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REAL AND HYPOTHETICAL EVIL

JUST how much freedom can we give up through loyalty and security programs in order to maintain freedom? There is little question that the loyalty and security programs negate many personal freedoms, and are bidding fair to undermine some of the foundation supports of democratic and constitutional government to the degree that it has been achieved in the United States.

On the other hand, some people, for example William Buckley and Brent Bozell—the co-authors of the book *McCarthy and his Enemies*—have held that the United States had not just the possibility, but also the duty, since World War II, to maintain, if possible, exclusive possession of secret information, for instance, of the "A" and "H" bombs, since their possession has kept Europe from falling to Communism.

This, then, produces a dilemma. On the one hand, security and loyalty programs without a doubt seriously injure the very freedoms they are designed to protect. Hitler recognized another facet of this demonstrable fact when he said: "The great strength of totalitarianism is that it forces those who oppose it to imitate it." On the other hand, say Messrs. Buckley and Bozell, what else can we do, since if we don't do this, then the Communists may take over?

I would like to venture a way out of that dilemma. It may be the way out of a number of dilemmas, for most of the great problems of our world seem to be posed for people at large in the form of "either-or" dilemmas. "Either we drop the 'A' bomb on the Japanese, or they may conquer and subjugate us." "Either we kill or we may be killed." "Either we get the 'H' bomb or the Russians may conquer us." And so it is that we are offered a choice between two evils, and we are told to choose the lesser. Obviously, as any red-blooded American knows, it is a lesser evil to do away with our own freedom than to have the Russians do it for us. Better, says Elmer Davis, no world, than a Communist one!

I would like to suggest that when we are given these choices between two evils, that we should choose, not in the old sense, the "lesser one," but rather that we should choose the *hypothetical* one. For, if you will re-exarnine most of the choices you are offered these days, I believe you will find that the horns of each dilemma in most cases differ: one of the choices is that of a real evil with immediately demonstrable results; the other is a hypothetical evil: it *may* happen; *but* it may not!

Thus, it was a real evil with evil consequences when the atom bomb was dropped on the Japanese. Now, with hindsight, we see that the Japanese didn't even have a hope of conquering the United States, and as a matter of fact were already negotiating—or trying to negotiate—for peace terms at the time the bomb was dropped.

It is, we agree, an evil thing to kill. On the other hand, if we choose not to kill, it does not necessarily follow that we will be killed. We *may* not be.

The Government-imposed, and sometimes self-imposed, security and loyalty programs accompanying atomic armament are a real evil. Real freedoms are undermined by them. If they constitute the alternative to the hypothetical chance that Europe *might* have fallen to the Communists if the United States did not possess the exclusive knowledge of the "A" bomb, wouldn't it have been better to take the calculated risk that Europe might not have fallen? The Russians got the "A" bomb by 1948, anyway. The Europeans during most of the period in question have never agreed in any large number that they would have fallen into Russian hands. They

believe there were other factors than the "A" bomb which kept Russia from such a move.

We can demonstrate the specific ways in which free men and free institutions have suffered as a result of the security program. It cannot be demonstrated that Europe would have fallen to Russia; it can only be endlessly asserted. It remains completely hypothetical.

In the words of Norbert Wiener, American scientists, including J. Robert Oppenheimer, "have been playing with hell-fire." One of the reasons, undoubtedly, is that they have been torn between the greater-and-lesser-evil problem, tending to choose the "lesser," that is, the real, evil, rather than the "greater," that is, the hypothetical, evil.

Having chosen the real evil—the construction of "A" and "H" bombs, with their accompanying security and loyalty controls inimical to science and democracy—sensitive men, like Oppenheimer, have zigged and zagged, and equivocated trying to avoid the logical implications of the system they accepted. But not so Gordon Gray and Thomas Morgan who, in their recent report, spelled out for all to see the logical conclusions of "security." They called it "the harsh requirements of security," which "in times of peril must be absolute, and without concessions for reasons of admiration, gratitude, reward, sympathy or charity . . . . Loyalty to one's friends is one of the noblest of qualities. Being loyal to one's friends above reasonable obligations to the country and to the security system, however, is not clearly consistent with the interests of security." How appropriate that Gordon Gray should be a University president, a contemporary educator! "

The great strength of totalitarianism is that it forces those who oppose it, to imitate it."

But, in my opinion, Oppenheimer's position in this matter is not much superior to that of Gray. Norbert Wiener's recent appraisal gets to some of the fundamentals; he says in part:

> The charges against him [Oppenheimer] are certain to backfire on the tribe of head-hunters; yet I am greatly afraid that the revulsion of public opinion which is bound to occur in his favor may lead to a false glorification of a new sort of scientist. In the first place, since the middle of the last war the scientist has assumed the new form of the "Megabuck" scientist, who is not interested in any project in which the investment is less than a million dollars . . . Any such scientist, participating in what has become a moving crap game must expect to get slugged occasionally . . . The essential point of the whole dispute between Dr. Oppenheimer and his accusers is that it is taking place at a time when there is a certain amount of pressure to use the most horrible forms of atomic warfare in a preventive war. Such a proposal would not stand up for five minutes before the informed conscience of mankind, or indeed the informed conscience of any great country. It is therefore necessary for those behind the scenes who secretly support this expedient to see to it that public opinion concerning it be ill-informed. [Therefore] it is necessary to discredit those few people on the inside of the atomic project who know and care about the facts and their moral meaning. To eliminate those people means literally to let all hell loose. Thus, whether we fully approve of everything they have done or not, whether or not we have considered them sufficiently sensitive to have gone the limit in protesting against the first use of the atomic bomb, against the reduction of physics from a science to a conspiracy of conformists, and against their own share in many other evils of our time, we must defend them and ourselves against the utter brutality and ignorance of their accusers. Dr. Oppenheimer has spoken of the sense of guilt of the modern scientist, but I fail to see much sackcloth and ashes being worn at the present moment. I can only wish that there went with the new sense of guilt a sense of contrition and a willingness to do penance. Still, in this time of destruction, a belated revival of conscience is better than none.

This view of Dr. Norbert Wiener may seem harsh, but it isn't as harsh as "the needs of security." It doesn't rule out admiration, gratitude, sympathy, and charity. In the light of the general role of scientists during the past dozen years, right up to and including their recent reactions to the Oppenheimer affair, I would go one step further, saying that, in my opinion, the scientists, being very frail vessels, won't save us, since they haven't been able to save themselves. I

have seen nothing in recent weeks to lead me to change that judgment.

If we would help prevent "all hell from breaking loose," then we would do well not only to defend the handful of scientists like Dr. Oppenheimer who have qualms and reservations about the use of the "H" bombs. In addition, we shall have to learn ourselves how to choose the hypothetical rather than the real evil, and we shall have to communicate this abroad. The first step is simple enough. Some men, and even some scientists, like Norbert Wiener, have taken it. They have learned how to say "no." They fit into that category of men which the Gray Board recognized in passing: "The board would assert the right of any citizen to be in disagreement with security measures and any other expressed policies of Government. This is all a part of the right of dissent which must be preserved for our people." When there are enough people, scientists and non-scientists, in the category of dissenters to certain present policies, new choices beyond "either-or" can become possible.

In 1946, Edmond Taylor, one of the chief organizers of the Office of Strategic Services, the wartime cloak-anddagger service, wrote a book entitled *Richer by Asia.* This is a remarkable book in several respects, but one of its chief themes has to do with the results of psychological warfare and security measures when they come to dominate a situation or a society. It is a remarkable book, too, in that Taylor, in 1946, predicted what could happen if psychological warfare (*i.e.,* cold war) should be put into practice between Russia and the United States.

His thesis is that psychological warfare leads to hot war, not to peace. The purpose of psychological warfare, he points out, is to delude the enemy, and that can be done. But in the process the delusion begins to overflow back into the organization of the psychological warriors. Ultimately the opponent is deluded, but so also is the society of the deluder. Hence, both groups are out of touch with reality, and from there move from psychological violence to physical violence. One of the techniques of psychological warfare is to reduce choices to two equally undesirable ones; to maintain tensions that cry out for some kind of resolution and relief. And accompanying the whole affair, necessary measures of security are required. If you are engaged in spying and sabotage among your opponents, it is sensible and reasonable to suspect that your opponent is spying and sabotaging in your midst. Immediately everybody becomes suspect. It becomes a perfectly natural precaution to look under your bed at night to see if the enemy is hiding there. Delusion takes over when, upon looking under your bed, you see the enemy. Secretary Forrestal, you may recall, was invaded by the Russians several years ago in his hospital room in Bethesda. This was just before his suicide.

The first step toward choosing the hypothetical evil is to take what our military men so stoutly call "a calculated risk." Say "no" to the real evil.

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THE ARTS OF PEACE

TOWARD FREEDOM is a four-page monthly periodical devoted to "the peaceful elimination of colonialism." It makes its business the spread of facts, with occasional comments by the editor, Wm. Bross Lloyd, Jr., as, for example, the following:

> The most puzzling thing about the Indochina situation is how the conflict could have gone on for nearly eight years without an American Secretary of State insisting that the United Nations look into it. . . .The cost of yielding to France's obstinate insistence that Indochina was a "domestic concern" is now apparent, and one is forced to ask what chance there will ever be for peaceful transitions if colonial troubles are considered "domestic concerns" until their international gravity can no longer be disguised, ant then they suddenly become matters for international military action?

Now comes a practical suggestion:

> Many Congressmen are now seeking ways to prevent our becoming embroiled in colonial wars. Why not write to ask them what they think of attaching a rider along these lines to every appropriation bill for military aid:
>
> "No part of this appropriation shall be used for military aid in any United Nations Trust or Non-Self-Governing Territory until after the President has officially requested the United Nations conciliation and mediation of the dispute or situation giving rise to alleged military needs, and the administering authority concerned has fully cooperated in these negotiations."

Another feature in the June *Toward Freedom* is an article by Sidney Lens, who finds the cause of the Mau Mau disturbances in Kenya in the age-old problem of land hunger. Toward the close of the last century, the British built a railroad through Kenya and British settlers acquired the best land on both sides of the track—in parcels of 1,000 to 40,000 acres. Behind the primitive terrorism of the Mau Mau outrages is a story of land hunger that may easily explain, if not exactly excuse, the desperation of the native inhabitants of Kenya:

> The five and a half million tribesmen, on the other hand, not only lost this choice area and were pushed into reservations, but also had to give up their rights in reserve areas that they had always considered their own. Since their poor farming techniques quickly exploited the soil, these reserves were desperately needed. For all this there was not one penny of indemnification. And to make matters worse the colonists devised a slick system for recruiting cheap labor from amongst those whom they had dispossessed. Taxes payable only in money, not in crops, were levied on the populace and those who couldn't pay were forced to go to work on the white plantations.

The wages of these workers on the plantations vary from 98 cents to $2.24 *a month.* While they are given a hut to live in and an acre or two of land for their own use, the specter of hunger is never far distant. The white settlers, of whom there are 30,000, fear that any concessions to the natives will mean a lower standard of living for themselves. Even the moderate native organization, the Kenya African Union, which has been urging a new constitution and land reforms, has been banned "on the pretext of connections with Mau Mau." Mr. Lens' final observation on the longterm meaning of Mau Mau is this:

> When all the sensationalism of Mau Mau eventually dies down, it seems certain that what will emerge in clear focus is a burning desire for some kind of land settlement, the same kind of burning desire which is activating hundreds of millions of colonials in Asia and other parts of Africa to seek independence.

While popular journalism stresses the sensational side of colonial news, *Toward Freedom* prints the explanations which lie behind the news—the explanations which, when understood, may lead men to lay a foundation of justice for the world peace of the future. *Toward Freedom* is $3 a year ($1 to students) and may be ordered from Room 503, 343 South Dearborn Street, Chicago 4, Ill.

It is perhaps natural that England, the country to which the West owes many of its basic

conceptions of civil liberties and the rights of individuals, has led all the Western nations in the number of individual protests against war. There were far more conscientious objectors in England during World War II than in other allied countries, and the English today support the weekly periodical, *Peace News,* which is the leading pacifist newspaper of the world. What happens to conscientious objectors in the United States? Harry A. Wallenberg, Jr., provides a brief answer to this question in *Whither Freedom?,* a pamphlet recently published by the Libertarian Press, Glen Gardner, N.J. This is a study of the treatment of conscientious objectors in the United States during World Wars I and II. While the record shows policies considerably in advance of countries like Germany, France, and Italy, American officials have still much to learn from the British, who endeavor to preserve the civil rights of this unpopular minority. Concerning the treatment of two conscientious objectors to World War II, the prominent physician, Dr. Evan W. Thomas, observed that the Federal prison authorities had dealt with them by means that were obviously an effort to humiliate and degrade them to "a sub-human level."

Copies of *Whither Freedom?* may be ordered at 25 cents each from the Libertarian Press, or from the author at 1706 Flager Lane, Redondo Beach, Calif.

REVIEW
NOVEL NOTES

EVERY reviewer, and, of course, every reader, is bound to encounter what seem extremely good passages in novels otherwise less than distinguished. Holding that a good passage is a good passage, these "dog days" are as good a time as any to take notice of several.

In Niven Busch's *The Hate Merchant*, the leading character is a former Huey Long henchman now teamed up with a group of religious revivalists. He finds, of course, that hate and fear are as effective in the pulpit as on the lips of a would-be political dictator. In both cases, some sort of "crisis" is needed to stir wild emotional forces into action. The "Reverend" Splane reflects:

> Huey had known how to turn wild forces loose and make you a part of them; at the same time he withdrew into the core of calmness in the center of the tornado. He was the rescue station there in the heart of the destruction: you there beside him, unassailable, unharmed. By a miracle a switchboard was still working there; you controlled it; messages came and went, you gave orders or obeyed them, as the case might be, there at the center of the crisis. Outside, buildings toppled, sewers burst open, gas mains blew up and caught fire, and all the complicated fabric of civilization was threatened with only you to defend it. Yet . . . and this was the queer part, you yourself had started all the trouble. You had done this without volition, done it to create the special climate which you needed in order to live.
>
> A sense of crisis: that was it. Without it you had nothing, with it you controlled. You were the earthquake and the fire in the streets. At the same time you were the calm voice at the switchboard. You sand-bagged the flood, put out the fire, sent the ambulances to the ruined houses. All began with you and ended with you; a complete, self-perpetuating cycle of destruction and renewal.

Reflection on this passage should be good for almost anybody. We doubt, however, if Senator McCarthy needs to bother. Perhaps he encountered Mr. Busch's novel in manuscript stage 'way back in 1952.

Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, winner of the National Book Award for 1947 and reprinted in a 50-cent edition (Signet, 1953), has been called " a modern Odyssey," and "a work of extraordinary intensity," "powerfully imagined," etc. We find ourselves unable to classify it as a work of art, either favorably or unfavorably, but find a portion of the Prologue a very moving piece of writing. Mr. Ellison is speaking of himself as a Negro in a white man's world—a Negro who sees many things with keener eyes than his more socially acceptable white brothers, but who is seldom "seen" by them at all:

> I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me.
>
> Nor is my invisibility exactly a matter of a bio-chemical accident to my epidermis. That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their *inner* eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality. I am not complaining, nor am I protesting either. It is sometimes advantageous to be unseen, although it is most often rather wearing on the nerves. Then too, you're constantly being bumped against by those of poor vision. Or again, you often doubt if you really exist. You wonder whether you aren't a phantom in other people's minds. Say, a figure in a nightmare which the sleeper tries with all his strength to destroy. It's when you feel like this that, out of resentment, you begin to bump people back. And let me confess, you feel that way most of the time. You ache with the need to convince yourself that you do exist in the real world, that you're a part of all the sound and anguish, and you strike out with your fists, you curse and you swear to make them recognize you. And, alas, it's seldom successful.

Among the weird constructions of science fiction, Alfred Bester's *The Demolished Man is* a top contender for oddity.

A radio and television writer, Bester apparently acquires a most unusual mood at the typewriter, for *The Demolished Man* sounds like a tape-recording of psychiatric ward conversations. However, in his closing chapter, after wandering through a plot wherein a 24th-century killer is hunted down by a 24th-century Sherlock Holmes, Mr. Bester turns up an unusual slant on criminality. It seems that, in this world of the future, although any man who kills another is marked for demolition—demolition doesn't mean death. This is not because of a humanitarian credo, and certainly not because of Christian ethics, but rather as a simple outgrowth of the logic implied in the following:

> When a man is demolished at Kingston Hospital, his entire psyche is destroyed. The series of osmotic injections begins with the topmost strata of cortical synapses and slowly works down, switching off every circuit, extinguishing every memory, destroying every particle of the pattern that has been built up since birth. And as the pattern is erased, each particle discharges its portion of energy, turning the entire body into a shuddering maelstrom of dissociation.
>
> But this is not the pain; this is not the dread of Demolition. The horror lies in the fact that the consciousness is never lost; that as the psyche is wiped out, the mind is aware of its slow, backward death until at last it too disappears and awaits the rebirth. The mind bids an eternity of farewells; it mourns at an endless funeral.

When the killer has finally been sent to the Demolition Center, the man who trapped him drops by, showing a friendly interest in the proceedings. He asks:

> `'How's the treatment coming?"
>
> "Wonderful. He's got the stamina to take anything. We're stepping him up. Ought to be ready for rebirth in a year."
>
> "I'm waiting for it. We need men like Reich. It would have been a shame to lose him."
>
> "Lose him? How's that possible? You think a little fall like that could—"
>
> "No. I mean something else. Three or four hundred years ago, cops used to catch people like Reich just to kill them. Capital punishment, they called it."
>
> "You're kidding."
>
> "Scout's honor."

"But it doesn't make sense. If a man's got the talent and guts to buck society, he's obviously above average. You want to hold on to him. You straighten him out and turn him into a plus value. Why throw him away? Do that enough and all you've got left are the sheep." "I don't know. Maybe in those days they wanted sheep."

Budd Schulberg's *Some Faces in the Crowd*, a pocketbook short story collection, seems to us to make extraordinarily good reading, cover to cover. Mr. Schulberg is a more versatile writer than we, and perhaps many, have imagined. Some of his tales are stark and brutal, some delicate and beautiful, but in all of them one finds deft twists and turns, leading towards a broader understanding of people very much like, or very much unlike ourselves.

COMMENTARY
THE SHAPING OF OPINIONS

THE question of how opinions or "views" are formed is always interesting, and this week's discussion of "absolutes" and "certainties" (see Frontiers) makes one wonder, for example, why a man who maintains throughout the active period of his career an attitude of outspoken skepticism, or even materialism, will, at the end of his life, embrace the tenets of some revealed, dogmatic religion. Heywood Broun is an example of this sudden and apparently inexplicable sort of change.

Perhaps the opinions which are so easily dissolved, possibly by some sort of emotional experience, are not thought-out opinions at all, but part of the intellectual climate which a man may absorb without analytical thinking. Some of a man's opinions may be forged against the grain of popular belief, and held in the deep conviction of original thinking, while others may be merely "floating" ideas—no more really his own than his next-door neighbor's. It is these floating ideas, then, which a man is able to drop, whenever they stand in the way of some apparently desirable goal.

The naive materialism of the nineteenth century seems very easily shed, these days. Several years ago, when the "return to religion" was first gaining notice in intellectual circles, the *Partisan Review* gave it special attention in a series of articles called "The Failure of Nerve." The articles were well written by men whose skepticism or "materialism" was considerably more than a fuzzy denial of "religion." There is, however, a wider view of such changes in opinion. A little over a hundred years ago, the Western world was puzzled, even alarmed, by the appearance of people called "mediums" who claimed to be in touch with "departed spirits." The surprising thing about the mediums—some of them, at least—is that they were able to convince a rather impressive minority of scientists of the reality of their phenomena. Alfred Russel Wallace was one, William Crookes another, and William James still another who acknowledged the presence of the supernormal in the psychic phenomena of the mediums.

With a few such exceptions, however, most of the apparently intelligent converts to spiritualism adopted it as a "religion." Today, of course, psychic research is well on the way to becoming a respectable science, but in the middle years of the nineteenth century, the startling events of the seance were enough to produce an unmistakable "failure of nerve" in men who felt able to abandon entirely the quality of suspended judgment and impartial inquiry which they had once boasted of as the "scientific spirit."

The "skepticism" of these men was not a result of deep reflection—they did not, indeed, have the habit of deep reflection—so that when confronted by experiences which could not possibly occur in the universe as they had pictured it, they let the universe go ahead and embraced unreasonable opinions.

There is a lesson in all this for educators. It is not enough to share the conventional opinions of one's time, even if they happen to be "correct" opinions. Much more important is the habit of evaluating even the most familiar opinions, and a spirit of readiness to deal with all manner of unlikely possibilities. This is the only real protection against the periodic "failures of nerve" which assault the men of the twentieth century.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

IN an age when everyone talks about "discipline," it is necessary for the philosophical educator to talk about spontaneity. And today, when so many talk about spontaneity and love "a child needs love, and love alone"—the philosophical educator may again find himself trying to restore psychological balance.

Actually, there is a common denominator of these terms, even though their meanings are usually set off one against the other. When a condition of understanding love exists between two people, this bond of itself imposes a stricter "discipline" than any other force possibly could. This is because no one performs tasks so well, devotes himself so thoroughly to the details of perfection in action, as the man who has an absorbing interest in the end to be served. And so it is that the men who unselfishly devote themselves to the service of group or nation seem to have a greater energy potential than the mere self-seeker, no matter how ambitious the latter. For a child, the desire to serve or benefit a loved parent will command a concentration and meticulousness which no cat-o'-nine-tails punishment threat could duplicate. Thus the man or child who truly loves will have the world and all of discipline. So far as society and family are concerned, it is also important for the one loved to be worthy of devotion, but even those who love unworthy people are committed to the disciplines which love demands.

However, as always, when the much used and abused word "love" is used, its meaning needs to be made clear. Love as philosophers define it is not an emotional state though emotional states of a pleasing nature may indeed accompany it. Love, we should say, is a voluntary identification with the needs of another person, so that in all events, whether favorable or unfavorable to self, the needs of that other are held in mind and fully incorporated into each action. Since "discipline" means a *continued* application of energy, a *constancy* of behavior and attitude, it seems that no other discipline would be as complete as that inaugurated and maintained by love.

A complication, however, is that when human beings mature, they develop more exacting standards in regard to the people they may love. This is not done consciously, and in some cases, indeed, it may seem clear that an actual retrogression has taken place in discrimination, but most people show themselves capable of evolution in perspective. So what actually happens is that few persons able to evoke *full* love are encountered.

This suggests that the reason why so few are loved completely is not because there is no one willing to love them, but, instead, because they themselves have never become sufficiently disciplined to command continuous respect and admiration essential elements in any true love. If this is so, then we have said, in effect, that one must love to be self-disciplined, and that one must be disciplined to know how to love or be loved.

The relationship here suggested between "love" and "discipline" is clarified by a third term—"devotion." "Devotion," when separated from its sentimental or fanatical associations, implies a constancy in which love and zeal combine. Joseph Shipley's *Dictionary of Word Origins* has this to say about "devotion:"

> When the ancients *devoted* themselves to a thing—or *devoted* a thing to a god—they made *a vow* concerning it: L. *de*, in regard *to, + vovere, vot*—, to *vow. Vow* itself is via OFr. *vou*, from the same L. *votum;* hence *vow* and *vote* are doublets; the vote registers the determination. The word *vote* meant first a solemn pledge; then an ardent wish.

Since we usually associate "discipline" with authority—and then deprecate both—it is well to note that there are two kinds of authority, just as there are two kinds of discipline. Erich Fromm makes this clear in a passage from *Escape From Freedom:*

> The use of the term “authoritarian" makes it necessary to clarify the concept of authority. So much confusion exists with regard to this concept because it is widely believed that we are confronted with the alternative of having dictatorial, irrational authority or of having no authority at all. This alternative, however, is fallacious. The real problem is what *kind* of authority we are to have. When we speak of authority do we mean rational or irrational authority? *Rational authority* has its source in *competence.* The person whose authority is respected functions competently in the task with which he is entrusted by those who conferred it upon him. He need not intimidate them nor arouse their admiration by magic qualities; as long as and to the extent to which he is completely helping, instead of exploiting, his authority is based on rational grounds and does not call for irrational awe.

Joining the implications of these paragraphs, we should say that there is always a distinct human need—not simply societal need, but a personal or individual need—for recognition of the principle of order in human conduct. The fact that the authoritarians, whether of church or state, have always insisted that *their* order be the one accepted does not countermand the imperative. It is simply that people are happiest when they live up to an ideal of constancy and consistency, linked to some form of transcendent purpose. Now, while no parent can "give" a set of transcendent purposes to his children, he can provide an environment in which the young gain experience with discipline. They are in a natural position to do so, according to Fromm's point, when their own "competence" in evaluating the total needs of the household is adequately demonstrated. Their "authority" can, in a general sense, be accepted without question, *precisely because it does have a rational base.* The parent who has practiced sufficient self-discipline upon his own wayward and negative emotions, moreover, earns respect as a just man, and those who are known to be just are trusted. If it is announced by such a parent that the child's share of work in the household should consist of such and such, there is no immediate reason for questioning, nor a natural desire to question, his decision. And such an assumption of natural prerogative, based upon the recognition of the need of the child for constructive disciplines of work, must by no means be regarded as *ipso facto* authoritarian.

So, to come back to the relationship between "love" and "discipline," is it not possible that the introduction of children to the meaning of discipline is one of the best ways of preparing them to enjoy the meaning and benefit of love itself? Such is the view defended here, one which encourages parents who have been intimidated by slogans such as "Don't be an authoritarian in your own home" to analyze their meaning and to recognize that while authoritarianism based on fear is always a bad thing, competent authority need not be at loggerheads with love and affection between parents and children.

FRONTIERS

A Question of "Absolutes"

A WATCHFUL reader of this Department has caught us fairly in a trap of language. Referring to the discussion of the "Dilemma of Liberals" (June 23), he writes:

> . . . you point out the dangers of a feeling of certainty about one's beliefs—or rather the danger of *too great* a feeling of certainty. Then you stress the need of conviction. Could you give us a little more about certainty and conviction? Where does one stop and the other begin? Offhand, I would have said that "conviction" is the stronger term.

This comment implies that conviction necessarily involves a feeling of "certainty." Perhaps it does, but there are various sorts of certainties. Consider, for example, the attitude of Charles Darwin, after he had read Malthus *On Population* and had conceived the idea of "Natural Selection." As Judd relates in *The Coming of Evolution:*

> With characteristic caution, Darwin determined not to write down "even the briefest sketch" of this hypothesis, that had so suddenly presented itself to his mind. His habit of thought was always to give the fullest consideration and weight to any possible objection that presented itself to his own mind or could be suggested to him by others. Though he was satisfied as to the truth and importance of the principle of natural selection, there is evidence that for some years he was oppressed by difficulties, which I think would have seemed greater to him than to anyone else. In my conversations with Darwin, in after years, it always struck me that he attached an exaggerated importance to the merest suggestion of a view opposed to that he was himself inclined to adopt; indeed I sometimes feared to indicate a *possible* different point of view to his own, for fear of receiving such an answer as "What a very striking objection, how stupid of me not to see it before, I must really reconsider the whose subject."

Thus Darwin, chary of certainties, embodied in his writings a spirit of impartiality which made *Origin of Species* a model of excellence in scientific composition. As Judd puts it:

> A subject of such complexity as that which it dealt with could only be adequately discussed in a manner that would demand careful attention and thought on the part of the reader; and Darwin's well-weighed words, carefully balanced sentences, and guarded reservations are admirably adapted to the accomplishment of the difficult task he had undertaken. . . .
>
> The splendid success achieved by the work is a matter of history. Its dearness of statement and candour in reasoning pleased the general public; critics without any profound knowledge of natural history were beguiled into the opinion that they *understood* the whole matter! and, according to their varying tastes, indulged in shallow objection or slightly offensive patronage. The fully-anticipated theological vituperation was of course not lacking, but most of the "replies" to Darwin's arguments were "lifted" from the book itself, in which objections to his views were honestly stated and candidly considered by the author.

Darwin's conviction should hardly need demonstration. His entire career is witness to his great conviction that research and study will lead to fruitful result. From boyhood he was a collector and student of natural history. And this is our point: Darwin's conviction did not blunt his impartiality, his open-minded interest in other points of view. If someone comes along to call attention to flaws in Darwin's science, and errors in his generalizations, we shall not in the least feel that our argument is weakened. Darwin's conviction concerning the value and importance of scientific method was what made him need no final certainties concerning his own conclusions. We are arguing for a mood, a spirit in human undertakings, not a formula for infallibility.

"Conviction," then, as we have used the term, involves a strong sense of the validity of human inquiry. "Certainty," on the other hand, suggests that some particular result or conclusion gained by inquiry is the last word—never to be altered or improved upon. The two notions, so far as we can see, are mutually exclusive.

This same correspondent also questions a statement in Frontiers for July 7 (concerned with

Erich Fromm's critique of the philosophy of Relativism).

> Why [he writes] call "the assumption that spontaneity and individuality are ultimate values for human beings" an absolute? Hadn't whatever is assumed better be called merely an assumption? Why not simply say that Fromm's stimulating and revealing insights have been gained through use of an hypothesis which is based on more extensive evidence than has previously been available—information gained through study of a number of societies rather than through one or a few societies?
>
> How would we recognize an absolute if we came across one? How would we know that our knowledge might not be extended at some time in the future—that revision of our absolute would never be necessary?

This question is fundamental and involves in a sense all the issues of the controversy over Relativism. The essential matter at issue is the validity of rational discourse, or *reasoning*. It is the assumption, admitted or not, of every man who reasons that reasoning may lead him to valid conclusions. This is a proposition which cannot be denied, for the man who denies it is offering a proposition which appeals to reason, thereby affirming what he denies. In all rational discourse, therefore, the validity of rational discourse amounts to an absolute. Even if one says that the validity of rational discourse may be limited, the principle holds, for his claims have meaning only to the extent that the validity is allowed.

Now, we take spontaneity to mean the quality of originating causes. If what a man says and does is wholly a result of external causes which "condition" him to say what he says and do what he does, then all his speech and actions are but "signs" representing prior influences upon him, and his words have no independent meaning. In this case, the term "mind" has no sense at all. The term "individual" has no meaning. Therefore, it seems to us, Fromm is right when he suggests that spontaneity and individuality are absolute values for human life, for if they are denied, the qualities which we assign to human life thought, moral responsibility, originality, creativity, achievement—do not exist, nor is human life capable of being distinguished as set apart from other forms of life by these qualities.

This is not to suggest that spontaneity and individuality are "pure" and unqualifed realities of human existence. They very clearly are not. They are *values* in life, to be sought, won, maintained, fostered, and defended.

But our correspondent has other questions:

> If we knew that we were in possession of an absolute, how could we get across to everyone that it is no good at all without voluntary assent"? How, that is, could we dissolve the old connection between absolutism and dogmatism? How could we keep some among us from imposing the absolute upon others "for their own good"—by any necessary means, including torture and liquidation?

Here we really get at the differences between this reader and ourselves, which are not so much differences as distinctions. In the first place, there is no tried and true method of getting any important idea across to anybody. The greatest men—men like Socrates and Gandhi—lost their lives as a result of trying to get ideas across to their fellows.

The simplest way, perhaps, of resolving this question is to say that we are declaring for *methodological* absolutes—the traditional liberal and humanist principles. It is an absolute, for example, that a man should be as impartial as he possibly can be in arriving at his conclusions. It is an absolute that he should allow his fellow human beings as much freedom as possible in reaching *their* conclusions—an idea which is at the foundation of the social compact of the secular state. Our correspondent fears absolutes because they may be turned into the slogans of tyranny. We agree that "absolute" has very nearly become a nasty word, but we believe that the idea of first principles is important for clarity in thinking, and "absolute" is a handy way to designate a first principle. We are, however, willing to use any other term which seems handier and still conveys the meaning we have tried to express. It is a

question, then, of salvaging the term "absolute," or finding a better one.

Socrates, we think, lived by methodological absolutes. They are clearly set forth in the *Apology* and the *Crito*.. Socrates' absolutes caused him to speak his mind to the Athenians, even though it was plain that they would punish him with death for doing it. Then, offered avenues of escape, he refused to break the social compact with his fellow citizens who had condemned him to death.

These were Socrates' *absolutes.* He believed other things, to be sure which may be termed his *views.* He only argued about his views, he did not insist upon them. But when it came to the highest values in his life, having to do with his personal integrity, his conception of truth and how it is reached, and what a man owes to his fellows, Socrates followed his absolutes and stood up to be counted in their behalf.

We are inclined to think that Fromm's notions of spontaneity and individuality could be expanded and developed into ideas about man which would be very much like the absolute values of Socrates—and, for that matter, of Gandhi, also. They are, in fact, the only weapons we know of which can contend successfully against dogmatism and dogmatism's servitors—torture and liquidation.

Letter from **BERLIN**

[The German correspondent who contributed the article, "Warning from Berlin" (MANAS, June 2), has sent this "follow-up" on his remarks about the psycho-moral effects of espionage activities in Berlin. American readers will probably be surprised—and shocked—by this letter, which comes from a man who is a lifelong pacifist and without political interests.]

BERLIN.—The world is getting excited about the Communist kidnappings. People living in West Berlin have been carried over into the East by force or by making them drunk. The case of Dr. Linse is the most famous of al1. Dr. Linse, however, was the chief of one of the worst espionage gangs in West Berlin.

Bad as kidnapping is, it should not be supposed that there is only one way of doing it. Being a prison officer, I know something about such things. The kidnappers, whenever they are caught in the West, are given heavy sentences of hard labor, and those who do it for money certainly deserve the punishment. But I know at least two persons who have been kidnapped in the East by Western agents—one by force, the other one by making him drunk. The latter victim was a policeman of the Soviet Sector who arrested a young fellow who some weeks previously had thrown a phosphorus bomb into a newspaper stand on the Eastern side, near the demarcation line, burning it up. Naturally enough, the offender, who had been seen, appeared on the list of people the East Berlin police wanted for arson. He was finally lured into the Soviet Zone, and this policeman arrested him, which was his duty and which every policeman in the world would have done. Now the policeman is in our jail—he was kidnapped. The same action, when done by the other side, is a crime.

I know of another case which is typical. A man who had been a Communist all his life (he is now about fifty) was in Mauthausen Concentration Camp during the time of Hitler. Speaking several languages and being an intelligent man, he served as an interpreter. Mauthausen was the only camp where prisoners were able to get control the day before the Allied armies came; they delivered the camp to the liberators with the SS guards already in custody. This man was a leader of the Mauthausen prisoners.

One of the SS brutes at Mauthausen had not only illtreated many prisoners, but killed a dozen of them in the days before the camp was liberated. But he managed to escape. Last year, the man in question happened to meet that SS guard in Berlin in the street. He got hold of him and delivered him to the police, saying that he should be tried for crimes against humanity and murder of a dozen prisoners. But the police had to release him, as the U.S. Military Government insisted that this former SS man was under their special protection, since he was an American spy. Seeing that his torturer would get off, the former inmate of Mauthausen managed to get him over into the Russian Sector, where he was arrested by the Russians. Then he committed suicide.

This was indeed a case of real kidnapping. And so my man is in jail now for kidnapping. But he would never have done it, if the U.S. Military Government did not protect criminals who happen to be useful against the Russians.

I write you this only to illustrate the atmosphere of immorality created by espionage activities. Things are too hot here, now, for me to try to help such people. The one man in jail is entirely innocent, in my opinion, but actually I cannot do more than tell him that I consider him innocent and advise him to avoid in his future life any contact with political work.

GERMAN CORRESPONDENT