

Hank Parkhurst's Proposed Q&A Chapter

William Schaberg claims that Hank wrote this proposed chapter for the Big Book either in late-October 1938 or, more likely, November of 1938 (see *Writing the Big Book: The Creation of A.A.*, most especially the footnote on p. 403 for his justifications for that dating).

It must be noted, however, that while Schaberg accepts Hank's claim in the Personal Questionnaire (see the complete text on this website under "Writings") that his last slip had been "3 years, 3 months" earlier as sufficient evidence for dating the Questionnaire being filled out in December, 1938. (Hank got sober in September, 1935.)

However, in dating the writing of this Proposed Q&A Chapter in late 1938, Schaberg ignores – for the reasons noted in the footnote above – Hank's claim in this Chapter that he has been sober for "three and a half years" [Question 3] which, if true, would place the writing of this Chapter in March of 1939 rather than in either October or November 1938.

While Schaberg's two arguments for an earlier dating are certainly plausible, a credible scenario could also be created in which Hank wrote this Chapter much later than Schaberg alleges as a last-minute addition to the text of the book.

NOTE: The [bracketed *italicized numbers*] following each question do **not** appear in the original document. They are used here only as a convenience for any reference to their location within the Q&A chapter.

A QUESTION AND ANSWER SECTION HAS BEEN PROPOSED FOR THE BOOK
As follows ----- Any Suggestions?

What is your answer when asked to have a drink? [1]

On the first invitation I refuse. If there is insistence I explain I cannot handle it and a drink would eventually lead to a bender. If the party is interested, I explain I am one of the unfortunate people whom alcohol seems to poison much in the way certain pollens poison hay fever sufferers.

What are people's reaction when you explain you are an alcoholic? [2]

I have never seen it fail to arouse sympathetic interest and respect for meeting the question honestly.

How long since you had a drink? [3]

Three and a half years.

Don't you ever desire a drink? [4]

Of course, Seldom a day passes when I do not wish I could drink.

Do all alcoholics who have used this method with [sic] they could drink? [5]

No. The desire to drink seems to be taken away instantaneously in some cases. Others lose it after a period of months.

What is there about liquor or the use of it you still desire? [6]

I miss the glow of well-being which comes from two or three drinks; the instant removal of tiredness or worries.

How then do you account for not drinking when you admit you miss those things? [7]

I believe some power outside of me has straightened my thinking in regard to the inevitable results of one drink.

Were the inevitable results of one drink pointed out to you before? [8]

Yes. A Psychiatrist in whom I had the greatest confidence labored far beyond his fees to prove to me the consequences of a single drink. This worked in some cases, but was useless when certain crises arose.

Have you met similar crises during the period of sobriety? [9]

Yes and worse. Two in particular have been worse than,

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or as bad as, any which caused me to drink before.

Did any of your friends, who are members of Alcoholics Anonymous, drink again? [10]

Yes. Many of them have had what we call slips.

What do you think causes slips? [11]

There are so many things, it is hard to define. Generally, I believe the man has been missing some of the more important points such as passing this on to another alcoholic, not putting first things first, dishonesty with self or others, not joining in the fellowship, getting angry at people or conditions, boredom, etc.

What do you mean by stating a man should pass this on to another alcoholic? [12]

This solution came to me for nothing. Every time I pass it on, I have done some good for another alcoholic and increased my own chances of not drinking.

Where would a man find people to pass this on to? [13]

Hospitals, Doctors, Priests, Ministers, Psychiatrists, etc. When people realize I am not interested in financial return, they generally cooperate.

How does dishonesty cause slips? [14]

Sometimes dishonesty sets up another cycle of shrinking from things which eventually leads to the desire to escape *[sic]* through drink.

What do you mean by putting “first things first”? *[NOTE: quotation marks added by hand.]* [15]

If a man is suffering from an incurable disease, I claim the first and most important for him is to do everything possible to recover from that disease. If a man is suffering from alcoholism, I believe the most important thing to him should be his recovery from his malady. In other words, first things first. Recovery should come before a job and everything else, for if the man does not recover, he will have no job or anything else anyway. An alcoholic is generally inclined to forget that he has spent many years getting into his present condition and is impatient for all difficulties to clear up immediately.

Why would not joining the fellowship cause slips? [16]

The best percentage of success has been obtained in localities where a meeting is held and a crowd of Alcoholics Anonymous gather for a good time and fellowship

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about one evening a week. Where men consistently pass up this fellowship on the basis of being tired or busy, I have noticed they are generally in danger of a slip.

Why would anger at people or conditions cause slips? [17]

When a man is griped at things, conditions, or people, he gets into a state of mind which separates him from the power that keeps him sober.

What are the results if an individual does slip? [18]

If a man sincerely wants to get well, I believe he will pick himself up and try to analyze the reason for the slip and carry on. The experience of the slip will undoubtedly help him to be stronger in the future. Generally, I believe a slip proves to a man irrevocably that he is an alcoholic and cannot handle liquor. In only one case have we seen such a case of discouragement result from a slip that the man simply continued drinking.

You speak at length of slips, it would appear that slips are common. Is that so? [19]

I would estimate that fifty percent who have accepted our method, have had no slips, and that everyone who has been sincere in their desire to recover has been so much better there is no comparison, even though they have slipped.

Why does boredom cause slips? [20]

To be brutally frank, I believe the man who gets plastered because he has become bored is generally a snob. He thinks he is a little better than the people whom he contacts and so he gets bored. While I do not claim that everyone in the fellowship must like every other person, I do believe that if a person sincerely searches for admirable qualities in other people, he will be able to find them. If a man really tries to help another person or persons, I believe life becomes so interesting he has no time to be bored.

How do you avoid criticizing people who may be wrong, and being wrong somehow hurting you? [21]

I ask myself – where am I wrong in this situation? If I examine the situation hard enough I find that I am at least somewhat to blame. It does not matter what percentage of blame is mine.; the fact that I am at least partially to blame tells me I must right this before I can afford to criticize another. This is an exceptionally hard attitude to reach and after three and half years, I have only partially learned it.

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Does not that attitude of placing yourself in the wrong tend to make you dishonestly submissive? [22]

Plain human nature will take care of seeing that I do not become a Casper Milquetoast. I look on this attitude as something like a brake which will not allow me to come to a full stop, but will keep me from lashing out and piling another wrong on top of the original wrong.

Does not this whole teaching tend to make you more introvertive? *[sic]* [23]

With the fellowship which has been built up of men who have suffered from the same malady as I, with the necessity of passing this along, I cannot become more introvertive *[sic]*, I believe this tends to make me more of an extrovert.

Are you not afraid that continuous repression of your alcoholism will result in one tremendous bust? [24]

Maybe it will, but so what? I have had three and a half years of sobriety which is a lifetime record for my adulthood. However, I have noticed that when one of our number has a big slip, he comes back stronger than ever.

If this works so well with alcoholics why would it not work with other who are in trouble? [25]

Undoubtedly it would. We see many of our families use the same approach to reach a happier way of existence.

If it could be successfully applied in other ways, whøy *[strikeout and y are hand written]* do you limit your work to alcoholics and those close to alcoholics? [26]

There are several reasons. Because of the things I have done, I am particularly able to interest alcoholics. Second, I am not a part, or trying to be a part of any religious movement. Third, one of the strongest things to me is the fellowship which has been built among men who have a common problem. Fourth, and most important to me, is the fact that working with alcoholics gives focus to my work and does not spread or diffuse it.

Did your drinking result in marital difficulties? [27]

Yes. My home was broken up.

Did this solution cure your marital difficulties? [28]

No, but it did give me a greater and more clearly defined picture of those difficulties. I have the feeling that whatever is right is bound to work out providing I can keep

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myself in the right frame of mind. I spent twenty years scrambling my marriage and making a mess of my life. I cannot expect immediate solution of all of my difficulties. However, my whole situation is less complicated today.

Have your financial problems been solved since your recovery? [29]

Most certainly not. I spent twenty years involving myself in all kind of difficulties with the help of alcohol. The only thing I can claim is that if I had gone on drinking, my financial difficulties would have been much worse today. You might call that a negative gain.

If your difficulties have not been solved, are you not inclined to think the way you are living is not worth while? [30]

Not at all. It is the first things first with me. I feel positive that if I go along doing the best I can and keeping myself in the right frame of mind, I will be rewarded exactly to the extent which I deserve. And when I do get those things I deserve, I will know they are not based on petty politics, pull or dishonest acts which are bound to come back later and smack me down.

Have you ever nearly slipped? [31]

Yes. Several times.

How did you escape? [32]

The first time I phoned one of the other alcoholics and told him I was afraid I was going to take a drink. He asked if I would wait until he got out to the house, and I agreed. When he arrived we talked over the desire and the things which were bothering me and strangely, the desire left me. Another time, I called one of the gang and he suggested reading the Bible and praying before I took the first drink. I never took that drink. The third time, I made careful plans and then simply told one of the bunch I was going to. Instead of getting all excited, he simply said, "So what. Go ahead and have a couple for me." I took a nap and when I woke up I could laugh at it, the desire was gone. Another time when in the biggest crisis of my life, which previously would undoubtedly have cause me to drink, I got to work helping others before the desire even had a chance to start to bother me.

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I understand that most alcoholics get into sexual messes. Is that true? [33]

Yes.

What is your attitude about possible future sexual troubles? [34]

If you are speaking of unfaithfulness, I feel the same way about that as I do about liquor. I am taking no stand on this question. I can only say I hope I will not get mixed up in any such difficulties. On the other hand, I have seen married men nearly thrown into an alcoholic slip by a sexual mix-up and the soundest advice I have heard given was, "you are terribly upset because you have been trying to live in the perfection of Jesus Christ and now that you find you are not as perfect as He was, are you going to add more troubles, such as drinking will bring? Or are you going to pick yourself up and be better in the future? Not better as the world sees it, but better as your vision of yourself sees it?"

How important is the fellowship? [35]

I think it is one of the most important elements. It allows newcomers to look us over, it allows the members of the fellowship to discuss their problems with others who have had similar problems. Many men get away from the weekly meetings, haven't time for one reason or another, and in most cases, I notice they have an eventual slip.

What are these weekly meetings? [36]

I am only familiar with them in three localities. At one of these, members who are interested decide who is to lead the meeting after the group gathers. He leads the group in the Lord's Prayer and then asks different ones to tell their stories. The meeting is closed with the Lord's Prayer. In the other two localities, the meeting is generally just a social get-together where the gang sits around and talks, sometimes in a large circle, sometimes in small groups. Occasionally this evolves into a meeting where some members tell their stories.

Why do you tell your story? [37]

I know my own story and when I am asked to tell it, it is generally because someone thinks it will be helpful to some of the newcomers. Actually all we have is the ability and

willingness for each to tell their own story. The attitude is more or less, "Here is what I was... Here is what I did... Here is what happened... And here I am." By this telling of stories, newcomers may more or less identify themselves or things they have done with those things we did. As long as we stick to our own story, we are never in danger of preaching.

What is your opinion of psychoanalysis? [38]

I think anything which enables a person to better understand themselves and their thought processes, is well worth while. After the analysis I understood myself better and could identify more of my thoughts, though it still left me with nothing to tie to but myself. And I had always failed myself before.

What is your opinion of psychiatric [sic] treatment? [39]

Same as psychoanalysis.

What do you regard as your greatest future dangers? [40]

I am still somewhat apprehensive about any success which might be thrown my way. I am afraid that success would build in me an inclination to deprecate the things I have learned to be so helpful in sustaining me in adversity. On the other hand, I am told that no real lasting success can come my way until I am ready for it.

What was the hardest lesson for you to learn? [41]

To keep first things first. I am apt to forget that as an alcoholic I was useless in a business way, to my family and friends. Only a [s] [sic] a nonalcoholic can I live a useful and happy life. Therefore, business, other people's actions, finances, in fact everything is based upon my remaining a nondrinker. So anything I do, anything which I might say was of prime importance is apt to throw me if I do not keep first things first [sic for this entire sentence]. Of course, that means for me to keep proper relation with the Power that enabled me to recover.

Do you realize that men who make a study of mental activities might say you are hypnotizing [sic] yourself? [42]

The only answer I can make is the one a good friend of mine who is a psychiatrist made to me a year ago. He said, "I have believed you were hypnotizing yourself, but all I can say today is, if that is so, there has been such an improvement in you

and these other fellows, that I hope you all keep right on hypnotizing yourselves.”
Which is his way of saying that no matter what it is, it works!

Isn't this nothing more or less than old fashioned revivalism? [43]

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I am forced to say..So What? It works! There is nothing that could place me in a more untenable position or make me do more ridiculous things than I did when in the grip of uncontrolled drinking.

Do you claim you are cured? [44]

No. I go around with somewhat the state of mind that I have been reprieved. It I take a drink I know I will call off that reprieve and yet I never have the feeling that I am fighting off liquor. I abused it, therefore the privilege of its use has been taken away from me.

What is your opinion of doctors and medical treatment for the alcoholic? [45]

I think they most definitely have their place in any program of recovery. They can bring the physical man back into such shape that he can think straight.

Because your present attitudes are so different from your former actions and thoughts, don't you ever feel *[sic]* like a hypocrite? [46]

Oh boy, and how. That is one of my most difficult problems. Knowing myself so well and knowing my own thoughts and struggles, I am terribly embarrassed when anyone attempts to pin any roses on me. All I know is that I am somewhat better than I was before, but the improvement is so small and all of my reactions are so human, I don't want to be forced into any pose of being good.

If this is so essentially religious, don't you ever feel any antipathy toward the ministers because they did not bring it to your attention? [47]

No. I tried ministers. They worked hard with me, but I simply refused to see. I think the main reason for this is that none of the ministers were alcoholics. Thank God.

Outside of the Bible what book has been the most helpful to you? [48]

Thomas Mason's.....

Do you go to church? [49]

Not regularly, but more than before. Probably I will become a regular church goer, but just at the moment (I may be fooling myself, but) I believe I am doing some church work every day. What I am trying to express is that every man should work that problem out for himself.

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You say that having gripes against people, things or conditions, are dangerous. Don't you ever have them? [50]

Sure, and plenty of them. But I identify them as gripes and know I should not have them. Before I was always so anxious to prove myself right that the gripe kept getting worse and worse. Now I know I'm griped about something, and that I'm probably wrong, so it does not have a chance to rise to the dangerous stage.

Do you ever lose your temper? [51]

And how. I blow sky high many times. But today I have the ability to apologize afterwards and admit my wrong. This is not an excuse for loss of temper, but these lapses do not harm me as much as formerly.

Are you ever tempted to preach? [52]

Plenty. Advice is so easy to give and another's dangers are so apparent that it is a human temptation.

When a man calls to tell you he is on the verge of a slip, what do you do for him? [53]

That is hard to define. So much depends on the man himself. One thing I always do is to say a silent prayer and ask him to get all his gripes off his chest. However, I usually tell him it may be right for him to go on a bender because I feel it may be necessary to prove certain things. I cannot get excited because anyone is going to get drunk. As I look at it, that will not presage the coming of the end of the world. I find that when a man is talking to someone who understands and actually does not care whether he is going to get drunk, he is apt to get his thinking on the right track and will not go on the bender.

When a man goes ahead anyway and then calls you up to tell you he has slipped, what do you tell him? [54]

I tell him not to bother me. I'm not in the business of pinning up anybody's diapers. When he gets through and sincerely wants to quit drinking, give me a ring and I'll see if I can be helpful.

When a man has had a slip should he attempt to hide it? [55]

We have found that to be one of our greatest dangers. The man is so ashamed of it, he generally has been so proud of his record that the temptation is great to pass it off. This, of course, is going right back to the old ways and

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is dangerous. If a man slips, my attitude is...So what? that isn't important, what is important is whether he is going to slip again. *[sic to that entire last sentence]* I clearly remember what a man once told me. He said, "An alcoholic who thinks no one knows about his drinking is like an ostrich with his behind in the air and his head in the sand."

Why do alcoholics give up such chances for improvement of position, for happiness, just for a drink? Why can't they go on the wagon and stay there like other human beings when they see the terrible consequences of their drinking? [56]

If you could answer that you would be on the trail of one of the best answers to – why an alcoholic. *[sic]*

Do you think you will ever be able to drink again? [57]

That is one of the greatest dangers. Many of our crowd have held on to the idea that some day, when certain financial conditions, when certain marital conditions, or something else is different, they would be able to drink again like a normal human being. Until that is knocked out of their heads and until they themselves know they can never drink again, their recovery is generally only temporary.

What do you see in the future for yourself? [58]

I am not interested in trying to see into the future for myself. If my recovery is maintained, I know that the future must hold better things in the way of real accomplishment and happiness than the past.

Have you any doubts as to the permanency of sudden conversion? [59]

Less now than formerly. I have seen too many of them stick. The extent, quality, and the permanence of any man's conversion is his own business. Again you might say...No matter what it is, it works.

Do you study the Bible? [60]

If you mean regularly, no. On the other hand, I have read the Bible a great deal more, and with more understanding the past three years, than all my life before. However, many of the fellowship are constant students of the Bible. A man's religious study, I believe, is entirely his own affair.

Is the Bible confusing to you? [61]

Yes, many times. Probably though because I am iconoclastic

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and do not study it enough.

How often do you pray? [62]

Many times a day.

What is your prayer? [63]

Thy Will Be Done...AND MEAN IT.

What is your vision of, or what do you understand, by God? [64]

That is unexplainable. When I begin to worry about that, I generally realize I am getting into a field where far greater minds than mine have argued and failed for years. I understand God as a great, indefinable, unexplainable Power which will help me if I keep in tune with it.

What do you think of a newcomer's chance of recovery through this method? [65]

I believe that to be unpredictable although I have yet to see a failure where a man sincerely wanted to get well and where he would follow strictly the experience of the rest of the men who have recovered.

Do you suggest this indiscriminately [sic] to men you believe to be alcoholics? [66]

No. Generally I talk to the man, and if he expresses interest, I tell him my story.

How do you present this to a man? [67]

First I tell him my story up to the time I discovered I was an alcoholic. By telling him my story, my drinking exploits, the tales of the shakes, how I hid bottles, etc. [sic to this entire sentence] Then I generally steer the talk to the subject of alcoholism. If the man decides that he is an alcoholic, (that is a thing I cannot

decide for him) I tell him how I got well and the cases of others who got well. I then put him in touch with other members of our fellowship. If the man wants it, he can get it.

What do you believe identifies an alcoholic? [68]

I believe an alcoholic, broadly speaking, is a man who cannot control his drinking. He cannot stop drinking when he knows that more will harm him. Nor can he stop drinking when he actually wants to.

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Were you ever hospitalized? [69]

Yes. Many times.

Are you on the wagon? [70]

No. I say this because I do not desire to take any positive position with myself in regard to liquor. In other words, I am not fighting liquor.

In former times when you were on the wagon, did you ever feel sorry for yourself because you could not join in a group of drinking friends? [71]

Many times, because I had an unconscious feeling that they were pitying my weakness of will power in that I could not handle my liquor without going on the wagon.

Do you feel sorry for yourself now when you are with drinking companions? [72]

Occasionally, but I laugh at the emotion. I know now that will power nor [sic] habit have anything to do with my being an alcoholic.

Did your wife go on the wagon when you quit drinking? [73]

Yes.

Was it helpful to you? [74]

Yes. On the other hand, what she did or did not do was not the main thing. I was told that if I were placing responsibility on any human being, I was on the wrong track. However, I believe her action was very helpful.

Do you or your friends in Alcoholics Anonymous hate liquor? [75]

Personally I serve liquor in my home to people who can control the use. Some of the group however have a hatred for what liquor has done to them.

Don't you think and talk of alcoholism too much? [76]

Maybe you're right. Anyway you are talking like a lot of our wives.

On the other hand, I have recovered and the thing is should I talk about it a great deal, or should I not talk about it at all, and do a lot of drinking?

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Do you ever get into arguments? [77]

Many of them, but I am slowly learning the futility.

Have you caught yourself doing anything dishonest or selfish? [78]

Plenty of times. In those cases I try to undo the harm I may have done.

When other men in this fellowship start to expound their ideas as to the way a man should meet certain problems, etc.. what do you do? [79]

Most likely I interrupt with an idea of my own which I think is better but I am slowly learning to listen and keep to my own story exclusively.

Do you see any difficulties ahead for this work? [80]

Only from two angles. First, enough money may not be available to do the things which would result in the saving of many lives now. Eventually yes, but at least a limited amount of money is necessary now in order to consolidate what has been gained and learned. Second, I believe great difficulties would arise if too much organization were interjected into it.

What in your opinion is the greatest necessity on this alcoholic work? [81]

Public understanding. By that I mean it would make it much easier for the alcoholic to recover if the public had the same understanding of the alcoholic malady as they have of diabetes. One of the greatest sources of annoyance to the alcoholic is the practically universal belief on the part of the public that the alcoholic is weak-willed or suffering from a habit.

Do you say there should be no organization? [82]

No. Every work of any kind needs at least a simple organization for efficiency [sic]. However, I believe the organization should be kept to the simplest possible form in order that no conflict be established with any organized religion. The strength of this, as I see it, is that it is extra religious work which can be co-ordinated with any organized religion and should be welcomed by them.

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What is The Alcoholic Foundation? [83]

Until this time, the work has been carried forward by private contributions from the people who have benefited. However, with the necessity for funds to spread the work further, it was thought wise to set up a foundation to handle any contributions which might come in.

How many men are there on The Alcoholic Foundation? [84]

It consists of seven men at present. Four nonalcoholic prominent business or professional men, and three alcoholics. It is stated in the article of trust that nonalcoholic members shall always be in the majority of at least one.

Do the members of The Alcoholic Foundation serve without pay? [85]

Yes.

Are the contributions to The Alcoholic Foundation deductible on income tax? [86]

Yes.

What will be done with the money donated to The Alcoholic Foundation? [87]

If anyone is interested in making a donation, one of the members of the Foundation will be glad to answer any questions.

Is there anything to join? [88]

Of course not. There is no membership list, or anything to sign.

Do you ever tell a man he is an alcoholic? [89]

No. That is strictly a matter for him to decide. We tell him what we did and why we are sure we are alcoholics. He must decide for himself whether he is an alcoholic.

Do you identify different kinds of drinking? [90]

The casual drinker who takes an occasional drink. The social drinker who drinks when socially inclined. The heavy drinker who drinks a great deal. And the alcoholic.

Do you have any religious services? [91]

If you mean in the sense of organized religion, no. I believe our meetings are more or less the get-together

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of a fellowship.

Have you had any problems with divorced men? [92]

Yes. The main problem is to get them to put first things first. They have, through alcohol, broken up a home which they loved and have been divorced by a loved one. They so many times feel that now they are different, all of the things they have thrown away should be given back to them immediately. It is so hard for them to realize that proper recovery and holding it is more important than anything else.

What do you mean by the beer experiment? [93]

Many times a fellow gets the idea if he had always stayed on beer, he would not have had his trouble. Or he has the idea that beer will not harm him. They generally try to drink nothing but beer and end up on liquor. Or they get as bad on beer as on anything else. Having learned their lesson, they generally say they tried the beer experiment.

To what do you attribute your not drinking now? (Another member answers) [94]

When leaving institutions I had no one to talk to about my problems. I was afraid to phone people for fear they would recall something I had done. I feel, however, that I have made up for it by doing time in the laughing academy. Because of my fear, I would phone someone I had met in the institution. Loneliness, I guess you would call it, and the other bird from the cuckoo hatch would feel the same way. Since meeting this crowd, there has been no barrier of what I have done because they understood and generally can match my experience with something as bad or worse.

SOURCE: William Schaberg, *Writing the Big Book: The Creation of A.A.*,
Appendix VIII, pp. 661-676