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- 10 Similarly the massive Chinese student unrest in the early years of the century, while eventually leading to the downfall of the Manchu Dynasty and to a half-century of civil war (which may not be over yet), was confined to one country.
- 11 Even the large Chinese populations outside of mainland China were hardly affected by it.
- 12 Today, however, there is a true "student international."
- 13 There is, of course, no central command, no common creed; but there is a common enemy.
- 14 It is organization.
- 15 Today's student "activists" are against organization and its authority in any form or shape.
- 16 Above all, they oppose what used to be considered the "good guys" among organizations, university, and government.
- 17 The young priests and religious of the Catholic Church are equally opposed to the authority and organization of the Roman Curia.
- 18 And that traditional symbol of rebellion, the Communist party, was one of the main targets of the French students and of the young among the French workers in the uprising against all authority in May 1968.
- 19 The war in Vietnam and the racial troubles of the black ghetto may explain the rebellion of the young people of America.
- 20 But they hardly explain why the Italian students storm their university buildings, or why the students of Poland and Yugoslavia battle with their respective regimes and their police.
- 21 Nor do they explain the outbreaks of student rebellion in India and Indonesia, let alone the organized anarchism of the Chinese students who enrolled by the hundreds of thousands in Mao's "Cultural Revolution" against school, government, and Communist party authority.

- 22 Clearly the “causes” only trigger the rebellion.
- 23 They do not “cause” it.
- 24 The perception of the young that society has become a [society of organizations](#), and that this is in striking contrast to the society of our textbooks, our political rhetoric, and our conventions is sound and realistic insight.
- 25 The response, however, is futile.
- 26 **There is no sign that our society has decided to do without the services that only the organization can supply .**
- 27 We are not willing to do without defense or without education, without economic goods and services, or without health care.
- 28 **The organizations will not go away .**
- 29 Repudiating them is not going to make them disappear.
- 30 It will not even reduce their power.
- 31 Indeed, scorning power only makes it more oppressive.
- 32 ****Power has to be used.**
- 33 It is a reality.
- 34 If the decent and idealistic toss power in the gutter, the guttersnipes pick it up.
- 35 If the able and educated refuse to **exercise power responsibly**, irresponsible and incompetent people take over the seats of the mighty and the levers of power.
- 36 Power not being used for **social purposes passes** to people who use it for their own ends – the [antidote](#).
- 37 At best it is taken over by the careerists who are led by their own **timidity** into becoming arbitrary, autocratic, and bureaucratic******.

- 38 [A revolution in every generation is not the answer](#)
- 39 Anarchism is a valid philosophical position and perhaps the only "pure" political theory.
- 40 The only trouble with it is that it does not work.
- 41 In practice it inevitably leads to oppression, the first **victims** of which are the philosophical anarchists themselves.
- 42 But there is even greater danger in the rebellion against organization by the young people of today: their **vulnerability to false leaders** .
- 43 It is not true that young people repudiate [leadership](#).
- 44 They seek leadership.
- 45 They need leadership.
- 46 If they cannot find it in the "establishment" – not even within the "loyal opposition" – they become easy prey to the **demagogues** .
- 47 If one "cannot trust anyone over thirty," one trusts, in the end, someone who acts the juvenile.
- 48 For one has to trust someone.
- 49 There is a frightening resemblance between the student "activists" of today, with their slogans of "idealism" and "sincerity," and the German youth movement just before and just after World War I.
- 50 The resemblance even extends to externals, to long hair, to folk songs, and to such slogans as "Make love, not war."
- 51 Yet the idealistic, antiauthoritarian Wandervoegel of the German youth movement who also did not trust "anyone over thirty" – became in short order fanatical, dedicated, unquestioning Nazis and idolators of Hitler.
- 52 The young want and need faith.

- 53 And the demagogue is the specialist in "sincerity."
- 54 The "activists" represent a tiny fraction of the youth of today.
- 55 The "lunatic fringe," the "hippies," the "beats," and so on, are a smaller fraction still.
- 56 The great majority of today's students will, as their predecessors did, settle speedily into the deep ruts of convention.
- 57 They will soon enough **conform to middle age** as now conform to "flaming youth."
- 58 Maybe they will keep on complaining about the "organization man."
- 59 But the young engineers, scientists and – above all – the young college professors who so desperately want to be "accepted" by the kids, are the ones who impose conformity on organization.
- 60 No one is more conformist than the "conventionally unconventional."
- 61 Students have always tended to be restless.
- 62 Suddenly the number of students everywhere has tremendously increased.
- 63 To a large extent, the present student unrest is but a symptom of the "educational explosion" as a result of which we now keep in school very large numbers of young people who, in earlier days, would have been at work.
- 64 That the great bulk of today's college students come from homes without tradition of higher education is in itself a major reason for student unrest.
- 65 In that respect, today's student rebellion can be compared to the traditional rebellion of the second-generation American against the immigrant background of his parents.

- 66 And just as these rebels from the Irish, Swedish, Jewish, or Italian homes soon settled down as comfortable members of American middle-class society, the students of today can be expected to settle down soon as middle-class members of educated society.
- 67 The generation gap is particularly wide today.
- 68 Societies are younger in their average age than they have been for a long time.
- 69 Yet, because lifespan – and especially working lifespan – has been greatly extended, a far larger number of older men is living much longer, and holding on much longer to positions of leadership and power.
- 70 Never before in modern history have there been so many young educated people; yet never before has leadership been so old.
- 71 Leadership in every institution and in every country is still held largely by a generation that has its roots in the era preceding World War I.
- 72 Indeed, only in the last ten years have leadership positions passed into the bands of people even born in this century.
- 73 In few eras was the gap in experience between generations greater than the one that divides those for whom World War I, the twenties, and the Great Depression were the formative experiences from those who were still children when World War II came to an end but who are today in their mid-thirties and well into middle age.
- 74 For those who were born after World War II, the world of their elders, the world of the thirties and early forties, is almost unimaginable.
- 75 Action and behavior based on these earlier experiences, that is, the action and behavior natural to the older generation, must seem to the young irrational, meaningless, and totally irrelevant.

- 76 The alienation of the young could therefore be explained away – as confined to a small fraction; as nothing more than a fashionable pose and the current expression of the short-lived Weltschmerz, that common, but rarely fatal, disease of adolescence; or as an accident of demography that will rapidly straighten itself out.
- 77 But as a symptom, the alienation of the young needs to be taken seriously.
- 78 Underlying it is the realization that the **society of organizations** poses problems to the individual that social and political theory does not yet see, let alone answer.
- 79 The “student activists” are certainly not going to answer the question of the fate and role of the individual in this pluralist society of organizations.
- 80 Indeed they do not even address themselves to it.
- 81 Yet their rebellion establishes that the question is central and will have to be tackled.

82 ***The Burden Of Decision***

- 83 Erich Fromm’s first book, *Escape from Freedom* (1940), was written just before World War II to explain the attraction of totalitarianism – of the Right or of the Left – for the young after World War I.
- 84 A similar book today, trying to explain the alienation of the young, might well be entitled *Escape from Decision*.
- 85 It is, above all, the **burden of decision imposed by the society of organizations** which the young find frightening and against which they rebel.
- 86 Suddenly there are career choices; the great majority only yesterday had their careers determined from birth on.
- 87 **Suddenly** there are decisions on the direction and purpose of knowledge.

- 88 Suddenly we have to have new economic policies; we can no longer trust either the automatic operation of Adam Smith's "complementary trade," or the "inevitability of history" of the Marxian schema.
- 89 Suddenly we have acquired enough knowledge in medicine to have to make decisions – on heart transplants or artificial kidneys, for instance – about whom to keep alive and whom to let die.
- 90 The rhetoric of the young complains bitterly about being "manipulated."
- 91 But their actions make it clear that it is the burden of decision that frightens them.
- 92 They want to "drop out" so that there are no decisions, no choices, no responsibility.
- 93 **To sidestep decision is also a decision** – and as the young will find out, the one least likely to be right.
- 94 The students, for instance, who stay on in graduate school (or who join the Peace Corps) to avoid having to decide, are likely to find, a few years later, that they have indeed made the wrong decision.
- 95 They are lucky if all they have lost is time.
- 96 But the reaction of the young, while futile, again reflects true insight.
- 97 The [society of organizations](#) demands of the individual **decisions regarding himself** .
- 98 At first sight, the decision may appear only to concern career and livelihood.
- 99 "What shall I do?" is the form in which the question is usually asked.
- 100 But actually it reflects a demand that the individual **take responsibility for society and its institutions** .
- 101 "What cause do I want to serve?" is implied.

- 102 And underlying this question is the demand the individual take responsibility for himself.
- 103 **"What shall I do with myself? "** rather than "'What shall I do?" is really being asked of the young by the multitude of choices around them.
- 104 The society of organizations forces the individual to ask of himself:
- 105 "Who am I?"
- 106 "What do I want to be?"
- 107 **"What do I want to put into life and what do I want to get out of it? "**
- 108 These are existential questions for all that they are couched in secular form and appear as choices between a job in government, in business, or in college teaching.
- 109 They have not been asked – at least not by Western man – for several centuries.
- 110 The Protestant Reformation four hundred years ago last posed them as general questions to be answered by everyone.
- 111 Where medieval Catholicism had given an "'automatic" answer of salvation through observance, the Reformation demanded of the individual that he ask himself: "Who do I want to be in order to be saved?"
- 112 Ever since Descartes in the mid-seventeenth century brushed aside man's spiritual existence as irrelevant, the West has concerned itself with what goes on outside of man – nature and society.
- 113 Of all the major thinkers of the nineteenth century, only [Kierkegaard](#) even asked, "How is human existence possible
- 114 To all the others this was a meaningless and unfashionable question.

- 115 They all asked: "How is society possible?"
- 116 Rousseau asked it, Hegel asked it, the classical economists asked it.
- 117 Marx answered it in one way, liberal Protestantism in another.
- 118 The concern all through the last two centuries of Western history was the society, its rights, its functions, its performance.
- 119 (This paragraph is from my essay, "[The Unfashionable Kierkegaard](#)," which first appeared in the Autumn, 1949, issue of the Sewanee Review.)
- 120 Now for the first time, we are again face to face with the age-old question of **individual meaning, individual purpose, and individual freedom** .
- 121 Narcotic drugs and avoidance of soap are not particularly relevant answers.
- 122 But at least the alienation of the young throughout the world today ensures that the questions will have to be considered.
- 123 For the society of organizations offers choices, and therefore imposes on the individual the burden of decisions.
- 124 It demands of him **the price of freedom** : responsibility.
- 125 See [Managing Oneself](#)

126 *The Spheres Of Freedom*

- 127 Totalitarianism differs froth all tyrannies of the past in that it aims at total control of society rather than at control of government alone.
- 128 Therein lies its danger; in a society where every social task is discharged in and through a large organization, total control seems both attractive and possible.

- 129 But at the same time, in such a society the danger of traditional, purely political tyranny is remote.
- 130 As long as no one organization is permitted to become the organization – as a Communist or a Nazi party strives to be – a pluralist society guarantees freedom from domination by any single group.
- 131 Pluralist society is an organization of “countervailing powers,” as J. Kenneth Galbraith pointed out almost twenty years ago.
- 132 (* In his book *American Capitalism* (Boston: Houghton Muffin, 1952).)
- 133 In fact, the danger in pluralism, as history teaches, is not domination by this or that interest group; it is **collapse into indecision** and into **a stalemate of competing “countervailing powers.”**
- 134 But the individual may still be oppressed, even though the powerful institutions fight each other to a stalemate.
- 135 Gaibraith held out the promise of freedom in the interstices between powers.
- 136 But this is precarious living.
- 137 Little Black Sambo did indeed survive because “the tigers ate each other up.”
- 138 But I doubt that Little Black Sambo greatly enjoyed the experience or that he would wish to go through it again, let alone to spend his life between those snapping and snarling jaws.
- 139 The sociologist of the New Left, the late C. Wright Mills, was on shaky ground in his talk of a new “power-elite” based on a conspiracy of the managers – of business, of the military, of the labor union, of the big universities, and so on.
- 140 **Conspiracies are rare, and successful conspiracies are exceedingly rare .**

- 141 And this particular conspiracy was a figment of Mills' imagination.
- 142 Yet the fact that the New Left believes in it should give us pause.
- 143 Even though these "elites" see themselves in sharp and bitter competition with each other, they may well appear to the individual as the tigers appeared to Little Black Sambo.
- 144 There is no guarantee that they will not, at any one moment, make common cause against the individual.
- 145 And that, ten minutes later, they will fight each other again is scant comfort to the individual whom they have devoured in the meantime.
- 146 There is only **one dependable safeguard of freedom** in such a pluralist society: to confine each institution to its task and mission.
- 147 The demand that each institution concentrate on its task is a political demand in addition to being a managerial and a social demand.
- 148 **The slightest attempt on the part of any one institution to claim "responsibility" beyond its narrow sphere should be considered usurpation .**
- 149 It may be meant well.
- 150 It may, in the short run, appear to be in the social interest.
- 151 It may indeed be the only way to get an urgent job done and done well.
- 152 But it is **incompatible with a free society.**
It is a threat to freedom.
- 153 This needs to be stressed for the government agency.
- 154 **The government agency is not part of the sovereign .**

- 155 It is **not a necessary part of the decision making, the governing, the directing intelligence of society** .
- 156 It is an organ of society for the discharge of a specific, a particular, a partial task.
- 157 That its ownership is public and its management appointed by the political authority is irrelevant.
- 158 To make the agency a part of the "sovereign" is, in effect, to usurp power.
- 159 The public knows this.
- 160 It feels the need for a line between "government agency" and "government."
- 161 When judges go on strike, the public is upset, if not outraged.
- 162 But when subway workers go out, the citizen treats it as just another fight between labor and management, even though it inconveniences and indeed endangers him more than a strike by the judges.
- 163 To dispense justice is a function of the sovereign.
- 164 Transportation is an "industry," albeit a vital one.
- 165 **To inject economic warfare into a sovereign function is inappropriate, is indeed outrage** .
- 166 To use it in an industry, while a nuisance, is appropriate.
- 167 The first to strike and the last to go back in the French general strike in May 1968 were the men in the government-owned French industries, especially in the automotive and aircraft plants.
- 168 We are, in other words, approaching the point where the distinction we make between various kinds of strikes is not a formal and legal one, but one of substance.
- 169 Whether a government agency is involved or not is no longer relevant.

- 170 We have come to look upon a number of areas as essential to the functioning and survival of modern society.
- 171 Disruptions of such services are threats to the public.
- 172 Whether they should be allowed and under what conditions is a hotly disputed and a difficult question.
- 173 The solution will be the same, however, whether the service is performed by government or not.
- 174 And "nationalizing" a service is no substitute for a solution.
- 175 This distinction is, however, quite incompatible with the positions still maintained by political theory and public law.
- 176 Both still follow John Austin's nineteenth-century doctrine of "formal sovereignty."
- 177 Both still hold that anything is an act or a sphere of the "sovereign" that can be traced back through formal, logical analysis to a legally valid "sovereign" act, a law, an ordinance, or a verdict.
- 178 The most extreme Austinians in their legal doctrine (if not in their political theory) are the orthodox Communists, to whom every institution, including the chess club, is an organ of the government, and every organ of the government an embodiment of the ultimate sovereign, "the working class," and as such, infallible and absolute.
- 179 In the pluralist society of organizations, the rule will have to be the opposite: every organization, no matter what its legal position or ownership, is a **special-purpose tool**.
- 180 Only insofar as its actions are necessary for the discharge of its special purpose are they legitimate.
- 181 Otherwise they are null and void.
- 182 Function rather than form determines what is lawful for an organization.

- 183 (Google “from analysis to perception – the new world
view”)
- 184 This also means, however, that regardless of legal form,
institutions doing different tasks must be autonomous.
- 185 The freedom of the individual in a pluralist society
demands autonomy of institutions.
- 186 Practice may have moved further in this direction than our
theory or our rhetoric might indicate.
- 187 To convert the Post Office into a “public corporation” may
not bring about the great increases in efficiency promised
by advocates of this step.
- 188 But that we can even discuss such a move seriously –
when postal communications have been considered an
“attribute of sovereignty” since Roman times – indicates
clearly that we are already considering function rather
than form.
- 189 Indeed no one (except the postal workers’ union) would
be terribly shocked any more by the idea that the postal
service might eventually be “reprivatized.”
- 190 Few would even be terribly surprised at the suggestion
that, twenty years hence, we might abandon postal
service altogether as no longer capable of competing
with new and different forms of telecommunications, no
matter how deeply entrenched as an “attribute of
sovereignty” it might once have been.
- 191 Similar developments are going on in Communist
countries; in large measure, they explain the institutional
crisis in the developed Communist countries, i.e., Russia
and her European satellites.
- 192 Traditionally European jurisprudence, since the days of
Justinian, divided law into “public” and “private.”
- 193 We may have to add a third category: “organizational
law.”
- 194 It would be “private” law, even if the organization were
government owned and government run.

195 But it would be "public" law even if the organization were
totally owned by private investors and run by their
representatives.

196 Every institution would be considered as limited to the
specific service to the members of society which it is
intended to perform, and as such, "private."

197 Yet, since every institution has power within its sphere, it
would be, as such (in the elegant phrase of the American
lawyer), "affected with the public interest."

198 **Such a new view of all organizations as being
autonomous and limited is needed both to make
organization perform and to safeguard the individual's
freedom .**

199 ***13 FEB – The Nature of Freedom***

200 *Freedom is never a release and always a responsibility.*

201 Freedom is not fun.

202 It is not the same as individual happiness, nor is it security
or peace or progress.

203 It is a responsible choice.

204 Freedom is not so much a right as a duty.

205 Real freedom is not freedom from something; that would
be license.

206 It is freedom to choose between doing or not doing
something, to act one way or another, to hold one belief
or the opposite.

207 It is not "fun" but the heaviest burden laid on man:

208 to decide his own individual conduct as well as the
conduct of society and to be responsible for both
[decisions](#).

209 "The Freedom of Industrial Man,"

210 *The Virginia Quarterly Review*

211 What are you going to [calendarize](#) from this page?