

Bethesda, Thursday July 13, 1950

Dear John,

You see I managed to fight clear of that aberrating engram concerning Post Offices and parcels. Or, to put it another way, I finally got up off my poor tired fanny and mailed the coats to you. You can imagine with what spirit I greet the onrushing Christmas season, with its happy bustle of parcels to be wrapped and cookies to be baked, cards to be mailed and sweet egg nogs to be drunk. By the time it finally comes, the day after Christmas seems like the best of my Christmas presents.

And now back to our lance-tilting! You claim to believe there is no such thing as conscience, that what we call conscience ~~are~~ is the result of engramic commands. I think we are talking about words which mean different things to us. Semantics rears its confusing head, yet again! I grant you there may be engrams dictating that such and such a person, afflicted with that particular engramic command, "may not tell a lie", or some such thing. I don't believe I had such an engram, for even the briefest look into my career shows me I have lied many times, and even lived various lies without so much as a qualm about the lies. Then something, call it higher judgment, call it conscience, call it the inner light, call it whatever you want or nothing at all (which might be better, actually, since it eliminates the menace of semantic misunderstanding) anyway something tells me I've been wrong to lie, wrong to live lies, wrong to cheat. This unnamed feeling doesn't always succeed in making me do what is right according to it) from that day forward, but I have come to realize that "it" exists and it usually forces me to do unpleasant things I don't want to do. It makes me go to the funeral of a friend's dead child. I have no engramic command to go to that funeral- all my instincts shout "Don't go!". It makes me be kind to the widow of a man I didn't like, when I didn't like the widow either. It makes me try to have more patience with some neighbor child who frankly irritates me. It makes me try to hang on to the spirit of some calm moment when I was momentarily able to see where the course of my duty lay, while every subtle justification some other part of my mind thinks up is working hard to point out why I really don't have to do my duty. Whatever it is, it exists and is a force for good. Aberrated judgments may come to the conclusion that someone else must be killed for the sake of this or that. Engramic commands may masquerade as "conscience". Evil most willingly dresses up and pretends to be good, or at least unfortunate means to good ends. Our judgments are often aberrated or simply mistaken. But if we listen to this other thing, we are listening to the higher reaches of judgment, and getting closer to basic good. In general, this "thing" inclines me to charity and truth, and the putting in its place of pure self. This "thing" is glad when I do something I should do out of charity, and starts pinching and jabbing and itching terribly if it thinks it can discern the least sign of disingenuousness in the act of charity. It can turn the finest thing I ever did (according to my judgment) into dust and ashes just by whispering "You didn't do it just because it was right. You did it because you thought you would get something out of it- perhaps only your own self-approbation. Try again, and see if you can do something, anything, purely and simply because it is right." This thing has

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the highest standards in the world, and it's quick as a cat with a mouse at discovering the loopholes my judgment or my engrams have left in my arguments. It dearly loves the truth and nothing but the truth. This thing and I are alone with ourselves, and there is no need for the charitable subterfuges we all need to employ with other people. Sometimes I deliberately ignore it, because I'm so fond of my opinions, my judgment, my engrams if you will, also. I hate to have the whole fabric of what I think of as my analytical judgment torn apart. But sooner or later this thing starts jabbing at me. All right, it says, you did more or less your duty. You really "thought" what you did was the right thing. But I don't! Hnyah!... It's a nuisance, in short. One of the things it will do is tell people they aren't always right, they haven't always got a monopoly on wisdom, their judgments may be in error, they have made plenty of mistakes in the past. If the judgments of these people are sufficiently hampered by engramic commands of one sort or another, this thing can't get anywhere, it isn't listened to at all. Then you have a fanatic, a man so enamored of his aberrated judgment that he will do anything to carry out the moronic commands of his engram bank, and the "reasoned" dictates of his mistaken judgment. But because he has heard about this "thing" sometimes called conscience, and knows it is respected even though disliked by the majority of mankind, he will snatch upon its name and use it vainly in his own demonic service. If liberty has had many crimes committed in its name, so has conscience. But liberty still exists as a goal, and this "thing" is still working actively or passively in some corner of our selves. It's working for basic good, basic truth, basic charity. It won't permit outside influences to touch it. It's like a hard core, off of which bounce all the silly engramic commands we may have acquired, all the reasonable self-justifications our judgments make. It's both very weak and very strong. Perhaps it's this way: perhaps if too many false judgments and engramic material start bouncing around it, the person in whom the struggle takes place becomes insane. This is leading me up to a position not far from yours and Ron's, isn't it? Perhaps you would call this "thing" the ultimate core of the analytical mind, the ~~goal~~ goal or scorekeeper or guide of all four dynamics. To me it seems to be unassailable in itself, but subject to being blanketed out, hidden by confusions from beneath, ignored, having its name taken in vain, ridiculed for naivete by the devious and aberrated. It still exists, it can't be mocked, it can't be talked away. If you chose to call it the clear analytical mind, all right. If other people chose to call it the kingdom of heaven which is within us, you are wrong to laugh at them because of a semantic difference. This "thing" goes right on working for good, for truth, for charity whenever it is given a chance, whether we call it the unaberrated part of the analytical mind, or the atman, or the conscience, or the Tao, or a nuisance, or the still small voice of God. Whenever men go against its whispered suggestions, they get violent as a means of self-justification.

That ends the lance-tilting for this week. Now I have a favor to ask of you. It's this way, doctor: my two blossomings into print through the Foreign Service Journal have given me an appetite for more of those welcome checks which result. So far I've managed to make a piddling but nonetheless appreciated forty dollars out of the Foreign Service Journal. I'd love to make some

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more money, because money is so nice and useful. I'm not only willing, I'm positively eager to throw literature out the window and let the pots boil away. All I want is one of those lovely checks. I am handicapped more than you possibly realize not only by an inconvenient lack of time and talent for turning out pot-boilers, but also by the fact that William works for the State Department. Anything printed by a member of the Department or his sisters or his cousins or his aunts must be looked over by people in the Department. For example, a friend of mine in Caracas wrote a funny little article about the difficulties of housekeeping down there. The Department said no soap, because the article hinted at dishonesty among Venezuelans, suggested things weren't just as modern as modern can be down there, and finally would have annoyed the Venezuelans by indicating that every last Venezuelan isn't absolutely wonderful. So I think I might as well resign myself to not writing my autobiography until William has retired on a pension. In the meantime I have written a platitudinous and badly phrased little piece on education for women which might not be rejected by some hard-pressed editor of a grocery-store handout magazine or third-rate Homemakers Herald. Could you help me land that check? Would you give me a few suggestions as to how to go about it, once the Department has said it's all right?

Laurence is looking forward to having Leslyn with us toward the end of August. I am too, because he's miserable with no one to play with. And Leslyn has wormed her way into my affections by her innocent arts. I hope it will work out. We are planning to go away on vacation around the 28th of July. First we will go to Flemington, spend the weekend and a day or two there. Then we have promised Laurence to take him to New York City, where he is passionately eager to ride on every means of transportation known to the metropolis. I have only to mention the word "subway" to send him into an extasy of anticipation. We will only be able to indulge him for a day or so, because of the hotel expenses. Then we are going up to South Jamesport for a few days around the third or fourth of August. We hope to leave Laurence in Abuelito and Putty's care after a few days, and then ride off by ourselves through New England. We'll have to be back around the fifteenth so William can catch up on lost work. Perhaps we could catch Leslyn on our way home. Do you think you could manage to come down for another weekend; and get her? While I can't say yet when it would be exactly, it would probably be around the weekends of the 20th or 27th.

Love to you all,