alternative at hand. We’d prefer a school that cultivates our children’s autonomy,” following Kantian principles—free in all matters (though it’s okay to stop a child from grabbing a knife), and so on.

Is this advice harmlessly idealistic? Surely the time and resources required are not the only problems with home schooling; even parents who are skeptical of the curricula of traditional schools think their children learn something from being socialized with others, if only the useful skills of compromise and cooperation. In actual practice, home schooling sounds like a terrible way to develop autonomy. And I am skeptical that 12-year-olds, let’s say, socialized in the culture of ordinary 12-year-olds, should really be left alone to make serious life choices on their own.

Similar problems challenge Neiman’s advice about travel, her second instrument of maturation. Travel is essential, she says, but must be carried out freely—not, for example, in college study-abroad programs, which “send young people abroad with the promise of learning in and from another culture, and keep them in conditions under which they cannot possibly do so.” Fair enough; as Horace put it in the first century B.C.E., *aelum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt* (those who go running across the sea change their climate but the basis of human happiness.” Carpenter is her canonical example of good work, though she acknowledges that we can’t all survive by making tables for each other.

Neiman has nothing good to say about institutions of any kind (except labor unions, perhaps). We tell children that their questions will be answered in school, she says, “and we send them to institutions for freedom rather than tradition will keep alive such stabilizing institutions as the universities that preserve philosophical analysis, or “those wise restraints that make us free” that our law graduates are supposed to fashion.

To be sure, the spirit of youthful freedom is too often corrupted commercially: as Neiman wonders about Kant and Coke, I can well imagine what Santayana would think of the Ohio State-Oregon football championship game. But the maturational tension never discussed is between stability and spontaneity, between respect for tradition and the impulse urge for creative destruction. These are, in my experience, the challenging part of university life in what Neiman rightly calls an infantile age, and she gave me no help with them.

Patrick Powers would like to learn the name of the physicist who allegedly declared, “This is not nuts, this is supernuts,” on viewing the launch of the prototype of a space ship powered by nuclear explosions. The pronunciation appears in the book *Who Got Einstein’s Office?* by Ed Regis.

Julian Kitay seeks a source for the following assertion: “You cannot convince a man of his error when his error is himself” (possibly phrased instead as “A man cannot be convinced of his error…”). Kitay adds that his “recollection (not reliable) is that one of the ancient Greek philosophers may have been the author.”

Luis Harss hopes someone can identify a poem, vaguely remembered and possibly Arabic, that describes how “The bird of sleep / came down to nest in your eyes / but seeing your lashes / thought they were nets / and took flight” (or possibly “fright”).

Send inquiries and answers to “Chapter and Verse,” Harvard Magazine, 7 Ware Street, Cambridge 02138, or via e-mail to chapterandverse@harvardmag.com.

**Taking a dim view of the cultural idealization of youth, Neiman says we do no one a favor by pretending that it is the best time of our lives.**

Not their mind). But are fences and overpopulation really, as Neiman suggests, the main problems with young people sleeping in haylofts half a world from home, as she describes de Beauvoir doing? It’s debatable whether youth travel is less safe today than it used to be or whether we are simply more risk-averse, but surely assault, robbery, abduction, terrorism, and so on are reasonable worries.

Work, finally, is the hardest instrument of maturation to square with personal freedom, and here Neiman’s political sympathies become apparent. She rues “the alienation of labor,” “planned obsolescence,” and “weakened unions,” and defines *neo-liberalism* as “the view that free unregulated markets producing ever-increasing amounts of shoddy goods are that will dull their desire to pose questions at all.” Corporations are bad, too. Neiman imagines what Kant would have thought about Coca-Cola funding “public” schools in exchange for exclusive pouring rights—indeed a startling and absurdist image, reminiscent of the scene in *Dr. Strangelove* in which Colonel Guano warns Group Captain Mandrake that he’s “gonna have to answer to the Coca-Cola Company” if the soda machine is damaged in the course of preventing nuclear holocaust.

I failed to notice a single positive characterization of any enduring institution—no state, business, or long-lasting educational institution comes in for admiration. We can grant the exaggerated importance of soft drinks in contemporary society, while still wondering how children raised for freedom rather than tradition will keep alive such stabilizing institutions as the universities that preserve philosophical analysis, or “those wise restraints that make us free” that our law graduates are supposed to fashion.

Harry R. Lewis, interim dean of the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and past dean of Harvard College, is Gordon McKay professor of computer science. Long involved in undergraduate admissions and athletics, among other aspects of College life, he has written popularly on such subjects in Excellence Without a Soul: Does Liberal Education Have a Future? and was coeditor, with Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, of What Is College For? The Public Purpose of Higher Education.