

The Reader Replies

THE READER REPLIES carries miscellaneous comments by readers and authors on various articles which have appeared in the magazine. All communications should be addressed to: The Editor, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington 9, D. C. Because of limitations of space, we cannot guarantee to print all letters received.

—EDITOR

In his article, "Freud and the Tragic Virtues," [AS: Autumn, 1960] Mr. Kaufmann makes the statement ". . . it is less well understood that Calvin's ethos dealt tragedy a much more lasting blow by preaching success and lack of sympathy for failure." This statement rather surprised me and I should like it very much if Mr. Kaufmann could elaborate on it, with particular reference to the Calvinistic doctrines that he considers to be bases for this statement.

MARTEN TEN HOOR

Dean Emeritus, College of Arts and Sciences
University of Alabama

* * *

The first half of the sentence cited by Dean ten Hoor reads: "It is well known that the Puritans closed the British theaters. . . ." What I had in mind in the second half of the sentence is, first, the point made repeatedly by R. H. Tawney in *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*: "He [the Puritan] sees in the poverty of those who fall by the way, not a misfortune to be pitied and relieved, but a moral failing to be condemned, and in riches . . . the blessing which rewards the triumph of energy and will" (Mentor Books, p. 191). Later, Tawney discusses "the suggestion of Puritan moralists, that practical success is at once the sign and the reward of ethical superiority" (p. 221). H. R. Niebuhr gives a similar picture in *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Living Age Books, p. 87).

For all that, it might have been injudicious of me to speak of "Calvin's ethos." But it was not only the Puritan ethos that dealt tragedy a lasting blow; I doubt that

there can be any Christian tragedy. I have given some of my reasons in my *Critique of Religion and Philosophy*, section 77 (which was cited in a footnote to my essay), in the first three chapters of my *From Shakespeare to Existentialism*, and in *Goethe's Faust: a New Translation, With an Introduction*, sections 3 and 4 (to be published by Doubleday this winter). From *Critique*, I cite part of one sentence, which contains three of the crucial words in Dean ten Hoor's quotation: "The conception of heaven and the lack of sympathy for the damned militate against tragedy" (Harper & Brothers, p. 244). This consideration applies to Christianity generally, but pre-eminently to "Calvin's ethos," seeing that he laid such unusual emphasis on the relevant doctrines; for example, but by no means only, in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III. XXIV.17, from which I quote: "The reprobate are hated by God, and that most justly, because, being destitute of his Spirit, they can do nothing but what is deserving of his curse."

WALTER KAUFMANN
Princeton University

* * *

Despite Phyllis McGinley's poem about Pandora in the Autumn issue of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, in which she bemoans that Pandora let Hope get out of the box, my *Webster's Unabridged* says: "Zeus gave Pandora a box enclosing all human ills, which escaped over the earth when the box was opened by her out of curiosity. Hope, also in the box, was all she prevented from escaping."

Never mind, Miss McGinley. Shaw said