from the Army, the overkill factor, the number of times over that one can destroy the target. General Medaris  
several years ago  
calculated/that the overkill factor with the stockpile of weapons that both the  
Russians and we had was probably that we could each of us destroy every man,  
woman, and child in the world some 35 or 40 times over. I am sure that that  
factor has since been increased. In that sense we are living, as I suggest, in an

age of overkill.

This is only one of the elements, the nature of the technological weapons revolution that has taken place. It is only one of the elements in our world. There are others, too. We are living in an age of revolutionary nationalism. All over the world the traditional societies and the traditional power structures are being swept away by what Mr. Macmillan in England called the winds of change. I would say that winds is a mild term. Even storms is a mild term. The forces actually are volcanic, in the sense that they come from very, very deep within the social and economic and political structures of every people around the world, and very, very deep within the structure of history itself. In that sense revolution has become an integral and inherent part of the climate of our time. In that sense also, a people like the American, which started with its own revolution and should have accustomed itself to the idea of revolution but which has in the recent past lost this sense of familiarity with revolution and become afraid of the concept, may I say, is not well adapted to living in this kind of world. What it means is that we have to reaccustom ourselves to becoming familiar with the concepts and with the idea of revolution, because the nature of the world is as revolutionary as I suggest.

One other thing is that we are living in a world in which there is both a weapons struggle<sup>and</sup> a weapons race, but in which probably our future position in the world and the nature of the world will be decided not only by that but also by what I call the political war. I use the term "political war," not "cold war," because sometimes it is cold, sometimes it is warmer, and sometimes it gets

quite hot, and so on. I use the term "political war" to mean all the factors short of actual shooting. It includes aid and trade, it includes diplomacy, it includes education and propaganda, it includes Peace Corps, it includes every factor that we are able to bring to bear upon the struggle between our power system and that of the Communists.

There therefore is one other concept loose in our world, and that is the fact that the world today has become a confrontation of two great power systems and a third which is uncommitted to either but which is nevertheless a factor of immense importance. That factor of the uncommitted world, the nonaligned world, and of the passions which operate within it, is a very crucial one for our survival.

Finally, of course, there is loose in our world a new force. Perhaps the best way to describe it--I wish I had time to develop it--is to say that, given this technologic weapons revolution, given the revolutionary nationalisms, given the two great power systems, given the race between them, the confrontation between them, given the political war, given all of that, the nation state has ceased to be a unit of order in the world.

If you read Machiavelli's Prince you will find in that book all the beginnings of the system of nation states in the world, what we call the international order, and you find the assumption that that international order can remain relatively stable by confrontations between the various nations, confrontations which at the showdown lead to war. War is an integral part of that system. War all through the centuries has been tolerable. The difficulty now, of course, is that war,

in terms of our present weapons, is intolerable. It is unthinkable. This does not mean that it will not happen, nor does this mean that we must not be ready for it. The intolerable is not the impossible. The intolerable has often happened in past history. What I am saying now is that the nation state as a unit of world order and the international system as an organization of world order have been undercut by these revolutionary forces that I have been speaking of. And that means that ultimately, if we are to think in terms of American survival as a people, as a civilization, and the survival of the free world--in fact, of the survival of humanity--we shall have to move from the concept of the nation state and of the international order to a concept which I call a transnational one which cuts across nation states.

This does not mean that the nation state ceases to exist. Obviously, it exists. I happen to believe so deeply in our own culture and so deeply in the health of a rivalry of cultures in the world as a whole that I cannot think in terms of surrendering any elements of it. What I am suggesting is that it will be necessary--this is not a matter of choice; this is now a matter of necessity--for us to cut across what we call national sovereignties ultimately in order to get a meeting of minds between the leaders of the various nations and out of all this in order to get new structures, which I call the structures of a collective world will.

Ultimately your children and mine, if they are going to remain alive, will remain alive within that kind of framework. In the immediate period between now and then, if they are to remain alive, it will be because we are operating on two levels: One, we will have to operate on the level of our national strength and our

national will. Second, more and more we will have to move beyond the power principle of the nation state to the power principle of the free world as a whole, and from there to the power principle of some kind of collective world will.

When I say this, as I have been saying it to many groups of all kinds all over the country, I find sometimes considerable hostility to it, hostility because people say, "Aren't you in effect infringing national sovereignty?" All that I can say about that is that this is part of necessity. This is part of what we must take as the givens of our time. I did not create this. Neither you nor I created these weapons. Perhaps some of you did. I don't know. But I certainly did not create these weapons. The American people, most of them, did not create these weapons. These are part of the technological revolution of our time.

It reminds me a little of what happened of Machiavelli when he tried to describe the realities of power in his world. He was attacked for them. He was blamed for them, in a sense. It's a little as if Harvey, who described the circulation of the blood, had been held responsible for the circulation of the blood. It was not he who made the blood circulate as it did. He simply described it.

What I am suggesting is that if we are tough-minded and approach the realities in our world, we will understand that these are among the realities.

Let me add now one other thing about tough-mindedness. When I speak of being tough-minded I don't mean just being tough. One of the difficulties is that we use the adjective "tough" to indicate something that we have stripped of everything except force. That is not how I use tough-minded. Tough-minded to me means the recognition both of the elements of force and power in the world but

also the recognition of the nontangible elements, the elements that you cannot grasp and manipulate, the elements having to do with ideas and ideals, with passions, with fears, with hates, with creativeness, with opinion. Every now and then somebody is contemptuous of the idea of world opinion, the idea of the opinion of other peoples in other countries. They say, "Let's be tough." I say "Let's be tough-minded." To be tough-minded is to recognize that there are elements of reality in the world which include both power and weapons but which include also idea weapons and include all the intangibles.

Perhaps one way of putting it is to say that America's future will be shaped not just by our weapons race but by our intelligence race, by the intelligence race between the free world as a power system, the free world as a power cluster, of which America is today a power center, and the Communist world as a power cluster, with its two power centers, one in Moscow and one in Peking.

If I am right about this, then, what we have to ask ourselves about the direct topic for this morning--which I have taken a long way to get at--is to what extent do these ethnic and human resources in America contribute to our strength in this intelligence race, which will really be the things that will decide our future.

I came to try to make a canvass of the resources in America, as some of you know. When I wrote my book, I thought in terms of the Continent as a whole, and what is in it and under it. These things are not unimportant; they are very important. I thought also not only of the land but of its people and what is in them, what they brought with them. I say "what they brought with them," because, if

you are going to look at it historically, the history of America is the history of successive waves of DP's, of displaced persons, who came here from the very beginning, starting with the Mayflower, and up to the very last boatload of refugees from Communist Hungary and from Castro Cuba.

Walt Whitman said we are not just a nation, we are a nation of nations. I cannot understand America if I try to think of it in terms of natives and of nonnatives. The only natives I know are the Indians. The rest cannot be divided in this way.

I remember once that there was a literary critic who did a review of a book. I had not written the book, but there were some acknowledgements to me in the preface. He fixed on that and he said that he couldn't quite understand why I would dare to say some of the things that were said in the book, because he said that I was only a sojourner in America, that I was just a kind of transient, that if you looked at America as a hotel there were permanent residents there and there were transients, and that I was a transient because I was not born in America. I was born in Russia. My parents were born in Russia. We came over in 1907. He said that we had to think a little bit, we transients. He, by the way, was also a transient. He had been born in Ireland, and he was identifying himself with me, actually. Both of us were transients, and we had better watch what we said, because the longer guests, the natives, so called, had a different point of view.

There are very few things that get me angry, but that one got me angry, because it wasn't just an insult to me, it was an insult to America. It was an

insult to the basic concept of America. There are no natives in the sense in which he meant it. There are those who can trace their family lineage farther back and those who can trace it not so far back. But all of us are DP's. All of us are displaced persons. If you try really to get at the strength of America, you have to get at it as the history of an energy system.

I wish that someone would settle down for the next 10 or 15 years and try to do a history of America, to rewrite the history of America, in terms of an energy system. I don't mean now just the energy that comes out of what is in the earth, or the energy that is harnessed in the hydroelectric dams and all the rest of it. I mean now the human energy. American brought from all over the world, by a curious suction force, some of the best human material in the world's history. America harnessed that human energy, and the strength of America lies exactly in the fact that it exercised this kind of magnetic force and that it brought people here who wanted to come here, all except the Negroes, by the way. The ancestors of the Negroes didn't want to come here. They were compelled to come here as slaves. But the rest of these people wanted to come here.

If you will allow me, I would like to say a personal word on this. When my parents came here with their children 55 years ago, I was at that time 4 years old. When they came here they came at the crest of the immigration wave. They didn't come here to get rich. They didn't come here because they had heard the legend that American paving stones were made of gold. They came here to make a living, yes. Mostly they came here to make a life. They came here because they had the feeling that their children here might have a chance to breathe freer

air, but mostly because they felt that they might have a chance to develop their potentials, whatever their potentials were.

To me this is the key, the secret, of what I call in my book the principle of dynamism in American history. The principle of dynamism is very closely related to the whole immigration history of America. It is very closely related to the basic motivations that brought people here.

George Santayana has spoken of the almost metaphysical passion which the settlers who came to America brought with them. But it wasn't only the metaphysical passion of the settlers in the 17th century; it is just as true, as I suggest, of the last planeload of Cubans from Castro's Cuba as it is of that first boatload in the Mayflower.

If we understand this I think we can understand a good deal. America is a pluralist society. It's a pluralist society without any kind of prescriptive superiority of one group over the others. Our English tradition has obviously influenced us far more than any of the others. In that sense you can speak of America as having an English heritage. It is encased within our language, also. Every word that we use obviously is the outward skin of a whole history of cultural memories. There is no question about that.

But in addition to this British tradition and in addition to the Indian tradition, there are other traditions as well. There is the tradition of every people that came here from every part of the world, including the Negroes, who were brought here. Each people brought its own cultural freightage with it--its own language, its own religion, its own cultural memories, its own peculiar

psychology. The children of the people who came here often turned against their parents out of a sense of shame. But their children in turn and their children did not do it. One of the things we have witnessed in American history is a reassertion of pride in the tradition of the subcultures along with the pride in the tradition of the larger culture . Every one of us belongs to a subculture in America, along with the larger culture.

The great integration that has taken place in American life is the integration of these subcultures. I don't call it a melting pot. I don't call it an amalgamation. I call it an integration. The trouble with the melting pot is that what goes into the melting pot is melted away and fused. The concept of integration means that what goes in is not wholly melted away. It still keeps some of its identity and it becomes part of the larger culture. There is a kind of dialogue that goes on between the sense of identity of the subculture and the sense of possibility of the larger culture.

But most important of all about this human material at the present time is that, if we are going to win in this intelligence race, the intelligence has to come from the people who make up America, and from all of them. It does not come prescriptively from some rather than from others. In other words, so far as I know, we cannot prove any correlation between the superior abilities or the superior character, and so on, of one group as against the others.

Here I come to the third element of my Machiavellian formula, which he calls *virtu*. It's a difficult word to translate into English, but it means a combination, as I suggest below it, of intelligence and courage--intelligence, character,

and courage. I have indicated that there is a double aspect of that. There is the individual intelligence, character, and courage, and there is the collective intelligence, character, and courage. But the collective one obviously cannot exist unless it is made up of all the individual ones, except that the collective one is more than the sum of its parts.

I think we can speak today of the American national character and of the American intelligence. We can speak of the American mood, the American temper, and the American will. I speak of all of these. I speak of the American civilization.

Let me here, too, stop for just a moment. The basic thesis behind my book as indicated by the title is that there is an American civilization. It may sound as if this is very obvious. It wasn't obvious when I wrote it. In fact I think I wrote against the grain of the opinion of most people. I remember after my book came out that I carried on a debate in a number of publications with Arnold Toynbee. Mr. Toynbee felt rather contemptuous of my basic position. He felt that there is no American civilization. He felt that America is the tail of the European dog. He felt that there was a Western civilization with its center in Europe, and that America was simply a kind of historical byproduct of that, and a segment of it. I felt yes, it is true that we started that way. There was an America-Europe nexus. Mostly our people came from Europe. Mostly our cultural traditions came from the various countries of Europe. But at some point in our history, and it is not yet clear where--some day the historians will have to determine that, too--we passed over from being part of the larger European

civilization to becoming a civilization on our own--not just an energy system of our own but a people with a tradition of its own and a character of its own which was sufficiently characteristic and sufficiently recognizable so that all over the world people didn't speak of the Europeanization of their country; they spoke of the Americanization of their country. In fact, even the Europeans spoke of the Americanization of Europe.

America has become one of the great civilization forces in history. By the way, when I say a "great civilization force" I don't mean necessarily always a good one. To say that we are a civilization does not mean we are therefore wholly virtuous, entirely strong, entirely invulnerable, entirely right. Obviously not. Those of you who have done me the honor to read my book will know that time after time throughout the book I am drastically critical of many aspects of American life, many aspects of American culture and American society. I am critical of them because I care deeply about the strength of America. I care deeply about the quality of our civilization, because I want to know what is vulnerable in it, because we want to know if we can get at what is vulnerable in it so that we may be able to transform that vulnerability into strength.

It's the same as if you are taking part in a campaign against an enemy. Unless you are willing to recognize in tough-minded terms what is against you and what you have to cope with, you are not going to be able to win. The same is true as we turn inward upon our own civilization. If we take this tough-minded attitude toward America, I think we may be able to evoke from some of the strength and transform some of the vulnerabilities and weaknesses within us

into genuine strength in this intelligence race.

I want to suggest now something of a formula of my own, if I can get away from Machiavelli. As I look at the human resources of my country and my culture, there are three aspects of those resources that seem to me to be crucial for the future. One I call elan, the second I call elite, and the third I call ethos. You will say: Why couldn't I choose American terms for them? There may be some who will call me un-American for not using any American term for any of the three of them. I used two French terms and a Greek term. The trouble is that our language does not yet contain the words that we need for this. Let me see if I can talk about each of these three.

What I first want to suggest comes perhaps from Carlyle. Carlyle once said that the basic question between man and man is the question: "Have you a fire burning in your belly?" I think that is the basic question between nation and nation, too, between civilization and civilization, between power system and power system. We have a fire burning in our belly. I drive along the State parkways and I see signs saying, "Food and Fuel." Food we have. How about fuel-- fuel in this sense of what it takes to make us move toward our national goals?

A couple of years ago there used to be a debate about the rediscovery of the American national purpose, as if we had lost it or misplaced it. My feeling is that we don't have to worry very much about the American national purpose. We know pretty well what the purpose is. If I can give you the best definition, it comes from Dean Acheson, who was asked at that time: "What is the American

national purpose?" He said, "Our purpose? It is to survive and perchance to flourish." I rather like that, except I would make one emendation if Mr. Acheson would allow me. That is, unless we flourish we are very unlikely to survive. Unless we flourish as a civilization, unless we flourish in terms of fulfilling the basic meaning of our civilization and fulfilling the aspirations of all the people within it, we are unlikely to survive.

This is what I mean by elan. There was a great American humorist, Finley Peter Dunne, who created the character of "Mr. Dooley." You remember, he was the Irish Chicago bartender. He used to carry on a colloquy with Hennessey. Dooley once said to Hennessey, "Hennessey, I don't understand these high-school history books that our children study. They always tell you what people died of. What I want to know, Hennessey, is what people live of."

This is what I mean by elan. I take the term from Henri Bergson, the great French philosopher who spoke of the elan vitale--the life force. What is it that a people lives of? I can perhaps best approach this by telling you of an experience I had in India. I was there for a year at the University of New Delhi, 1959 to 1960. I was teaching at the University there, but I also tried to get at every other university I could, because I felt it was part of my responsibility as an American to reach these young people. I know that part of Communist strategy all over the world is not the strategy of trying to reach the worker nor the peasant. Oh, no. Their strategy today is the strategy of reaching the educated elites all over the world. What they count upon is that the educated elite will in turn reach the middle classes, the workers, and the peasants. I wanted to get

at these Indian students and young teachers, and I did. I asked them a question. I said, "Tell me what your picture is in your minds of my country and my culture." They did. They said, "America is rich, and America is fat. You are the most prosperous country in the world. You have the highest profits, the highest wages, and the highest living standard. You have Cadillacs and minks. Your shop windows are filled to bursting with all kinds of good things. We are poor people compared to you. But you are also an old people in the sense that you are afraid. You are afraid of the revolutionary winds and storms all over the world." And I said to them, "I think I understand what you mean. There is this America, and we, ourselves, are aware of it. But there is another America, too. There's the America of the American Revolution, which was the first revolution against colonialism in modern times. Without <sup>our</sup> revolution against England you could never have had your revolution against England. There is the America of the Jeffersonian revolution and the Jacksonian revolution. There is the America of the people who came from every part of the world and came across the plains and built what they built, not out of negativism and suspicion and hate but out of affirmation. There is the America of William Jennings Bryan and the populace. There is the America of Theodore Roosevelt and the new nationalism. There is the America of Woodrow Wilson and the new freedom. There is the America of Franklin Roosevelt and the new deal." If I were talking to them now I would say there is the America of John F. Kennedy and the new frontier, not out of a sense of partisanship but because I believe there is an authentic continuity there.

What I am suggesting and what I suggested to them is that there is also this

America, which is what I call the America of the continuity of dynamism, the America of the authentic revolutionary tradition. I said to them, "There are these two Americas, and each American carries both of them within himself, like two burning cities within the human brain. What finally will emerge in America will emerge in the confrontation of both of them within each of us."

It is this which I speak of when I speak of elan. I know when I talk to college students all over the country in America today--and I do--that what moves them is something of the same thing, because they have generosity and idealism. They want to be stretched. They want a sense of the heroic. I don't think they are going to be stretched unless they get some sense of this elan, an elan that stretches all the way from our beginning up until our present crisis.

There is another aspect that I spoke of as elite. This term, by the way, most of my colleagues on university campuses, and most of the people who call themselves liberals in America, are horrified by. I horrify them in general these days, because I insist on being tough-minded where I think many of them are tender-minded and sentimental. By the way, we have sentimental liberals in America and we have sentimental conservatives. We have tough-minded liberals and we have tough-minded conservatives. We have tender-minded liberals and tender-minded conservatives.

One of the things that horrify my tender-minded liberal friends is the idea of an elite. They say, "Surely you can't talk in these ~~terms~~ terms. It's a fascist term." When I wrote my book, It Is Later Than You Think, about 25 years ago, I spoke of the necessity for great leadership in America, and some of these same

people said that I was fascist then, because they said that the leadership idea, the fuhrer principe, was a Hitler idea. I said, "If you abdicate the idea of leadership to the Nazis, you are through." I say now that if we abdicate the idea of elite to either the Communists or the fascists we are through, because in every civilization, in every society, there is not only the mass society and the mass culture but there are also the elite groups and the elite culture.

What I mean by an elite is a minority with talent and ability. There are actually in every society two elites. One I call the commanding elite. The other I call the intellectual elite. This doesn't mean that the commanding elite doesn't have brains. And it doesn't mean that the intellectual elite doesn't command to some extent. But the commanding elite is specialized to power. The intellectual elite is specialized to ideas, to all the intangibles. Any society in which these two are hostile to each other is an unhealthy society. Any society in which they get along with each other and intersect is a healthy society. The commanding elite is to be found in the Government, it is to be found in the defense forces, it is to be found in business leadership and labor leadership, and so on, wherever there is power. The intellectual elite is to be found in the campuses and in every area of creativeness in American life.

More and more we need to bring the people from the intellectual elite into cooperative touch, into a working relationship, with the commanding elite. More and more both of these elites need to understand each other. But, what is most important, more and more we have to draw on the talent, ability, and character of every youngster in America, if we can get at them, in order to

elicit from that whole mass of the people the best energies that will go into the making of our elites.

If you will allow me to give an illustration of this now, I want to illustrate it from an episode from the campus at Oxford, Mississippi. As you know, there isn't any topic that I don't touch on or that I am not willing to touch on, and this one is so important that I want to talk about it. I don't know Jim Meredith and I don't know what ability he has, and I don't care right now. What I told you about my coming to this country with my parents, let me repeat. We came here because my parents wanted their children to have a chance to show the ability that was in them. I think Jim Meredith has the same right to a chance at a chance. He may or may not have that ability, but he has a right to show it. He has a right to show it with equal facilities.

Let me now give you another illustration of what I mean in this sense. It is autobiographical. I was coming back from a trip to the Middle East about five years ago. I wanted to come back by way of an Iron Curtain country. I tried to get to Russia but they wouldn't give me a visa. So I went to Poland. I went to Warsaw and I spent some time there. I found a group of teachers and journalists there, magnificent people. I found real intellectual ferment in Warsaw. I knew they were Communists, but I knew also that they were Communists against their will. They made that very clear. We spent a very interesting evening that I recall. There was a kind of chairman to the meeting, and the chairman got up and he said, "Mr. Lerner, we have heard of this book of yours on American civilization. We haven't had a chance to read it. Can you tell us in a single word

what is the essence of American civilization?" Have you ever had that thrown at you? In a single word, what is the essence of American civilization? I said, "This book is 1000 pages. You want me to distill 1000 pages into one word?" He said, "That's right." So I thought very fast and very hard. What is it? Is it freedom? Is it democracy? Is it equality? Is it tolerance? Is it decency? Is it dynamism? Of course, it's all of these things. Suddenly I heard myself saying, "Access." The chairman laughed. He said, "We have heard of American success. We haven't heard of American access." I said, "You see, we have a Declaration of Independence which says that all men were born free and equal. I hope we are born free and will remain free, but we are not born equal. Every one of us is born unequal. I have six children, and every one of them was born unequal, with unequal abilities and potentials. Any employer knows this. Any parent knows it. Any teacher knows it. And any army commander knows it. People are born very unequal. But we have the notion in America that there ought to be equal access to equal opportunity, so that every youngster born with these unequal abilities will be able to develop his unequal abilities to the fullest. It is in this sense that I say that the heart of the American experience is the idea of access."

It goes deeper than the question of justice to the individual. It goes to the question of national survival. It goes to the question of collective intelligence and ability and character, because we cannot afford to let any part of the total pool of potential ability and character in America be inaccessible to the uses of the American Nation. We cannot afford to cut any part of it off and say, "This

we will not be willing to tap." In that sense access holds the key to the future. Also, we cannot afford to allow any part of that total potential to be cut off from replenishing the elites of power and ability and all the rest in American life.

It is in these terms that I suggest to you that this idea of the two elites and the relationship between them and the whole mass of the people may well be the key to our future.

I would like to end by suggesting the third one and saying just a word about it. The third one is ethos. The third one has to do with the values, the principles, the commitment in our society. I submit to you that a nation lives and dies and fights not just on natural resources and not just on human resources, not just on talent, ability, and so on. It also lives and dies on commitment. I use the word "ethos," because ethos goes beyond just commitment. Ethos means values and principles and life goals, and all the rest. It means also that we have internalized these into every individual in our civilization, so that he doesn't even have to think about them. They become an intrinsic part of himself.

May I suggest to you that I think probably the most difficult part of our situation is that we have not yet developed an ethos of commitment which will have very much meaning in the kind of age of overkill in which we are living today. I don't know whether we are going to be able to develop it in time. It requires courage, it requires a kind of stoic fortitude on the part of the people as well as on the part of leadership, it requires humanity, it requires a sense of the human connection, it requires our overriding our prejudices, it requires our being able to evaluate people for what they are and not for what the labels on

them are. Most of all, it requires our moving away from some of the slogans that have dominated us.

With this I want to end. Lenin used to say that in a Communist society the dominant question is "Who, whom? Who rules whom? Who survives whom? Who sends whom to Siberia? Who, whom." It's the ethos of the political jungle. In our society what is the dominant question? I think it is not "Who, whom?" I am afraid that to too great an extent it is "Who gets what? What's in it for me?" In these terms I am afraid that we are not equipped for this age of over-kill.

I had a student once who I thought would be good in the diplomatic corps. I talked to him for about a half-hour about doing this. When I got through he said, "What's the percentage for me?" Then I knew that there was a wall of noncommunication between him and me.

Let me give another illustration. There is a street in New York called the Avenue of the Americas. There are stores on it which sell various signs, you know, humorous things. You buy them, take them home, and put them on your desk or on your walls. I remember standing in front of the store windows looking at one of these signs, because it was quite a challenge to me. The sign said, "If You're So Smart, Why Aren't You Rich?" You know, I looked at that for a long time. I looked at it and looked at it. You know, I wasn't able to answer it. I puzzled at it again, and I still wasn't able to answer it. Finally I got the answer. The answer was, it was the wrong question. It was the wrong question to ask.

I think to a very great extent the ethos of the society is indicated by the kinds

of questions it asks, not necessarily by the kinds of answers it gives, but by the kinds of questions it asks. We shall have to reshape a lot of the questions in our society.

So, gentlemen, I give to you an elan, two elites, and an ethos, all of them potentials, none of them with us, none of them guaranteed, all of them possible, all of them possible to be shaped. I suggest to you that if we can put these together with our human resources, we will be able perhaps to win that intelligence race in the political war. We may be able to stretch out our hands to seize and to grasp the future. If we don't, then what Adlai Stevenson once said I think will be true: "There will be other and bloodier hands than ours that seize out to claim that future."

COLONEL MULLER: Gentlemen, Dr. Lerner is ready for your questions.

QUESTION: Dr. Lerner, could you comment on the codes of conduct as a useful or necessary tool in the development of ethos?

DR. LERNER: Yes, I will. Let me first say that I am glad you say "codes," plural, because I believe that there are several types of codes. One is the formal code. It is the moral code that is inherited in the culture. This tends to be rather rigid and it tends more and more to get out of relationship to a second kind of code which I call the operative code. The operative code is what the culture develops in terms of the actual functioning of people, their actual day-to-day living. It is still a code in the sense that you expect people to live up to it, but it is not as demanding as the formal code. The formal code says, "You must not

drink." The operative code says, "You can drink, but you've got to be able to carry your liquor." The formal code asks for very strict and severe sexual morality--monogamists and all the rest. The operative code does not. But the operative code says that whatever you do you had better do discreetly and you had better do it without scandal. You can infringe the formal code. You cannot infringe the operative code.

There is a third code, may I suggest. That is, an emerging code. I think the young people today are not satisfied with the formal code or with the operative code. I think that they are groping, as they are groping for so many things. They are groping for something which will be for them more satisfying than the going operative code. I find this one of the most heartening things. I think that there are among many of our youngsters those who feel that in order to breathe they've got to break all the windows, morally. There are always people like that. But there are also others who I think are making a very earnest and sincere research for something that will give them a feeling of commitment but which will not restrict them to a code which they feel was formulated for a much earlier society, in fact, formulated many, many centuries ago in another society. I have tried to say this in my book. It's the best answer I can give you right now.

QUESTION: Dr. Lerner, in the past our leaders have evidently not been fully aware of the tough-mindedness of the Soviet leaders in certain negotiations. Do you believe that our present leaders in the free world have a sufficient and comprehensive knowledge of the ethnical and cultural background of the Soviet leaders and their possible course of action, so that we can deal successfully with them?

**DR. LERNER:** That's quite a question. I can tell you this, and that is that I have been very heartened by the ~~experience of the last few weeks~~, in answer to your question. I think, by the way, gentlemen, that we have ~~passed~~ a kind of watershed in our national life in the past few weeks, in the sense that this was the first crisis when the whole Nation felt itself on the brink of a possible nuclear war, and when our leadership was aware of the elements of danger there, and yet took a stance which showed both tough-mindedness and at the same time very considerable moderation of the various alternatives possibilities for action, and that the Nation passed through an experience of looking at the Medusa-head for the first time, the Medusa head of a possible nuclear war, and was not turned to stone, and did not avert their gaze. You will notice I put it in terms of both the leaders and the people.

I do not think that you can think of the concept of leadership in isolation from the people. Leadership for me is a dialogue. It's a dialogue between men who have to make the decisions and the people as a whole about whom and for whom the decisions are being made.

I think this dialogue was a good one, and I think that what was shown in this was that our leadership and our people have evidently become aware of exactly what you ask in your question.

Now, if you ask me whether there are any guarantees that will continue to be true in future crises, obviously there are none. But if we learn it all from experience, this is one aspect of experience from which it is quite possible to learn.

QUESTION: Dr. Lerner, do you see any evidences of any growth of this transnationalism that you spoke of?

DR. Lerner: I see evidence of the beginning of growth of the transnationalism, yes, of course. Let me put it this way. The United Nations itself is an international organization. It assumes that each nation that is part of it has full sovereignty and doesn't surrender any of its sovereignty. Yet some of the things that have happened in the United Nations indicate something beyond that.--for example, the whole Congo episode in which Mr. Hammerskjold, who was a very farsighted man, saw that the U. N. was not simply to come in after a crisis had developed and try to deal with it but that part of its problem was to prevent crisis from developing. Mr. Hammerskjold got the U. N. to take action in the Congo which set a framework which actually limited to a very great extent the action of the various nations. This was what enraged Mr. Khrushchev so much against Hammerskjold.

In that sense I would say that the U. N. has shown the beginnings of an organization which is not simply a debating society, not simply a form in which the representatives of the various nations carry on their propagandas, but which also has the beginnings possibly of an executive, an executive with power and even an executive with its own troops. In that sense I would say that there is the nucleus of a transnational force.

Now, the problem, of course, is that what strength the U. N. can muster now is pitiful compared with the strength of the great nations. What we need to do ultimately, if we are going to envisage the kind of transnational force that I

~~am speaking of, is to envisage a process of a confrontation of minds between ourselves and the Russians on the question of arms control, and eventually, of course, of disarmament, and to envisage also that whatever collective world authority emerges will have some kind of monopoly of weapons so that it will not be helpless before any of the great nations.~~

I think that will take a long time, but the kernel of it is here.

QUESTION: Dr. Lerner, do you think this transnationalism of which you have spoken is a logical outcome of American ideals?

DR. LERNER: Well, in one sense, of course it is, and that is that America itself is a microcosm of all the cultures in the world, of all the nations in the world. An Englishman called Wyndham Lewis wrote a book about America, which he titled, America, Cosmic Man, cosmic in the sense that we are a microcosm. In that sense I think it is an extension of our basic ideals.

But let me give another illustration. Here I want to make some very important distinctions. I gather the last few questions are really focusing on what I see ahead, what I envisage ahead. If we can in the political war convince the Russian leaders that they are not going to be able to carry out their grand design of expansionism, if we can convince them that they have got to operate within a more limited concept, a nonexpansionist concept, then, what kind of world do I envisage? I can best explain this by referring to a speech that President Eisenhower, when he was President, made before the United Nations. It was a very interesting speech. One sentence of it was, "I look forward to a world of open societies." As I was reading the speech I almost let that one go by, and then I

went back to that sentence and I studied it. What did he mean, "a world of open societies?" --America is an open society, of course. A democracy is an open society. Does that mean a world of democracies? If that's what President Eisenhower meant than I am afraid he was not being tough-minded, and I am afraid we cannot look forward to that. That I would say is not tough-minded, because one of the givens, one of the necessities, now, is that there are a number of social systems in the world, and they are here to stay. Communism is one such system. When I say it is here to stay I am speaking of the calculable future. I don't know about the indefinite future, but for the calculable future, which means a number of generations, we are going to live in a world with communism as a force, <sup>and</sup> with national socialism--and I use that now not in the sense of the Nazis but in the sense of countries like Egypt or Ghana or Guinea, where you have a socialist pattern with an intense nationalism. That's here to stay. Algeria, the new nation, is an example of that. Democratic socialism is here to stay. I am thinking now of a country like India or a country like Israel. Nehru speaks of a socialist pattern. I call that democratic socialism, because it is a <sup>with</sup> planned economy but with democratic methods, rather than total coercion behind the planning. That's here to stay. Then there are mixtures like the British economy or the French economy, or, for that matter, the American economy, which is a mixture. We are not just a capitalist economy. We are a mixed economy.

I tried in a whole chapter of my book to show what the mixture is, an amalgam. That's here to stay.

Now, if you say that, then I think that the phrase, "a world of open societies," is the wrong phrase, and I would like to suggest something instead of it, and that is, an open world of diverse societies. What I mean by "an open world" is that the world must be open in the sense that there is room in it for every kind of society, but that every one of these societies must be immune from aggression by any of the others. If aggression takes place the collective-world will must deal with it. Each society must be immune from aggression but it must carry the tasks and problems and burdens of its own kind of economy.

I would like to see the Russians and the Chinese really shoulder the burdens of making their system work. There are some ways in which it can work well, and there are others in which it can't. The Chinese, for example, haven't begun to solve the problem of food. Neither have the Russians. Neither has Castro in Cuba. It's very hard for communism to solve the problem of food, partly because you can't read the Communist Manifesto to a cow. You just can't do it. You cannot resort to indoctrination in this area. And even the human being, the peasant, doesn't really listen to the Communist Manifesto when you tell him you are going to take his plot of land away from him, because that plot of land is dearer to him than all the Communist Manifestos in the world. This is part of the way he feels about his land. They have not solved the problem of food. In China they have not solved the problem of industrialization. We don't know whether they will.

I say that every one of these systems ought to have to carry its burdens

and solve them just as we have to carry our burdens and solve them. In that sense I look forward to an open world of diverse societies. In the long run I think that we in what we call the free world can do pretty well, because I think that if we can learn something from the other world--and I think we need to learn some of the things about planning, democratic planning, and we need to learn some of the things about shared goals, not just the anarchism of individual goals but shared goals, national goals, and we need to learn something, as I suggested today, about a shared elan, and all these things--we don't have to worry about which will win. What we do have to worry about is that there should be this open world of diverse societies in some generations to come.

QUESTION: Dr. Lerner, do you think the educational system in the United States today is adequate to meet these challenges? If not, what changes would you suggest?

DR. LERNER: May I say that I once did a book, a couple years ago, called The Unfinished Country. America is an unfinished country, and I would say that there isn't a single feature of American life which we can say is adequate in the sense that we don't have to keep on changing constantly. That is true of the educational system as well. The educational system I think is the focus for a good deal of what we still need to do.

No, I do not believe that it is adequate. Let me see if I can illustrate that. I think that the American educational revolution is one of the crucial elements of our revolutionary tradition. It is one of the most important revolutionary elements in our history. You see, we were the first nation in modern history to introduce

the idea that education has to be universal, that it has to be free, and that it has to be obligatory--universal, covering all, free, open to all, and obligatory, every child must be part of it. The reason we developed this really profoundly revolutionary system of public education that came at the beginning of the 19th century was that we had a very peculiar task. I said that America was a nation of nations when I spoke of the immigrant groups from all over the world. Our problem was to take the son and daughter of every one of those immigrant families, coming here with a different language and a different culture and tradition, and to find some kind of cement that would hold them together. The problem of the educational system was one of cohesion, national cohesion. It was the problem of giving all these youngsters the minimum that would prepare them for citizenship in this kind of conglomerate, pluralistic world but which would make a nation out of them.

May I say it worked. It was a wild dream that the founders of this educational system had at the beginning of the 19th century, the dream that this could be done on this Continent. It worked. In that sense our educational system has been a success, not a failure. The trouble is that we are living now in an era in which that is no longer adequate. The problem is no longer to find the cohesion that will take these immigrant children and make them citizens. The problem now is to develop leadership ability and talent. The problem is to develop youngsters who will take their place in the commanding elite and in the creative elites. That has now become the problem of education for America.

In that sense we are now entering on a second educational revolution, and that

means that all your techniques, all your methods, all your ideas have to change. The old idea used to be that you gave every youngster the same kind of teaching, the same teachers, the same courses. Everything was the same. You brought them down to the lowest level that was common to all of them. But that is no longer possible, because, if we do that, we are going to lose a lot of our talent. It is going to mean that a lot of youngsters who could go much faster by other methods are not going to do that. The result is that we are having to differentiate our methods more and more. We are having to think in terms of real groups, a whole gradation of talent groups. We are doing away with the grade system, for example, in the elementary schools. We are thinking in terms of honor colleges--a college within a college. We are thinking in terms of honor groups in high schools and so on.

What I am suggesting to you is that we have to think of a radically new educational system, but our thinking on this has begun. I get to a lot of schools in this country, too, as well as colleges, and one of the things that have given me a great sense of excitement is to see the ferment in every area of the country, not in every city and not in every town, but, I would say, in every area. There are many cities and towns in which there is no ferment. There many in which the parents and the community don't really care about education. There are many where they are not willing to extend themselves to give it any kind of aid. And may I say that there are many Americans who pay lip service to the idea that education is the crux of our future but, when they are confronted by the proposition that if this is so then we had better pour out our financial treasure for it, they say, "Oh, no." When it

comes, for example, to the question of federal aid, they say, "Oh, no; anything but that." But the fact is that if we will the ends we must will the means, and if the end is what I have suggested then we had better will the means as well.

There are two aspects or three aspects to this educational problem. One has to do with financing and the second has to do with the reorganization of curriculum teaching, with the retraining of teachers, and with the rethinking of concepts. The third has to do with the question of tapping the potential talent and ability of every group in this country instead of just some groups.

QUESTION: Dr. Lerner, you said that the essence of the American culture could be described in the one word, access. Yet there are many in our culture who do not take advantage of the opportunities for self-development to which they have access. Aside from the educational problem, what should be done to motivate these people?

DR. LERNER: That's a tough one. The question of motivating youngsters is a really tough one. Very often their failure of motivation comes from, let's say, the ethnic group they come from, and the conditions of living in that ethnic group. They have a sense, for example, of burning injustice. I live in New York. There are areas in New York where the Negro youngsters and the Puerto Rican youngsters, and the rest of them, lead lives of violence and of potential violence, which we know about now, but if you try to study why there is this violence, you get two answers: One, the disorganization of their home life, their family life, alcoholism, broken marriages, and whatever it may be; but, secondly, a sense of burning injustice because they feel that they are not being given the same opportunities

that others are. If all of this operates on you, then your motivation is not going to be very good.

What I am suggesting is that part of the problem of motivation is not an individual problem but it is a social problem. Now, there is also the individual problem of motivation. No, let me say that there is a family problem of motivation. I can perhaps put this best by saying that as a teacher I have often found that a youngster has real potential ability and that he is not stretching himself. Very often, when I have tried to find out why, I get him to talk about his home, and I find that he comes from a home in which there are no books. I use this symbolically when I say that there are no books. I mean that literally there are no books, but also symbolically, it is a home in which the life of the mind has played no real role. Some of these youngsters come from homes that are very rich and that are loaded with books, but they never take the books down. Sometimes the books are false fronts, by the way. They look like books, like some of these white-wall tires that are not really white-wall tires. They look like books, but they are not. Or even they are books and perhaps even first editions, but nobody reads them. This is what I mean by a home without books. And may I say that a home without books seems to me to be as bad as a home that is a broken home, a home that is disorganized, and sometimes worse.

If you look back at the very beginnings of our history, we are a people of the book. Those who first came to America brought the Book with them. They brought the Old Testament and they brought the New Testament. The first thing they did here was to found schools and colleges. The life of the mind counted. What

happened later was very interesting. I am always writing American histories in the future. Part of the story of writing an American history is to find at what point this preoccupation with the life of the mind in America stopped and we became an anti-intellectual people. Do you know that there was actually a time in our history when one of the major candidates for the Presidency was attacked on the ground that he was an egghead, a man called Adlai Stevenson. What that meant was, I suppose, from my definition of an egghead, one who made the life of the mind his principal preoccupation. There was very considerable fear that a man like this might get into the White House. After Stevenson got beaten he used to go around giving some talks, and he used to start his talks by saying, "Eggheads of America, unite! You have nothing to lose but your yolks."

Actually we have moved away from that anti-intellectualism, and we are once more, I think, recapturing the old tradition. This is important in reference to the question that was asked about education. I think part of the problem of education is that we don't have very good teachers. We have some of the worst material in America teaching. You know that, The best material very often goes into business, into the professions, and so on, and then down the line, and some of the worst material goes into teaching. It is partly because they don't get paid, but it is also because they don't have prestige in their community, they have no standing.

If you really are going to get good teachers, you can do it only in a society that gives value to what they are doing, so that you can get some of your best youngsters, rather than some of your worst youngsters, going into teaching. This

has to do with motivation. ~~Why should a student, by the way, from Harlem or from the Puerto Rican barrio, really be motivated in school when he knows that all around him these things don't count? You are not going to get motivation unless what you are trying to motivate him for really counts. That's part of our social problem.~~

The last, of course, is individual. Here I can only say that I haven't seen a youngster yet in my life who wasn't motivated. The problem is, what is he motivated for? Some of these youngsters that would never study American history because they can't remember what happened in 1789 can give you the batting score and the fielding score for almost every player in the major league back to 1890. They are motivated all right. They are motivated. But they are not motivated for the things we want them to be motivated for.

The question is not one of motivation but of channeling the motivation. What this means, of course, obviously, is that it requires, again, a dialogue between teacher and student which we can't avoid.

I want to end with that, because I think this goes to the crux of things. I'm a teacher. I have been a teacher for a long time. I think I can say that the real key to the question of motivating students is how you value them, how directly you address them, and how well you understand them, but also, what the image of the teacher is in their eyes. On one of the campuses on which I used to teach, we used to have a story about two faculty people meeting each other, and one would say to the other, "Under what title are you going to give your course this year?" Of course, what he meant was, "What are you going to call the same old

notes that you've had for a long time?" There is another sense in which that is true, and that is, no matter what you teach, and no matter what you call it, ultimately you teach only one thing, and that is yourself. You teach yourself. You teach yourself through your subject matter. The image of the teacher is the crucial thing.

As I look back at my own education, I have forgotten almost everything that was in the books and that I put down in my notes, but I remember a few teachers. I remember their stance toward life. I remember what Ernest Hemingway called "grace under pressure," their courage. I remember that they were not stuffed shirts. I remember that there was no sawdust stuffing in them. I remember that they were willing to be nonconformists on many things. I remember their preoccupation with the things that they were teaching, their obsession with them. I remember the joy they had at communicating it. I remember a kind of incandescence that they had, which is a crucial thing for a teacher. I remember that they were not truncated men.

One of the things we do about many of our teachers is that we expect them to limit themselves in many ways--not to say this or not to say that. But a student who sees that the teacher is afraid is not going to develop into a courageous American, if the man who is teaching him is not courageous. If the man who is teaching him is truncated, the student is not going to be a whole student.

In this sense I would say that the problem of motivation is the problem of the relation between teacher and student, in which the teacher understands the student

and evokes from him his best potentials, and in which the teacher presents to the student the image of a man, a real man, a man with real commitment.

Thank you for your patience and generosity.