

March 15 (how well I know the date these days!), 1951

Dear John,

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How very, very nice to learn that you have hooked yourself a woman! I'm delighted indeed, and wish you may be as happy as William and I are. I certainly hope we will get a chance to see you this spring or summer, either up there or down here. Peg sounds like a fine woman, and so I hope you will treat her with proper care. In my opinion it was wise of you to 1) not put the matter off too long, 2) not pick a girl ten years or so younger than you, so that the barrier of different generations might arise.

Of course I have heard about Peg both from you and from mother. Of course, also, I have taken a few of mother's comments cum grano salis, but really there haven't been many that needed salting, as it were. So I take it Peg has made an excellent impression on mother, who says, by the way, that she always looks and is dressed "smart as a whip" - a point which you as a man would not think to mention. I think you exaggerate mother's feeling that Peg might dominate her little Johnny - on any matter which you consider of importance. I don't think she feels that way now, if she ever did.

Every normal woman loves to marry men off, so I'm glad you're being married off. And every normal human being has a good deal of advice to give on such occasions - absolutely free! - not to say unsolicited. If you have written to Pop also, you will probably be unusually rich in good advice, poor old John! But my desire to contribute to this wealth of council is inexorable, and since your letter arrived I've been thinking a great deal about it, so I'm unusually well supplied with surplus good advice, none of which has anything remotely connected with my own business.

I've been worried about you as a step-father, mildly. You say Jane is fifteen. I wouldn't be fifteen again if I could possibly avoid it. Girls fifteen have sensibilities keen as a razor, are a prey to all sorts of imaginary insults, are addicted to suffering the tortures of the damned in silent martyrdom, and are experts at making other people think they are carefree young characters without a doubt or a second-thought in their minds. They are not mature, know they are not mature, and yet are subject to great pain when not treated with the dignity and respect due to a queen-mother. I know all this because I passed through it. Therefore I trust and hope that you will guard every idle word with young Jane, treat her with a combination of loving indulgence and dignified respect, never make the slightest effort to rebuke her (Peg's department) and bear in mind that she may easily misinterpret everything you do or say. Also, I hope you will realize that Feedee is going to be a thorn in her flesh and will probably try to tease the life out of her for several years. I have always been very fond of Jimmy because he practically never scolded me as a child, in fact spoiled the daylight out of me. Mother has always said the same about Papa. For step-parents I recommend a thorough course of spoiling - let the real parents do all the work of civilizing youngsters. Even a gentle rebuke from you will be absolutely useless, and only serve to make Jane dislike you.

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Now for what is really none of my business: I hope you will sell your present house as soon as possible and get a larger one, suitable for your much larger family. Plenty of lebensraum so the kids will have less opportunity to get in each others' hair. A new environment for a fresh start, too. I realize that although you would be able to sell your house for an excellent price, a larger house would be quite an expenditure these days. Perhaps Peg might be able to face the thought of buying a less expensive big house of the 1900 variety, and making necessary changes and re-decorations. At least those old places are good and big, with plenty of bedrooms for people who want to be alone, and judging from Washington prices, they are a good deal cheaper than modern houses with less lebensraum in them. However, lots of people can't stand the look of them on the outside- which is hard to change without a great deal of money. Insides are much easier and cheaper to change. Well, heaven knows it's your business and not mine, but I do think that your house is too small for the five or six or seven of you. It would make adjustment more difficult for children. Perhaps you had already thought of this several months ago!

Your discourse on the latest highways you have traveled in dianetics was most interesting. It did indeed sound a great deal like what is called sometimes "mystic philosophy" for want of a better term. The word mysticism has fallen into great disrepute since the 18th Century's smug Age of Reason, when so many really great minds united to attack it for the very practical and reasoned purpose of eliminating all the cobwebs from pure Greek and Roman classicism. It's fun to read our old friend Gibbon in these parlous times because he was so completely sure of himself, his age, and the infallibility of the philosophy current in his times. Never did an unworthy doubt enter his mind: all would be well in the best of all possible worlds just as soon as human reason had cleaned out the accumulated trash and superstition and nonsense of all ages past- with the exception of the best days of Greece and Rome. He never doubted that Byzantine art was utterly tasteless and always would be considered so. A Gothic cathedral's lacework in stone magnificently trying to reach the sky with no steel beams, no thick arches, the least possible support- was the idle and foolish work of barbarians sadly off their rockers, to Mr. Gibbon. He does a wonderful and happy job on the sillier Christian "saints" and abominates anything tinged with "mysticism". Anyone as self-confident as that can't fail to make pleasant reading in an age less sure of itself than his. But there have been few ages so fortunate and smug, and the accumulated thoughts on the unity of man through the ages, plus the varied methods of reaching a sense of that unity, are lumped together under the heading of mysticism. Heaven knows there is a lot of silly business mixed up in such a large and unweildy lump. And everyone disagrees about a mass of details concerning God or The Way or Nirvana or the Destiny of Man or the Inner Light or the basic instinctual patterns. That plus the fact that every language has its idioms, and every philosopher his favorite method of explaining things, and every individual his pet vocabulary, is tailor-made for ruining the reputation of mystics and mysticism. "You've got it all wrong!" shouts one man, who has seen the Light, or had a vision, or been v uchsafed a revelation, or undertaken the Way, or achieved loss of the Self in the greater universal Self of Brahma. "You are all wrong- I know because I have just discovered the one and only means of attaining happiness. Like a flash of lightening, I saw everything as it really is! I must set you all right!" One man says "Tat tvam asi", and be-

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fuddles whole generations of men who don't speak sanskrit and anyway are convinced that the only truth is that we are all one in the sight of God. Another man thinks both of them are crazy mystics because he not only doesn't speak Sanskrit but also is afraid of the word "God". However, he does think there must be some sort of plan behind the universe, or maybe some basic common purpose in most of mankind. But he's no mystic, mind you! He's a practical-minded man and can't stand that sort of tripe. What's more, he's never bothered to read any of that sort of nonsense at all. If he is ever subjected to a display of mysticism, its vocabulary is likely to be so strange to him as to make the whole sound like gibberish. Still another man will say he is a Christian, and therefore abhors the name of Buddha. For Buddha never mentioned a God, being sure no man could fathom the nature of God. But this same Christian would do reverence to Boethius- who also never mentioned God, and for the same reason. The Eastern Sage is likely to curl his lip slightly at the symbolisms used by Christians- for he has quite a different and far more logical set of symbols which he employs purely for the purpose of explaining the nature of the Universe to the generality of mankind. None of those Western Christian superstitions for him! It is as hard to see the basic similarity above or behind other people's thinking as it is to see the basic likeness of the two statements: "That art thou" and "the Kingdom of God is within you". It's easy to translate separate words and use them, but hard to learn and use idioms. Shankara said in the ninth century AD that the wise man is one who understands ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ that the essence of Brahman and Atman is Pure Consciousness, and who realizes their absolute identity. Mystic nonsense! But it sounded to me like what you said, "Feg, I am an immortal essence!" And your deep introspection is surely a cousin of the meditation of the sages and the silent, night-long prayers of the saints. A great difference in word-choice, not so much difference in thought-content. You say that you have found the great importance of love, and the affinity of man for man. You know with great faith that nothing can disturb you too much, notwithstanding the existence of misunderstandings and bad data. You have hope that "This, too, shall pass", just as childish tempers, the result of childish misunderstanding, pass. My dear old favorite I Cor. 13 says, "For we know in part... but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child I spake as a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child: but when I became a man I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am known. And now abide faith, hope and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." It's put in far different language, with different emphasis, but it sounds to me a lot like what you were saying, nonetheless. And I agree with you that it isn't mystic nonsense or a religious manic. It is a result of conscious awareness of the deep, ancient urges of the human inheritance, to quote you, and few reach close to that awareness. Those who are aware of them have indeed been lonely always- but not as lonely as all that. I don't think dianetics is the first or the only road to that awareness. I don't imagine you do, either. Your life force can't have been in existence for two billion years, and yet have you as its sole and first discoverer. It just isn't plausible. But how the differing words and thought-patterns have mixed us all up and made us unintelligible one to another! Even if we are sur-

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prised to find that someone else, or a group of other people, have reached the difficult goal we have attained, we are most apt to think their methods of arriving there are very peculiar, not to say downright silly. Tolerance of other peoples' methods tries the patience of the greatest saints, and always has.

I hope to have this infant around the first of April. I now look as if I had stuck a captive balloon under my tired old maternity jacket. Dr. Norton, who is a frank soul, says that I look like a ripe watermelon about to bust- and that's how I feel, too. It's been a long hard grind. I do wish someone would hurry up and think of some easier way to produce infants. This way may be time-tested, but in my opinion it's about time for it to be out-moded.

We are finally getting our S-F magazines regularly, and enjoying them very much, both of us. Exiting and relaxing at the same time. I enjoy the articles, too, even though I can't understand an awful lot of some of them. At least they give me that self-educated feeling. You'll learn me yet, John.

Time to make supper. Love to you and the girls. I should like to know how your marriage plans progress.