Rice Grad Kolenda Is Modern Philosopher

By JUDI TRAVIS

The majority of Rice Institute students know Dr. Konstantin Kolenda, either through one of his philosophy courses, or as a member of the Will Rice College resident faculty. Recently, he has been honored as the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship which will enable him to lecture on American philosophy next year, either in Austria or Germany.

A Rice Graduate

A Rice graduate himself, Dr. Kolenda received a Rice diploma in 1950 and his Ph. D. from Cornell in 1953; he returned that year to teach at the Institute. Music and sports are among his "non-academic" interests and he is a member of one of the city's soccer teams.

Schopenhauer

Soon to be published is Dr. Kolenda's English translation (the first) of Schopenhauer's work, Freedom of the Will. His current research project is an "Investigation of the Rules Following the Activities of Man." The central thesis is that before an activity can be entered, certain rules pertaining to it must be learned. One's original learning is never completed, for life consists of absorbing the rules and also growing within their scope.

His Courses

Dr. Kolenda teaches a wide variety of courses. Philosophy 220 offers a survey of Western classics and appeals to those students who want a good philosophical background, and also to many engineers with a free elective. Philosophy 340, the Philosophy of Science and Theory of Knowledge is another course which engineers find especially attractive. Philosophy 350 is particularly valuable to language majors, French and German alike, as it explores the literature itself along with the philosophy behind it. Dr. Kolenda finds that contact with his students is stimulating and indispensable to his work outside the classroom.

A Good Thing

The college system, he says, is definitely a good thing, both socially and academically. His major criticism of Rice students is their lack of expressed appreciation of all their marvelous facilities, and also the fact that too many grad students forego all intellectual pursuits once they leave the Institute. With a Rice degree comes a sort of Noblesse Oblige.

Our Period Is Exciting

What does Dr. Kolenda think about contemporary philosophy? "We are living in an exciting, evolution period, says Kolenda. Due to changing values, a new orientation must be found. In recent years, the structure of Western thought has been greatly shaken.

Existentialism

No single thing can be done to alleviate the many crises which we face. Existentialism is a reaction to the crises; it suggests new conceptions, asserts new values of freedom, but perhaps in a rather dangerous way—dangerous enough to have serious objections to it raised by many other thinkers. British philosophers, the conceptual analysts, are undertaking a critical re-examination of the inter-relationship between language and reason.

We're Not Deserted

This is an important concept, but we must realize that nothing can be done overnight. Dr. Kolenda assures us, however, that philosophy has not deserted us.