

lowed the outlines of rubble and debris heaped beside the door. The exterior walls were scarred by fire, severed by violence, marred by deep cracks. The steeple which Christ raised His hand to when He reached toward God, the steeple where the rainbow ended, sprawled on the hollowed ground. "This is the greatest church that ever was or ever will be. Men search all their lives for what it holds." The priests left the door ajar. St. Mary Le Port was only an empty shell.

## For the Sake of Self

Deborah Staiger

EVER SINCE man first formulated morals by which he felt he was intended to live, he has held selflessness to be a primary characteristic and goal of the worthwhile existence. We are condoned in seeking our own interests toward the end of self-preservation, but all our other efforts are supposed to be directed at helping our fellow man. Fine as this doctrine may sound, I regard it as inherently hypocritical. I find it increasingly disturbing to try to discern anything but self-satisfaction in mankind's seemingly altruistic actions; for men, even in their relations with others, have one basic drive—gratification of their own needs. Admittedly, the person who is centered upon others will find more of a welcome by society than a person who revolves about himself. As Benjamin Franklin said, "He that falls in love with himself will have no rivals." But I am concerned with the cause of generous deeds, not their effect. Herein lies one of life's greatest paradoxes: generous deeds are rooted in selfishness.

Some overt acts of kindness obviously have as their motives personal ego-raising; other benevolent efforts stem from more subtle desires to be accepted by humanity. In viewing the former we may look to the multimillionaire who donates thousands of dollars to an orphanage. This gesture is not only good public relations for him (assisting a helpless child is an infallible way to the public heart) but also a reassurance to his conscience. Such a philanthropist might reason, "Since I have patronized my fellow man so magnanimously, I must be quite a noble person." In contrast we could scrutinize the intentions of an unselfish missionary in Africa who sacrifices and toils so that the natives may lead fuller lives. When the veils of "Christian duty" and kindness to one's brother are brushed aside, a basic personality need shines dully beneath. The missionary's soul thrives on love gleaned from his work; it sustains his mind as food does his body. Such a personality need, which is satisfied by observance of the Golden Rule in humble and benevolent service, is, of course, more desirable than a need which requires the crushing of another's ego to elevate one's own. Yet we all act because of inner drives to preserve not only our bodies but also our morales. Spinoza

wrote in his *Ethics*, "The primary and sole foundations of virtue or of the proper conducts of life is to seek our own profit." Hence any altruistic action—indeed, any action of which I can conceive—has as its basis personal gain.

The compelling problem now becomes the differentiation between admirable and disagreeable manifestations of the soul's inner drive for fulfillment. How can the altruist be better-loved than the egotist if they both are actually self-seeking? The solution to this enigma is inextricably linked with another mystery not designed for man to comprehend: it is linked with the explanation of man's purpose for existing on earth. When we understand what our basic goal in life was meant to be, we will understand what determines the most acceptable personal needs. If, for example, we were created to progress materially, the man who has a drive to explore science or help others do so is at the summit of selfless endeavor.

Only one trait of mankind mars the smooth fabric into which I have woven all of humanity's efforts on earth. In my cold approach to even the most graciously-rendered of services, I have not provided for one man's instinctive, thoughtless risk of his own life to save another's. Here we may advance a theory which sounds a note of hope for the petty, selfish existence we seem to be leading. Perhaps all of mankind is one great Being exhibiting self-interest in its own entirety rather than in its component parts. We may all indeed be a part of the main to which John Donne refers in telling us, "No man is an island entire unto himself."

## A Logical Conclusion—Don't

David Mannweiler

TO THE average medical layman, the three days I spent in bed with a minor ailment several years ago would be nothing. But to me these few days marked a time when I became aware that I was suddenly allergic to the slightest dose of penicillin and had to give up all antibiotic drugs. This discovery seemed especially peculiar to me because until this time I had always taken my penicillin along with the best of the seventh-graders and had been able to hold the drug with no aftereffects. These were not facts that I particularly boasted about, but nevertheless, I did feel a certain sense of belonging in knowing I was accepted as being normal.

Heeding my mother's frantic call to save her from a child staying home from school, the family doctor, a man I trusted medically and hated financially, came to give me the penicillin shot that was intended to get me well as soon as possible. I looked forward to his visit with the same apprehension any twelve-year-old boy would have who knows he is about to be shot with a hypodermic needle in a very tender spot.