

次の文章を読み、下の設問(1)～(4)に答えなさい。

The complaint that young people today are not what they used to be is among the most durable refrains in human history. Older adults lament the decline of the next generation, and the young dismiss them as out of touch. Because this pattern recurs with such regularity, it deserves more than a weary acknowledgment.

One explanation is that the criticism contains a modest truth: the young, almost by definition, possess less experience than their elders. ^(a)There is nothing scandalous in this fact, any more than it is scandalous for a novice pianist to stumble through a simple melody. Skill and judgment accumulate slowly over time; to reproach the young for lacking them is rather like reproaching an apprentice for not yet being a master. Yet this obvious point is precisely what many older critics forget.

In ordinary life, people often show that they do understand ^(b)the asymmetry they later deny. When a child struggles to sound out words on a page, adults smile, guide gently, and admire the effort. No one imagines that the child ought already to read fluently. The recognition that the child is a beginner naturally invites patience. The puzzle, then, is why this generosity fades as the child grows older.

What changes is not the young but the way some elders choose to regard them. What transforms a patient guide into an impatient critic is not the possession of superior experience but the use to which that experience is put: not to teach but to condemn, not to illuminate ignorance but to punish it. The young person is no longer someone who has not yet had time to learn, but someone who ought already to know better. A swimmer calmly shown how to stay afloat rarely resents the instructor; a swimmer pushed into deep water and scolded for sinking is unlikely to be grateful. The young do not resent being taught; they resent being reproached for not already knowing what they have never been given the chance to learn.

To understand why elders so often forget the very gap that ought to shape their behavior, one must consider a subtler psychological factor. To recognize fully the difference between oneself and the young is to confront an uncomfortable implication: if one has lived much longer, one must also be correspondingly nearer to the end of life. Few thoughts are less welcome. It becomes tempting, perhaps unconsciously, to minimize the gap in order to avoid the conclusion it implies.

Research on time perception lends weight to this possibility. Because each successive year becomes a smaller fraction of accumulated experience, it feels shorter than the last. Some psychologists have suggested that the subjective midpoint of life arrives surprisingly early, perhaps around late adolescence, after which time seems to

accelerate. To acknowledge the full distance between oneself and the young would therefore be to acknowledge how rapidly one's remaining years may be slipping away — a realization most people prefer not to examine too closely.

Such denial has decisive consequences. Once older adults cease to view the young as beginners, they treat them as incompetent peers — individuals who should already know what they have never been given the chance to learn. The critic may regard such rebuke as a duty, a responsibility owed to society. ^(c)Yet this supposed duty rests precisely on the authority of experience that the critic has just finished denying. In demanding deference to age while refusing to acknowledge the very difference that would justify it, these critics embody a contradiction that the young, whatever their faults, are usually quick to detect and slow to forgive.

It must be admitted that age does not guarantee wisdom. The world contains elders who have accumulated years without accumulating insight, and it is perhaps not accidental that the most vociferous critics of the young are sometimes those who have improved themselves the least. Condemning the faults of others demands far less effort than correcting one's own.

Still, one hopes that the long passage of time might make people more patient, perceptive, and capable of understanding. If experience brought none of these benefits, the prospect of aging would be bleak indeed. One would hope that more of us might become the sort of adult who helps a child sound out a difficult word, rather than the sort who berates the child for not reading it already. ^(d)Yet becoming such a person demands a depth of self-knowledge and generosity of spirit that takes a great many years to cultivate. And by the time we are finally capable of it, we may discover — with some irony — that there are not many years left in which to practice it.

- (1) 下線部(a)を和訳しなさい。
- (2) 下線部(b)について, "the asymmetry"の具体的内容を日本語で説明しなさい。また, "they later deny"とあるが, それはなぜか。その理由も日本語で説明しなさい。
- (3) 下線部(c)の内容の説明として, 最も適当なものを以下の選択肢から選び, 記号で答えなさい。

- ア 年長者の批判は, 若者を自らと同等の能力を持つ存在として扱うという, 社会が否定するような年長者の独りよがりな責任感に基づいたものである。
- イ 若者の未熟さを叱責する権利は, 自らが歩んできた経験の重みを正当に評価し, それを若者に継承しようとする意志がある場合以外は, 認められない。
- ウ 若者との境界を曖昧にすることで, 批判者は自らが拠って立つべき経験という名の権威を自ら放棄してしまっている。
- エ 若者を批判する大人は, 自らの経験がもたらす優位性から目を背けながらも, その存在を認めないはずの経験を盾にして, 若者に敬意を持って従うよう強いている。
- オ 若者への叱責を自らの責務だと考える批判者は, 自らの老いを正面から受け入れた上で, 長年の経験に基づいた権威を次世代の育成のために正しく行使している。

- (4) 下線部(d)を和訳しなさい。