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POINT OF DECISION

THERE is a sense in which the most obvious difficulties experienced by human beings are the most neglected ones. Take for example the somewhat guilty secret which haunts every one of us—that we don't seem to be able to live up to the standards we set for ourselves in reflective and self-critical moments. This, very simply, is the problem which centers around what men used to call "the will," but which is hardly ever mentioned, these days, except, perhaps, by poets and old-fashioned moralists. But poets need not be taken seriously, and who will listen to old-fashioned moralists?

We have no intention, here, of launching upon a pretentious discourse about the Will. Obviously, the modern psychologists have reasons, even if not very good ones, for denying the existence of will, or "will-power," or "free-will," altogether. One of the reasons is that the will—if it *does* exist—is capable of only the most abstract or metaphysical definition, and except for a few pioneers of the new psychotherapy, who may find themselves tangentially entering this rarefied atmosphere as a result of their explorations of mysticism, no psychologist dares to be caught expressing himself in metaphysical terms. First of all, to speak of a "faculty" of the mind is an unforgivable medievalism in a modern psychologist; second, how would you go about "measuring" the will?—for in psychology, everything gets measured.

A further objection to talk about the will lies in the fact that most moderns have a long-standing feud with any expression which sounds like moralizing. It is a little insulting, when not merely boring, to have somebody tell you to be "good"—to bestir your "will" and make something of yourself. Not only that; it also pricks the conscience a bit—even though in our terms, not *his*—and this is annoying, too.

So, on the whole, there is a vast silence on the subject, except for an occasional article on how to quit smoking, or some glib assurance from a psychologist that the whole idea of the will is no more than a bit of inherited theological twaddle which has vastly confused, for one thing, the problem of alcoholism by causing old-fashioned people to ignore the fact that alcoholism is really a disease.

We don't like moralizing any more than the next man, and it is certainly true that exhortations to have more "willpower" are often or mostly nonsense; but we take the view that the will does not become an unimportant subject for this reason. The idea of cutting off your right hand if it offends you is all right as a bit of Biblical rhetoric, but we know of no sane man who has followed this advice—except, perhaps, the psychologists, who, being offended by the popular notion of the will, have decided that we are better off without any.

So, to make an entirely new beginning, we turn to a passage on the views or teachings of Gautama Buddha, a man who, in the opinion of some, was a psychologist of great practical insight. Unlike some others, the religion of Buddha is a religion of attitudes. Acts are of course important, but the key idea in Buddhism is that acts inevitably result from attitudes or thoughts, so that the control of acts must begin with control of the mind. What is the agency of control? It seems necessary to call it the "will." What else would you call it?

Besides *The Light of Asia,* by Edwin Arnold, which is a poem embodying the life and the principal teachings of Buddha, the best book we know of on Buddhism is *The Creed of Buddha,* by Edmond Holmes. In his last chapter, Mr. Holmes calls attention to the fact that Buddhism has in

common with modern science the study of the processes of growth; but while science devotes itself to organic processes, Buddha was concerned with psychological processes—or, as Holmes put it, with growth of the soul. He writes:

> What the science of the West is doing for the growth (and the development) of wheat and barley, Buddha did for the growth of the soul. He taught men that, if they would bring their lives into harmony with certain fundamental laws of Nature, their souls would grow—as well-tended crops grow —vigorously and healthily; and that the sense of well-being which accompanies successful growth, and which, when consciously realized, is true happiness, would be theirs. He taught them this; and, in teaching it, he made that appeal to their will-power which is his chief contribution to the edification, as distinguished from the instruction, of the soul. The husbandman must take thought for his plants if their lives are to be brought into harmony with the appropriate laws of Nature; but the plant which we call the soul must take thought for itself. Penetrated with the conviction that what a man does reacts, naturally and necessarily, on what he is, and so affects for all time the growth of the soul and its consequent well-being; penetrated with the conviction that conduct moulds character, and that character is destiny;—Buddha called upon each man in turn to take his life into his own hands, and himself direct the process of his growth.
>
> This message was his legacy to the ages. It is for Western thought to take it up and repeat it, developing in its own way the mighty ideas that are behind it.

Yes, this was written a long time ago—nearly fifty years. There is an air of innocence about Mr. Holmes' enthusiasm and hopes for Western man which would probably be impossible for him today. Yet his advice seems good. And there may be point in the fact that very few seem to have taken or repeated this advice in the intervening half-century.

One of William Saroyan's most entertaining stories concerns a credulous young man who wanted very much to win a race. Acquiring a small manual, not on how to train for and run a race, but on how to indoctrinate himself with the idea of victory, he proceeded to prepare for the race by dreaming of himself flying across the finish line far in advance of the others. His illusion was as pretty as a soap bubble, and as fragile. He fell, in short, on his face.

This is not to suggest that the competitive spirit, or "will-to-win," is unimportant in athletics, but that an exertion of the will in athletics is virtually impossible without a coordinated knowledge of the technology of athletic achievement. The will, in other words, whatever it is, requires a coherent channel through which to flow. If it is a force, it has to have gears to turn, and those gears must mesh efficiently with others.

What we are talking about, we suppose, is the anatomy of determination. Anyone who has been in the presence of great human determination knows that it exists and is real. An atmosphere of power moves around with a man of great determination. It may be a power which invades the freedom and independence of other men, who feel this strength as if it were a naked sword; or it may be a gentle strength involving faith in and devotion to an ideal—an ideal such as Gandhi lived by. The point is, such strength, such power, is unmistakably real.

It also has attractive power. Strong men soon find themselves surrounded by admirers. They may be fearful, envious admirers, or they may be adoring devotees—disciples. In any case, power attracts.

Thus the question of the will involves moral as well as psychological mysteries. An egotism which masters in some degree the technology of the use of power may extend its sovereignty over an entire nation. It is a matter, it seems, of learning the rules. And curiously enough, there is some similarity between the rules for the kind of power Buddha invited men to acquire and the rules adopted by egotists. In both cases, a multiplicity of desires must be subdued. In both cases the emotions must come under control. In both cases the course to be followed must be drafted and one's steps directed without deviation from the course. It almost seems, what with atom bombs and such, that we are fortunate that the

men of our time have only a chance acquaintance with the rules for developing the will. Perhaps the psychological confusion which pervades our time is a blessing in disguise, arresting the devastation that would result if men were able to give the discipline of saints and sages to their evil or destructive purposes.

Here, it may be, we are brought face to face with the dim outline of the theological myth of "the Fall," for surely there is some meaning for human beings in this tragic cosmic drama. The "War in Heaven" cannot be merely a bit of celestial history, an anecdote for poets like Dante and Milton to amuse themselves with.

We have always had a shy liking for the side of Lucifer in that ancient combat. In terms of the only political philosophy we are able to cling to, Jehovah was far too much of a totalitarian for our taste, and his interest in keeping Adam and Eve innocent of the knowledge of good and evil has always seemed a vast presumption. Why shouldn't they suffer the pains of trying to distinguish right from wrong? Did he want to keep them forever in some kind of zoo? Jehovah must have been like the modern psychologists, since he didn't believe in the will, either! Not for Adam and Eve, anyhow.

A world without will would be a world without good and evil, and a world without Shakespeare and Dostoevsky. It would also be a world without Nero and a world without Buddha. Well, we know the kind of a world we have, and it isn't any Garden of Eden.

What we are trying to get at, here, is the idea that any man who sets himself to find out something about the will is getting ready to eat the apple all over again. It will probably be discouraging, too, because practically all the apples are wormy, these days, and even if you find a good one, it may not taste very good, since our taste has been badly spoiled.

But a time comes in the affairs of men when they have to eat the apple, or try to, if they are to go on being human beings at all. A point is reached, either from the dull ache of pain, the furies of unslaked desire, or the demons of fear, when life as we know it becomes intolerable. And then a man is likely to ask himself who is really running his life, and to what end. It was the Buddha's claim that all roads lead to this point, eventually, and whether you accept his vocabulary and are willing to call this point "knowledge of misery," or prefer more contemporary sub-titles, may make very little difference, actually, in what happens after.

This is as far as we feel able to go with the subject. Buddha went much farther.

Letter from
CENTRAL EUROPE

INNSBRUCK.—The old problem of *Anschluss*—unification of Austria with Germany—has again come to the fore with the decision of the German Federal Supreme Court that the 75,000 Austrians who live in Germany must be regarded legally as German citizens.

It is no wonder that the Austrian press expressed deep astonishment at this decision. The Soviet-influenced papers in particular were inclined to regard it as a step of German preparation for merging the small country with the larger one. Commenting, Dr. Adenauer, Chancellor of the Western German Republic, said that the Supreme Court is not a political institution and judged with no other motive but the strictly juridical one. It had decided that an Austrian citizenship was not yet to be recognized in Germany, but this did not mean that Austria would not be regarded as a fact. The decision showed only that the necessary legal foundation had not yet, in Western Germany, been established. The court had pointed to a gap in German legislation, and this gap would be closed as soon as possible. He took this opportunity, concluded the Chancellor, to declare with all possible responsibility that the rumors about another *Anschluss* were nothing but the inventions of those who were interested in driving wedges between the *rapprochements* of the European countries; Austria's independence was beyond any question.

While these words ended the debate, a number of people in Austria were not very much pleased with the utterances of the Chancellor. Most of this group, naturally, belong to the *Grossdeutschen* who, although being Austrians, have always voted for unification and regret that this union did not come about before Hitler's time, so that it might have survived the debacle in 1945. But a smaller number, not being much delighted either, consist simply o£ Austrian nationalists.

The latter by no means want the extinguishing of Austria. Why not, they ask, an *Anschluss* of—at least certain regions of—Germany with Austria? The idea is that the Bavarians have in some ways more homogeneity with the Austrians than with the Prussians. Bavarians also have extensive industrial and technical resources which are lacking in the mountainous neighboring Austrian states—Tyrol and Salzburg. The Habsburgers—a dynasty which has ruled for many centuries in Vienna—are not allowed to enter Austrian territory, since World War I. Meanwhile, the present pretender (Emperor) Otto von Habsburg, after he married a German princess a few years ago, made his home at Lake Starnberg, not far from Munich, capital of Bavaria, and many people take this as an infallible sign that he thinks as they do.

For some Austrians, this hope encloses a patent solution. If the Soviets intend never to leave Vienna and Lower Austria, the amalgamation with Bavaria would secure the survival of Austria. But if the Soviets depart, the new state, as the strong heart of Central Europe, would play quite an important instrument in the Pan-European orchestra. This state would also be entirely German-speaking and entirely Roman Catholic. Extremists with such extraordinary hopes are confident that a "new Austria" of this sort would in the course of time act like a magnet and again attract those neighboring countries like Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia which—until World War I—formed integral parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

These are utopian dreams in the real sense of the word. But they make plain how absurd the European situation has become, since the Soviets have taken possession of its Eastern parts, and indicate the desperation of those who long to escape from this dilemma.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
SOME GOOD QUESTIONS

READERS who have noted our enthusiasm about much of the writing of Ignazio Silone (particularly his essays, since our lengthiest quotations came from Dorothy Norman's *Twice a Year),* will not be surprised when we call attention to a two-page "Self-Portrait in Questions and Answers" by Silone appearing in the *Partisan Review* for November-December. Each of the questions, it seems to us, provides a ground for fruitful conversation. We like especially the title selected by Mr. Silone, "Self-Portrait," for questions of this nature and the answers given, whatever they are, are probably an ideal way to sum up both the principles and personality of an author.

Passing over the opening paragraphs, which deal chiefly with Silone's favorite authors, painters, etc., we begin with the following:

> *Do you think man is responsible for his actions?*
> As far as he is free, yes.

This interchange again calls attention to Dwight Macdonald's "The Responsibility of Peoples." In this essay, Mr. Macdonald enabled his readers to see that it is both unfair and unrealistic to have expected Germans who cooperated with the Nazis to "refuse orders," in face of the fact that most of the people of the world today move in tightly organized routines, whatever their nationality. The idea of disobeying orders seldom occurs in any army, or, for that matter, to any one whose livelihood depends on maintaining his position in industry, a trade union, or a political party. As Macdonald said in relation to the German war crimes, "If anyone is responsible, everyone is responsible"—to the extent that acceptance of the dictates of impersonal entities, like Governments, are so seldom questioned anywhere that the tradition of non-conformity is clearly on the wane. Silone continues:

> *Do you think man can overcome his destiny7*
> Yes, if he accepts it.

This is a recognition which seems prerequisite to development of what David Riesman has called "autonomy." Individual man *can* be free, but not unless he clearly understands the nature and extent of the odds against him, the odds that weigh so heavily in favor of conformity. If he "accepts" the fact that only the most difficult and persistent struggle will make possible genuinely independent thought, he is at least in a position to understand the conditions of freedom.

> *What do you think about suicide?*
> It is one of the many things that I cannot understand.

This simple comment reflects the unquenchable spirit of Silone's struggles with the Italian underground. There is much about the cloak-and-dagger aspect of resistance movements in totalitarian countries which inspires admiration and arouses excitement. But the most glamorous thing of all demonstrated by the many who endured persecution, prison, or concentration camps in behalf of the ideal of freedom, is the single fact that one who lasted, as did Silone, was simply too much of a man to ever envision the possibility of ultimate defeat. There are many kinds of suicide, and Silone is one who "cannot understand" any of them.

The next four questions and answers we reprint together:

> *Do you believe in the possibility of a perfect political order?*
>
> No.
>
> *Or in the possibility of perfect laws, institutions, authority?*
>
> No.
>
> *1n a Christian State?*
>
> No, it would be a contradiction in terms.
>
> *1n a Christian Society?*
>
> That alone would be a Christian society in which love replaced the law.

Reflection upon the historical development of Christianity is here in order. While it is perfectly apparent to numerous thinkers and writers that the very "success" of organized Christianity subverted the ideal of ethical freedom taught by Christ, it is not always easy to remember that no compromise between organization and principle can leave the principle unpolluted. And, just as you cannot legislate or coerce any individual into becoming "good," so is it impossible to erase communism and implant democracy by recourse to appeals to either fear or

ambition. We hold that no one understands democracy in its highest sense save sages and philosophers who, it is of record, have never had any truck with organizations as means of representing their ideals to the world. This is one of the many reasons why we object to calling the United States and Great Britain "Christian nations." The *nation* can no more be "Christian," or "Buddhist," than a nation can be sub-human or evil. Both political and religious animism lead to curious delusions of group superiority, and there is a psychological common denominator between those who insist righteously that we *are* a Christian nation and the racial superiority concept of the Nazis, or the Marxist notion of the unique virtues of the proletariat.

There is this further commentary on the labyrinth of Marxist values:

> *Do you agree with the maxim "You can't go wrong if you always follow the working class"?*
>
> As a compass it has lost its usefulness. The working class is not going in any one direction.
>
> *But on the whole, can it not be said to tend in one direction?*
>
> Its direction varies from one country to another, from Labour to Social-Democrat to Communist to Titoist to Syndicalist to Peronist and so on. To say that one should always follow it, is meaningless.
>
> *Are proletarian organizations, when free from external pressure, not spontaneously progressive?*
>
> Not spontaneously.
>
> *What ultimately decides the real nature of these organizations?*
>
> The conscience of their members and their leaders.

When religious spokesmen hold forth on the subject of "conscience," the word often sounds a trifle unreal—perhaps because these men are seldom the ones who are called Upon to alter the course of practical events. But Silone as a one-time Communist (see *The God that Failed)* had a thorough try at working through the medium of a party apparently advancing the cause of the underprivileged. When *he* reduces the question of how much good can be done by organizations to a matter of *conscience,* the term becomes impressive.

Our final quotation is an expression of art as well as philosophy. No bombast to this "message," but a lot to think about:

> *Have you confidence in man?*
>
> I have confidence in the *man* who accepts suffering and transforms it into truth and moral courage. And so now I think that out of the terrible polar night of the Siberian slave labor camps, Someone may come who will restore sight to the blind.
>
> *Someone? Who?*
> His name does not matter.

This is more, we think, than a replay of the Great Man theory of history. Silone here indicates his faith in some reality behind time-honored conceptions of heroism and greatness. If Silone believes in a Christ or a Gandhi at all, he believes that men of such stature may always be walking silently off-stage and will, from time to time, find a way to enter the foreground of human activity. To say that human greatness may come out of Siberian labor camps is to affirm that it may come from anywhere, at any time.

A few years ago a Congregational minister, thereby intimating his graduation from sectarian Christianity, remarked that what he was really interested in was a resurgence of appreciation for spiritual values, adding that if such resurgence "passed Christianity by," this would be of little moment. In spirit, we relate Silone's "his name does not matter" to this point of view, hoping that men will some day grow broad enough to relinquish the fond imagining that guidance to a better way of life is bound to come to the world only through the channels they regard with favor. Only those who can discover truth and inspiration in unlikely places can be sure of what truth and inspiration are.

COMMENTARY
THE GROWING TIP

A READER finds objectionable a sentence in our article, "Impartiality is the Issue" (MANAS, Dec. 15, 1954). The context of this sentence concerned the likelihood that the majority of Russians are quite satisfied with the political system under which they live. Most of them, we said, doubtless enjoy those phases of life which have been bettered by the revolution. (Now comes the offending sentence:) "It is only the creative tip of free discussion and free dissent that has disappeared." Our reader says:

> Forgive me if I appear over-emotional over so simply worded a sentence! There is an old Hebraic myth to the effect that so long as 616 pious Jews inhabit the earth (the number 616 being the number of seeds in a pomegranate), Jehovah, in spite of widespread iniquity and wickedness, will not permit the earth to be destroyed with holy violence! Destroy "only the creative tip" of a nation—of a world—and consider what remains! Destroy or eliminate the creativity . . . and all the bread and circuses in the world are worthless. . . . In combination with reason, when it is accompanied by humanity and reflection, you have the essence of the content of existence—"only the creative tip."

Manifestly, what this reader doesn't like about our sentence is the word "only." In self-defense, we can "only" say that the sentence was written in a mood of understatement—there is nothing shilly-shallying about the statement itself—being intended as a mild sort of irony. Of course the creative tip of any society is its most important part—its organ of originality and self-determining change! That is why we put the sentence in the article, which, at this point, was busy explaining how a visitor could go to Moscow and see a lot of people who seem to be getting along fine. Unless that visitor cares about the right to free dissent, he won't see anything wrong with its suppression, and will be capable of uninhibited eloquence about the material achievements and even the prosperity and status of the "cultural workers"—as did the Scottish writer of our Letter from Moscow (MANAS, Nov. 17, 1954).

All that we were trying to suggest is that people thrilled by the progress in material human welfare in Russia have a right to their "say"—that their claims should be admitted without prejudice, if they happen to be true. And while admitting them ourselves, we endeavored to point out, without any ranting to muddy the discussion, that those other qualities which a free people are supposed to prize have very little chance for survival under the Soviet system. But let us not exaggerate our virtues. The "creative tip" is really made up of a very small minority in any country. And while free discussion and free dissent are still legal in the United States, it is becoming increasingly difficult to eat regularly and hold a job while engaging in these unpopular activities. We may say this: There is complete theoretical acceptance and a measure of practical acceptance of these civil liberties in the United States. But as the measure of practical acceptance diminishes, American criticism of the Soviet system correspondingly loses its substance.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

FRIEND Glaucon, your thinking processes are thoroughly congealed this morning. Since it is your wish that we continue to discuss education during the short time I shall be allowed to participate, we must strive to somehow loosen the fibers of your brain, else nothing that we talk about can be properly comprehended. Where shall we begin? Not difficult to find a beginning, Glaucon. Is it not that thought of my approaching death is the transfixing agent, impaling your reason on a wall of fright? You admit this, yet would rather not discuss the subject?

Glaucon, there is nothing more important to discuss with the young than the subject of death. You, like too many of our Athenians, have been taught during youth to shun mention of dying, save when drama and a hero's tale is involved. But if one is afraid to even *think* about death, he is certainly apt to live in mortal terror of any threat to his continuance in life. The Five Hundred must fear me on some such ground, finding it unbearable to contemplate a weakening of their power, and thinking that my arguments might eventually unseat their authority. Losing power is a kind of death—they are right enough in this—but need any kind of death seem so terrifying? If a governing power fails, after a time, to command the support of the people, those who constitute the state clearly have somewhere misjudged. One would think that such would welcome the opportunity to discover where the error of their planning lay, where their misunderstanding of the citizens' wishes and needs, or the citizens' misunderstanding of their representative governors.

We all die a thousand deaths, Glaucon, in the acquirement of learning. Our dreams and ideas all are in need of periodic remodelling, since the old must die for the new to be born, and the wise man bemoans not this fate, but instead meets it eagerly, so that he may ever hope to learn more than he knew before. Now, the point I am coming to is this—that a close relation exists between fear of death and fear of change, so close that if one were able to cast out fear of change he would also diminish greatly the fear of leaving his bodily abode for some other, presently unknown, habitation.

A man becomes a tyrant when he fears death, for he must move in advance against any who show likelihood of acquiring equal power to his own—and who thus could, he reasons, do away with him on some future occasion. But a man also becomes a tyrant when he fears the little deaths of unseated opinions, and it follows that the more his fear of little deaths, the greater the fear of the large one at the end. So these two sorts of fear combine, mightily strengthening each other, until, in the man who is both afraid to be shown mistaken in his opinions and afraid of death, we have a sad spectacle—one really less than a man. A true man is known by his capacity to encompass change in his understanding, to profit by the lessons it teaches, and thus develop that marvelous resilience of spirit which can distinguish us from the animal creatures.

For all these reasons, Glaucon, it is well and proper for the young as well as the old to ponder the meaning of death, in all its many forms. Finally, it must be, one can come to see that the fear of all deaths is simply fear of the unknown, and that man reaches his full stature when he welcomes the unknown instead of fearing it. What is, after all, the difference between relinquishing a cherished opinion and relinquishing one's physical form? In both cases one steps beyond the bounds of the familiar, but in both cases this can be done in one of two ways: either in the spirit of adventure and with a firm tread, or with the stumbling, craven gait of one who looks behind even as he is forced forward by the Gods. It is not opinions, Glaucon, nor bodies, that give men their likeness to these Gods, but whatever of undying spirit resolves to live through change, through both little deaths and big ones.

But now, as I think over what I have just said, I find need for revising my words. For another point of reason now comes to mind, which makes me doubt that the "big" death which signals the release of the body is any bigger than the others. In fact, perhaps the reverse is the case, for if a man live most truly in his mind, and if his parting from his physical frame need not necessitate giving up the ideas he holds most dear, this is less of a fright and a disappointment than having to start all over again to mold his convictions. Those thoughts upon which a man has built faith and hope may have become far more a part of him than his body, even though he needed the bodily agency to give thought voice. I like to think, Glaucon, that men thus prove their kinship with the Gods—that, now and again coming upon a true thought or principle, they build for the everlasting. Thus one can hold, as at least some few have held, that of all one's relationships, the relationship to a true principle is the dearest and the most enduring. Consider our friends, Glaucon, and even our families. Is it not true that in the course of time our converse with all these tends to change, is afflicted with doubt, suspicion, or anger? If a principle in which one believes can, when proven, last longer as a source of inspiration than any of these, it must be that in the light of eternity each one *does* have the strength to stand alone with his Gods.

The approval of our friends is not always to be depended upon, any more than the memories of the pleasantest hours, nor the greatest of fortunes, but the ideal quest for truth is of a different substance. It never need desert us, nor shake under our tread, nor dissipate with fluctuations o£ the grain market; knowing this, one has not to tremble at the prospect of loss. Teach your children, Glaucon, to early inquire into the nature of the differing sorts of faith that men hold, so that they will have ample time for judging who are the happiest—those who live for the discovery of truth, and who dedicate themselves to the truths, however few, they have discovered, or those who seek security through popularity and wealth. Before half the allotted days of your progeny have passed, they shall have ample time to see that those who seek security by possessing the least, and those who live for truth, finally, have the best chance of discovering staunch friends of like mind.

I was once considered a friend of Athens, Glaucon, as you know, and for the youth to converse with me was considered advantageous to them. But now a committee has decided that I am un-Athenian, and, in fact, that it is un-Athenian to ask questions of any august governing body. By threatening me with death they seek to prove that they control the founts of fear, but it is not so. They fear death—not I—nor any who realize that changes of forms, opinions and circumstances are inevitable, but that truth alone shelters from the pangs of loss. If Socrates meets any of the Five Hundred in another birth, moreover, their fear will still be with them, which is the reason that I grieve more for their lot than for my own.

FRONTIERS

More on Organization

LAST month—in the issue of Dec. 1—we printed here the suggestion of a reader for a formal organization which would "present to lay members the best thinking of all times in religious, philosophical and mystical fields." We found reason to agree warmly with the idea, as this subscriber put it, of "welcoming and profiting by the insights and wisdom of all," but expressed extreme doubts about an attempt to support work of this sort with a body `organized as our churches are organized, with well-qualified and well-paid leaders." Not content with this, we went on to speak disapprovingly of organization in general, and particularly of organization around a "spiritual" ideal.

Now comes another reader offering tempered qualifications. We quote parts of this reasonable defense of organization:

> I do agree with you on the matter of difficulties arising out of organizing, yet I am inclined to take a middle way. . . . Organization can too easily yield to patterns of authoritarianism, true, thereby causing splits, schisms, etc. Yet the very fact of ongoing schisms indicates a kind of resistance when a group becomes too authoritarian. If this did not happen, we would indeed be in tight little islands with no freedom to move about. . . .
>
> "If people won't get together without being organized, their interest is superficial." This is too broad a statement for me. Strangely, perhaps, I have felt as much if not more superficiality of interest in some of the attenders at the least organized group. I believe that if no one has the responsibility to pay, or to contribute—and this is the lack, perhaps, in no organization—the tendency is simply for the lonely to congregate in a situation a bit more reassuring than a park bench.

What the MANAS editors were against, of course, in their reply to the letter in the December issue, is organization for its own sake, and organization which takes the place of originality and initiative. An organization which is no more than a tool to execute the initiative of free and active people may be good and necessary. And we should like to edit a bit the sentence this correspondent singles out, making it read: "If people won't get together without being organized *by others*, their interest is superficial." This seems an important amendment.

Our correspondent speaks of an organization at whose meetings she found considerable stimulus: "My association with this *organized* program left me indeed not more rigid, but freed to proceed to do a lot more researching." She continues:

> I also experienced a small group of fifteen or twenty people who organized temporarily around the study of a book. I have to call our bit of planning a loose form of organization, revolving around the fact that one planned to be at a certain place every other week, and to know loosely what the program would be.
>
> In addition, I have experienced a group with practically no organization at all whose aim is free discussion. Much valuable theorizing can be found here, people of similar interests do congregate weekly at a location. But I also note that I respond least to this arrangement.

The explanation given is that the least organized group lacks "spirit and go." We can well believe it. But does this relative failure betray only "lack of organization"?

What seems the real point of this general question is well put by our correspondent: "Perhaps the need is for more analytical study of organization, as such."

Some enterprises, obviously, require a great deal of organization; others, very little. Take for example the operation of a sea-going liner. The organization of the crew of a boat is rigorous, with the captain enjoying absolute authority. We are unable to quarrel with this arrangement. Running a ship requires much skill and much responsibility. Since the captain accepts the responsibility for the lives of the passengers, and the preservation and delivery of the cargo, he should have, and does have, a corresponding authority. It is an authority qualified by law, to

prevent abuses, but in emergencies his word is absolute.

This is a form of organization appropriate to the function of going to sea in ships. Going to sea in ships involves specialists in navigation and other branches of applied science. If you want to go to sea you conform to the rules of sea-going organization, or stay at home . . . or get your own boat.

The small group our correspondent writes about, which formed in order to study a book, was an organization of an entirely different sort. No authority was involved, and practically no administration—certainly no administration which could not be performed equally well by any of the members. So far as we can see, this organization was entirely functional, eminently sensible, beyond any sort of criticism. It is difficult to imagine such an organization getting out of hand. Ideas of personal authority, status, or privileged position can have no place in such an arrangement.

It is in organizations erected upon a pattern of hierarchical authority that the trouble arises. Ordinarily, as we suggested above, the organization of the crew of a ship leads to no distorting egotisms, but read *The Caine Mutiny* for an account of what may happen when military hierarchy is added to maritime organization.

Organization, then, becomes potentially dangerous when it allows too free a reign to the concept of authority; and authority becomes actually dangerous when its meaning passes from technical authority—such as that possessed by a competent navigator and experienced seaman on board ship—to symbolic authority such as may be claimed by a religious prophet or a nationalist fanatic.

The great revolutions of the eighteenth century were directed against sacerdotal authority and the alleged "divine right of kings." The principle here at issue is the same as that which allows the captain his authority on board ship.

In the case of religion, who has the great responsibility? If you believe that the priest or a particular religious organization represented by the priest has this responsibility for the salvation of ordinary men—for imparting to them the saving truth, which can be learned in no other way—then it is natural to give the priest and his religious organization all the authority and power needed to execute this responsibility.

But if, on the other hand, you think that in religious matters, or in the philosophical quest for truth, no man can assume the responsibility of "knowing" for others, then the assignment of power to any other is the greatest conceivable folly and a betrayal of human potentiality. On this argument, then, a man's own personal authority in respect to ultimate questions ought to be guarded as his most sacred possession. Insistence upon the prerogative of private choice in religion and philosophy is by no means a species of arrogance or presumption; it is rather recognition that no one else *can* choose for us in matters of this sort. The most humble man, then, if he still be a man, will retain this right of choice and eye with suspicion those who would shape his opinions for him—or anyone who imagines himself to be something more than a "lay member" in the quest for truth.

The captain orders the seaman to perform a task. The seaman must do it, whether or not he understands the task, or why it should be done; it is better, of course, for him, and perhaps for the ship, if he understands, but no vital principle is violated by obedience without understanding. It is a poor educational situation, but not an evil one in respect to the objective of keeping the ship going. The evil thing would be for the sailor to refuse to obey, and cause disaster.

But in a religious society or group, almost exactly the reverse moral conditions exist. If a man is "ordered" to believe in a certain way; or—which is more common—allows himself to be beguiled into acceptance of some belief, half bribed by promises, half frightened by sinister threats of punishment in the hereafter; then he

gives up his manhood as a thinking being. This is the greatest possible disaster.

The point, of course, is that the purpose of the organization on shipboard is to keep the ship afloat and sailing in the right direction, while the purpose of a religious or philosophical association is to find the truth. Sailing a ship is a collective enterprise involving both higher and subordinate functions. Finding the truth is an individual enterprise requiring an attitude of mind consistent with the nature of truth—a free mind, a daring mind, and a mind engaged in independent discovery.

These separate and very different functions require very different sorts of organization.

It may be said that the pursuit of truth is often assisted by facilities for research. In this case, the organization devised to provide the facilities must be closely watched lest the facilities tend to prejudice the research. These functions must be kept absolutely clear and separate. A library, a university, a laboratory, a museum—these are places where learning may *happen* to take place. They may also become places where learning is frustrated by pretense and pompous authority. This fact, we think, is of greater importance than any known accessory or facility to the learning process.

Having made some attempt to clear the ground thus far, we are brought to the question which has been haunting our discussion for several paragraphs. Is it not true that some men are wiser than others? Should we not admit that some men are better qualified to teach than others, more able to point the way to truth?

Let us admit it immediately. There are such men. But what sort of men are they? Of one thing we are sure: *They are never the sort of men who seek or enjoy any sort of authority, spiritual or otherwise, over their fellows.* They are men with the least taste for organization and the apparatus of authority. They are the philosophers who, as Plato reports in the seventh book of the *Republic,* re-entered the cave of ignorance to instruct their fellows with great reluctance. They are the men least likely to succeed in politics, whose talents do not run at all to pleasing a board of trustees. They are men who, if hedged about with organization, may be expected to depart with a melancholy smile. It was Albert Einstein, surely a teacher of this world, who said recently that if he were a young man again, he would become a plumber or a peddler. Does this mean that Dr. Einstein would refuse to teach? We doubt it. His statement may be about the most educational thing he could think of to say to the men of his time and circumstances—his way of suggesting that nothing will be much good for us until we reduce the oppressive organizations that hamper and restrict a free man's life.

Actually, understanding the problems of organization seems not very different from understanding the problems and nature of man. If we knew, for instance, what really serves the good of man, we would also know what sort of organization will be of the most use, and what will hinder. Since the confusion and deception resulting from organization is so great—especially that growing out of religious organization—it seems plain that special precautions should be taken in this area. We may learn to organize perfectly for technological purposes, yet make terrible mistakes in organizing for spiritual or mystical purposes.

Our correspondent suggests that resistance results when organization becomes "too authoritarian," adding that without such revolt we would find ourselves "in tight little islands with no freedom to move about." Well. . . .

A lot of people can't move about, right now. People who aren't plumbers or peddlers. People who have fallen under the control of some political or religious authority. People whose lives are mainly directed by fear. These are facts which have some relation to the problem of organization.

However, turning to a more positive view, our defender of organization points out that the

writer of the letter in the Dec. I issue really suggested some sort of "great collegium, and this of course might have its place in a culture like our own." She says further:

> The correspondent was unfortunate in his comparison with the organization of our churches [he later wrote the same thing, himself], I feel. On a limited scale, the community centers springing up across the land may forecast more the sort of thing intended, except that thus far these have perhaps limited their approach to art expression. But they do have a degree of *spontaneity* that holds them together—as organizations. They inform us that people are doing some forms of searching, albeit rather limited.
>
> Somehow, I can visualize the correspondent's idea, a vast one, actually. We do need more than *books*, together with people and a place, do we not?

These outreaching thoughts come well at the end. For our part, we should be willing to approve, even, perhaps, to join, any organization which resolved to trust to spontaneity to keep it together! And so long as the people with ideas and an interest in ideas will themselves find their place and their books, and plan their meetings for the best meeting of *minds* they can devise, they will hear only huzzas from this Department.