

It is often said that when a man begins grumbling about young people, that is a sure sign he is aging. For my part, I have no intention of criticizing young people as most adults do.

For the past several years, I have met with more than 1,000 university students as an interviewer in entrance examinations given by Kyodo News and also as a guest lecturer in university classes. These occasions have given me the impression that contemporary university students are just like plants grown in a greenhouse. They grew in a favorable environment without experiencing even the slightest hardship. They favorably impressed me in general but seemed so weak that I worry whether they will be able to withstand the storms or droughts that life serves up.

Lately, I gave a special lecture at a private university in Tokyo under the university's biannual program for coaching students hoping to pursue a career in the media industry. Lecturers are professional journalists working for newspapers, publishing companies and television networks. This was the second time I participated in the program.

In my class, I spoke for about an hour under the theme of "What is the quality especially needed to work in the media industry?" From my experience of having worked as a journalist for 20 years, I cited three things: communication power, seriousness and imagination. I did so because these three qualities are what today's students lack most.

show private photographs they had with them. Their possessions were different, but their reactions were identical. Despite their outrageously loud makeup, the girls were bewilderingly cooperative and opened their bags to show me their belongings. Thanks to their obliging attitude, the interviews were a complete success. But they were so honest, at best, and so defenseless, at worst, that I wondered what they would have done if my intentions had been less than honorable.

In the latter half of my university lecture, I let the students interview me as part of practical skill training and had them write a short interview article. I insisted that they write in their own words.

Our society today is flooded with information thanks to the spread of the Internet, and when we search websites for opinions on specific issues, we often find ourselves hard pressed to tell whether the opinions are original or borrowed from others. I invited the students to a tavern after the class for a chat over drinks and asked for their thoughts on writing essays. As I had expected, their answers were that it was difficult to think for themselves.

In my class I miss no opportunity to tell students that they can hardly survive the age of globalization unless they cultivate the habit of thinking for themselves.

Well, as I was just closing this essay, I suddenly realized that I was speaking ill of young people. I may already have become a sarcastic old man.

J.S.

Contemporary Student Temperament

By Ogata Shinichi

To put it simply, communication power is the quality of establishing a good rapport with other people. Seriousness is an index of a person's will power to do or tell what he or she wants. Imagination is a person's quality to guess what others will feel about what the person says or does. To my mind, these qualities are essential not only to media people but also to humans in general in living in society.

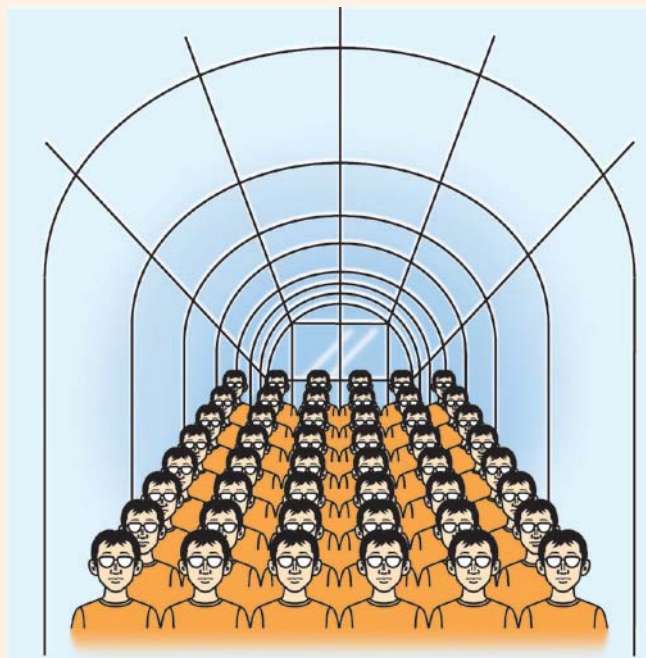
Most university students today, aged around 20, were brought up in an environment in which they were not required to combat hunger. When they grew up, they found themselves amid personal computers and video games. They use mobile phones even when they contact friends in their neighborhood. They do have problems, but they shy away from taking pains to do their utmost because they can manage to subsist somehow in the present society.

As mentioned at the outset, I have been involved in giving interviews for Kyodo's entrance exams for the past several years. As I see from what applicants say in interviews and group discussions, university students are well-educated and have good manners, but they are all alike. I have seldom come across high-caliber students who possess a strong enthusiasm to become a journalist. Many of the essays they write resemble what I have read somewhere.

Since I interviewed young people in Tokyo's Shibuya shopping district as a journalist 10 years ago, I have had the vague impression that young Japanese people today are too soft-hearted.

In the street interviews I asked girls with heavy makeup or delinquent-looking boys to tell me the brands of cosmetics in their bags or

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