

*The 146
Principle*



Maxwell Dodd

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For Herr Blauen Augen

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(A Gift of Encouragement)

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As we begin...

This is a work of encouragement and intended inspiration directed to two quite different purposes. It advances *The 146 Principle* – the simple idea of the greatness of the individual possessed of a deep confidence in himself (or herself) and in life, itself.

In the first instance, it came into being because I was touched by the generosity of that wonderful lad who was kind enough to allow me the use of his flat in Bremen in the north-west of Germany in a high summer heatwave, no less. That generosity provided me as well with access to a computer and my plans of writing could be pursued – shirtless and shoeless but also in much comfort. That lad is a remarkable young man of quite astonishing gifts of intelligence and soul and that it should be on his computer that a work of higher giving should be compiled is far from inappropriate. The name of the work indeed comes from a discussion we had a few nights ago in the darkness before sleep of his plans and their fulfilment. All that I have known in life tells me that humans have endless potential to be and to do but that there are insidious pressures upon us to meet the demands of a compelling world and to conform our ways to a wider authority whether we are truly willing to do so or not. I would want for the lad whom I dub “Mr. Blue Eyes” – they attract the young misses to his life like flies to the honeypot – that he have a full, free life, vivid in rich experience and untouched by the fears that the world would wish him to have. It is therefore a work of sheer inspiration and can be judged accordingly. If you feel as a result of having met the work, the least ambition to hope for more, my purpose will have been met.

I needed also to do some serious writing of a plan I have to offer the Church of England in England when I get there shortly, programmes of inspiration intended to do something about the ailing church and its empty pews and the slow steady decline I have seen in Anglicanism. I am Australian though I am rarely in that country and during a recent visit there for the summer, I was horrified by the empty pews and the bleak presentations I saw in both Anglican and Uniting Churches. That there were so few in attendance at services and that the few who were were nearly all older than I am (and I am fast approaching my three score years and ten) saddened me enormously. In one country Anglican parish in north-western New South Wales, I was mortified that there was about to be a “Billy Graham Crusade” conducted by, I presume, a grandson of the founder of those programmes. If ever there were an irrelevance and an error, this was it.

It will be apparent to readers who stay with these writings that I am not entirely persuaded of the truth of the Christian message of sin and death. I attend services (always Reformed or Protestant – Rome frightens me for its authoritarianism) as an act of unity but without an excessive acceptance of the grounds of belief that underpin the worship. Anglicanism gave me in youth a very real sense of the Presence of the

Numinous – not as a belief but as an experience to be known. All that has come in the

50 years or more since has been to confirm that we are as individuals precious parts of the Universe and that that Universe is deeply within us and awaiting our discovery of it.

My experience of life as you will also see took me to the Eastern pursuit of an inward quality of calm and enablement - I have been a regular and often more than once a day meditator since October 1984 and I have found in such experience for all the lack of fireworks (readers, please note - supreme patience is mandatory), has come an ever developing experience of Presence allied to a calm and an empowerment that I choose to call "enablement" that never ceases to do less than astonish me. I find too that the advice of the Heidelberg Catechism that no hair of the head is at risk is also so true. I am comforted that I have met the Ultimate in such a process and that this experience is not in any way abnormal or beyond any searcher - I have simply travelled longer than anyone I know. I have also come to share the perception of the Buddha that the ultimate spiritual experiences are utterly natural and native to our beings. I have encountered, however, such levels of personal satisfaction and contentment together with such peace of heart and mind that I would fail all if I were not to seek to offer the wisdom of its acquisition, and especially to the members of the very institution whose guidance touched my soul when I was so much younger.

The title of this little work is taken from a story that I have recounted to the lad of a commercial tale whose substance I understand to be correct though perhaps I am not entirely accurate in the detail. That this may be the case in no way diminishes the message of the name of the title or of the advice and message of its quality. Highly successful businessmen are usually the possessors of vivid self-confidence and of an almost ruthless courageousness which takes them to the highest of human challenges as they understand that term. While there is always the risk that high self-confidence will become a luxuriant - and finally destructive - egoism, and I acknowledge the danger, the story on which the title is based reflects enormous credit on the man of whom it speaks. He saw how to solve his problem, however much like Everest the climbing necessary, and he set off to ascend - and he did so, successfully.

I am convinced that greatness is the destiny of all of us and that the journey of its discovery is open to any man or woman, boy or girl. We are set about by a frightening conspiracy to denude us of our birthright - the pressures upon us to conform and be good, quiescent citizens are immense. For all that, there are successful people who meet the fullness of their own nature, who may be said, in the terms of the *schema* called "Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs'" to be "self-actualising" or "self-transcendent." These are the people who build the world in which the rest of us live and it is to them and to what they can do, that this little work is additionally dedicated.

Maxwell Dodd

Bremen, Germany

St. Benedict's Day, 2010

The 146 Principle

One of the world's great entrepreneurs of our day is, like me, Australian born, and, like me, sees a wider world outside Australia as the place to live and advance his interests. Rupert Murdoch is now, I gather, 78 years of age, but is utterly undiminished in his energy and vision.

His family are the largest private holders of stock in a company that was founded in Adelaide in South Australia long before the Second World War to own the principal newspaper in Adelaide, "The Advertiser", called News Corporation Limited. News Corporation Limited is still the vehicle through which the international conglomerate of interests under that name marches though it is now apparently incorporated formally in the State of Delaware as are many American based businesses for some highly technical but satisfactory reason. It is listed on the Stock Exchanges of New York and Sydney but the family interest of Mr. Murdoch is so large that absolute control of the company and therefore the businesses it operates is entirely vested in him.

The journey to its current international size from its small origins in what is really provincial Australia is a remarkable tale of boldness and vision and much risk taking. Nothing however does Mr. Murdoch more credit than the tale of his major crisis in the growth of the business in 1990 when in the midst of an international recession, it became necessary to do a complete re-organisation of the business's finances. Refinancing an operation of the size of his business involves very often large numbers of organisations and people, merchant banks, accountants and lawyers and will take an extended time to complete. That there was an international recession at the time and that there was a danger of default made the task of re-ordering the finances of the business unusually difficult. This is especially so, as a point to be observed, critical to this discussion, is that all the "ducks" have to line up at once and that any failure with any one of the lenders to consent to a re-arrangement ran the risk of a total collapse in the financial structure with obvious and painful consequences.

As I recall the tale, the re-arrangements were nearly complete, when it was realised that one small bank in the midWest of the United States was refusing to participate in the re-organisation and was calling for its full repayment of its part of the then existing financial arrangements. So large was the total sum involved that there were to be 146 banks across the world involved in the re-ordering and it was mandatory for success that all 146 approve the new arrangements and their participation in them. That was possible but there was one bank whose contribution was small but critical which was refusing to refinance. As all the "ducks" had to be in one line at one time, this was a matter of enormous concern.

It became apparent that 145 banks were involved in the refinancing but that this one

"stand out" bank was endangering the whole operation of refinancing. There was no

alternative but for Mr. Murdoch to take himself to the midWest and meet the proprietor of the bank personally – something utterly unheard of. This he did, as I understand, by knocking on the door of the owner of the bank at his residence and negotiating his salvation into the night. He was successful in doing so but the other side of his success would have been catastrophe. 146 “ducks” would line up and they did – hence the name of this work and of the principle being advanced.

In a work on inspiration and growth, there are several important messages to be taken from this tale. One is the courage to take what the Danish philosopher and theologian of 200 years ago, Soren Kierkegaard, called “the leap of faith” – that wonderful step out into the darkness – either to find a place for a foot or to discover an abyss. An act of courage only to be made by those of great quality – and daring. Second is the need to meet one’s risks head on. There is nothing to be gained by going round in circles to avoid the problem – it has to be met and it has to be met usually immediately. Success is always with the attacker and life teaches that those with the courage to seek their solutions to their disasters usually find precisely what they are looking for. Mr. Murdoch in the case in point knew as well that it was in meeting him as the direct spokesman for the largest interest in the business that the other interest could decide favourably to him. His apparently devastating skills of salesmanship and presentation (charm included – but this is not to criticise this important ingredient in success) worked – he rose to a challenge when he needed to do so and the outcome he needed was his.

All this points to that wonderful quality so often reduced to egoism – self- confidence. Belief in oneself is a totally necessary part of all personal growth – you are the statement of the Eternal in all you are and you should be proud of what you are and free to give it and celebrate it. Anything less is denial.

When you are challenged and there is risk, think of the simple numbers, one, four and six. One hundred and forty-five out of one hundred and forty-six would not have been enough. Only 146 were big enough and it must be for us the same principle of total commitment of all we are to all we are and do.

Success and its rewards are there to be had by the man or woman of stature and capacity and all the other qualities of greatness. Are you big enough?

Christian Revival

The church is in desperate need of revival. Its message is seen to be tired and beyond the needs of modern man. That is the greatest falsehood but I see the church to be so tied up in the knots of its own lack of courage in presenting its message that it is its own worst enemy.

As I have said elsewhere, I owe Anglicanism a huge debt – it gave me the vision of the Eternal Universal – I share the modern wariness of the word “God”. The young man saw a God that allowed him to “dream dreams” and “mount up with wings as eagles” – as God intended. That God did not create us to lead lives of fear and shallowness, to be the victims of the world, but to be the conquerors (“more than conquerors” no less) and to be the men and the women who would be the “lights on the hill.”

My recent experience in Australia both of Anglicanism and of Presbyterianism (you will see that I was educated by the Australian Presbyterians and that my spiritual home is a Presbyterian Seminary in northern San Francisco) was that belief and its practice were flaccid and weak. I left services feeling relieved that the insult to God of the participants in their lack of colour and vigour was over. Something has to be done.

That we are the ones who inhabit the churches Sunday by Sunday is a matter that ought to be self-evident in the quality of our lives. We should be seen externally to be the individuals in whom the God of whom we prattle so endlessly is to be found, alive and guiding with great effect. Our lives should reflect the earthly qualities that are the marks of the vividly spiritually enriched. We should possess a calm and serenity, a contentment, a joy and a sense of rich laughter, an enablement of energy and direction, and a simple purposeful vigour, the qualities surely of the blessed. We must be the creatures of a rich personal compassion, the ones who can see Bonhoeffer’s “nearest *Thou* at hand” – fearlessly and without any thought of reward or price as the one to whom we have a universal duty of unity – true “agape”. We must be the leaders and not the led. I regret that what I see to be self-evident is far from evident. This need not continue.

The church has become far too much the work of men and not nearly enough the work of God. It is so concerned with all the absurd forms of this modern nonsense called “political correctness” (itself not a sign of respect but of fear, its antithesis), it is so interested to see God in terms that are feminine (how completely unnecessary!), and it is so troubled by the issues of the feminisation of the priesthood (does it need a priesthood at all?) and by questions of sexuality that it has forgotten its real purpose. That African bishops may fear the American liberalisation of the church’s view of homosexuality for example may be true for them, but we must recognise that we live in two quite different cultural norms and that political threats of schism are to be

totally disregarded. The church and its worshippers need to rediscover self-confidence in the essential Truth they are offering and being offered – and manifest this in their lives and not merely with their tongues. The preservation of a structure, indeed, may itself prove unimportant.

Essentially, the challenge is for the Church to find its Victorian greatness again, not necessarily as an institution but as the vehicle of the invigoration and enablement of the men and women in the pews. They must be given encouragement to lead lives of enormous constructiveness as the statements of their beliefs – and the experience to flow from it. They must be comforted and guided in living so that they are the leaders of the world and not the led. The church has historically been the powerhouse of Western life and culture – that we are in a third millennium does nought except to inspire us to make sure that all that has gone before is not lost.

This is only to be done when the Church emphasises that its message is of the importance of the individual and that the individual is the statement of God in action. We are so concerned to offer a belief-system about God as the Transcendent that we forget that the Eternal is immanent and that true salvation is deeply interior.

My own journey of life has taken me to an Eastern enquiry and the gentle guidance of Buddhism. It has taught me that God is immanent and that the experience of the God *within*, far from being something externally offered, is the outcome of years of patient meditation. Salvation is not a philosophical debate on the merits of the death of a “Saviour” but the consciousness rarely given or known of an all-enveloping and all-suffusing comfort and balance. The experience to me of meditation is not that of the Eastern *bhagwan* of endless breathing and yogic stretching (I share the guidance of a straight back) but that of a simple practice of an ever enriching and enriched personal composure in silence and stillness with the steady re-ordering of the mind and the emotions to go with it. Something vivid and yet intensely calming has arisen within me as a result that my own perception tells me is the Western experience of what in the East would be called “enlightenment” though I am usually very wary of saying this so plainly for fear of being seen to be egoistical. I have encountered an ever-growing peace and “enablement” – I prefer to see this as “clarity”. I find the whole theological structure of Christianity to be totally otiose: the intimate experience of God in our daily lives is one of absolute order, allied to a vigour and a quality of personal balance which need no explanation.

I am reminded that about 20 years after he was enlightened, the Buddha, in answer to the question of the longer-term worth of his *Dharma*, observed that he did not know whether there was an after-life. He went on, it is reported, to say, that, if there were, his teaching would prepare one for it and, if there were not, one would live better in this life anyway. I find this commentary especially compelling.

I began by observing how immense is my debt to Anglicanism. I saw from the horrors

of the Evangelical "Bible-believing" (inerrancy is a most dangerous idea) teachings of the Diocese of Sydney that God was being sold so short and for years I have sought more clearly to understand what it was that so hurt and disappointed me. In greater age, I find that it is possible to articulate my concerns. The church needs again to find the vision of the God of which it would speak and to inspire its adherents to lives that reflect a completely new dimension of experience, a quality of scope and size so enormous that life is something vivid and rich. We are to be the leaders and not the led, fearless in expressing all that we have come to know as the Truth of the Universe - free and whole and balanced - the men and women who will see the revival of our English-speaking world and our reassertion of our own independence and strength as daily realities. The world is in terrible need and we alone can be its saviours.

Do we have the courage and the strength of belief and of experience? With God's involvement in our consciousness, we most certainly do.

Advertising a Programme

Maxwell Dodd has a great debt to the Anglicanism of his youth.

He was baptised in the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Church Street, West Maitland, New South Wales, on Sunday 14 March 1943 and was confirmed on Sunday 18 August 1957 (the day after he turned 15) in the Parish Church of St. Swithun, Telegraph Road, Pymble, New South Wales. For all his Anglican origins and the comfort of that provenance, he was educated at the Presbyterian Great Public School of Sydney, The Scots College, Victoria Road, Bellevue Hill, New South Wales from which he departed in December 1959 to pursue the professional studies of the law – the obvious vocational calling of one of his – by Australian standards – very privileged origins. He had little difficulty with his professional studies completed under the authority of the Supreme Court of New South Wales and was admitted as a solicitor by that Court on Friday 28 May 1965 when he was still 22. He felt an urge to travel and indeed did so and spent six months in the practice of his profession in a firm which had two offices in East London where he found that his professional *metier* was not the academic understanding of the law but a gift for dealing with people. This finally led to a major career in Sydney as the solicitor who led the life of a barrister where he found to his surprise that for all the differences of the life he knew and that of his criminal clients, he had an odd intuitive gift of crossing social frontiers. This led him to challenge more than ever the beliefs of a church to which he was deeply committed as he found that the comfortable world of Anglicanism in Sydney at its social pinnacle bore no relation to the pain in lives with which he was contending with considerable success in the various courtrooms of Sydney and other centres day to day.

He found however that the professional success he was knowing and it enriched him materially most substantially and allowed a life of wider experience in so many extramural ways was not enough and he withdrew from practice following the retirement of the older man whom he had joined in 1970. With the retirement of the one known – to his horror - as the “older” Max, on 31 December 1978, “young” Max had himself pulled out of it 25 months later. He thought that finding opportunities to meet a new career based on his deep skills of human communication would be straightforward. It proved anything else but that and indeed he was another eight years finding the guidance he was seeking as to his new “call” and its proper expression. It came from the man in charge at the time of the external doctoral programmes of the Presbyterian San Francisco Theological Seminary in San Anselmo, California, whom Max met on Thursday 20 April 1989, the Revd. Dr. Warren Lee, who is now a very close personal friend and source of endless wisdom and support. The advice was simple – “Your ministry is ‘Hope’”. Warren saw that Max was not one to be ordained but that his gifts and experience were for the wider benefit of individuals. What has come since has been a wandering ministry of seeking to offer deeper understanding to all he meets in all parts of the world and the joys of a life well and fully led.

Though Maxwell is Australian born, he has virtually left the country of his birth behind for all its generosity in paying a fortnightly old age pension. He has however recently been back in Australia and was struck with concern and indeed a measure of horror by the flaccidity and lack of vigour in all the presentations he saw of Anglicanism and indeed of the Uniting Church (Australian Presbyterianism merged with Methodism and Congregationalism in 1977). To him, those who have been touched as he has by the inspiration of God (he shares the vision of “deutero-Isaiah” in so many ways) given by the church to a boy so long ago are to be themselves the best evidence not of their faith but of the living highly personal experience of the God to whom that faith has directed them. He wishes to offer this wisdom to the home of Anglicanism in the autumn and the winter and is seeking opportunities to present to congregations a vision of God which is strong colourful and deeply compassionate. Books and materials are available and much more.

Freedom to be Yourself

We are the free statements of a rich living God. As the Franco-Swiss philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, observed so long ago in the opening lines to his work of 1762 - which is really all that is now remembered of him - *Du contrat social*, "Man is born free, and everywhere I see him in chains." How very true.

Rousseau's observations related to the political and social structure of France in the times of Louis XV: his observations 250 years later are just as true of the pressures upon the individual in our modern Western societies to conform and behave.

We have been endlessly socialised and taught to dance to the tune of a world around us. The pressures upon us to meet the requirements of our being parts of a social system are so ingrained and so systematically inculcated into our deepest consciousness that we are the slaves of the world without even recognising it. That the child needs to be educated is not to be denied, and that education is more than merely teaching the child the essentials of language and arithmetic is equally to be asserted. The child needs to learn to be protected from obvious danger and to meet the requirements of living in a world of others where interaction is endless and paramount. The outcome of such training is however so comprehensive that we need to "un-learn" and be "de-hynotised" – those hideous coinages are not mine but the principle is correct. What is worse is that we are so socialised that we do not realise how much of our behaviour is itself put into us without our even knowing whether we were exercising free choice.

That is the essence of the problem. We do need to know how to deal with others and much of our preparation for life is grounded rightly on the needs of others and of a society which functions only when individuals within it understand the principles of cohabitation. We observe the road rules not because the rules are written in concrete but because the proper use by all of the roads needs understanding of proper linking and avoiding. The fact that the road toll is so relatively small is itself proof of the point.

And yet the surrender of our freedom is something that is so subtle and so pervasive. We are so unaware that nearly all that we do has been given us by others and that our meeting the standards required of us has come without our ever giving thought to choice. We are slaves to the world and our freedom is lost.

Freedom to a philosopher (and her handmaiden, liberty, the word used by the political philosopher) proposes a lack of "prior constraint" which includes "restraint." It presupposes that the individual is without any guidance or pressure in the taking of all decisions (often with endless and perhaps conflicting choices) and that the individual is without pressure in the taking of decisions. Guidance may be there and it may have been socially inculcated but that guidance is to be seen only as that – there is no requirement on the decision maker to make any particular choice – his freedom is endless and untainted.

This is why freedom is so important. Only in not being bound to make any decision or to take any particular course of action is freedom to be found and only in the understanding of what those pressures are, will freedom be established. It has to be said that freedom does not deny guidance as to any course of action or the willingness of the individual to take a decision again that has already been taken. Freedom simply connotes that that decision taken *de novo* is a decision where his choices were independently exercised and prior understanding used only as a guide.

The tragedy of Western man is that he has thrown so much of his freedom away in the name of his material strength. I see around me societies whose members are so obedient and so conformist – where they have so little idea of the pressures that have led to their taking decisions of so many kinds – where those decisions may have been different had they been aware of the pressures upon the individual to take any particular course of action. This is so especially apparent, for example, in the world of fashion. Fashions come and go but the pressures upon individuals to wear something or to do something that is so “popular” (those who would take your freedom from you are experts in selling their enslavement as something desirable) are so great that it requires an unusually understanding individual to question them.

What I am suggesting is that far from rejecting all the flavours of life, we simply ask ourselves whether we wish to do or not to do any particular thing as the statement of what we were led to without our being aware of the pressures to such a course. Knowing what leads to courses of action is the basis of freedom as the whole essence of freedom is the marvel of independent choice. We must ask ourselves every moment whether the decisions we are taking are our own free choices or choices being made by training and education, whose purpose has run the course and is now fulfilled. We shall find as we go through the day that there are all manner of decisions that we are taking to which we came without any thought that the thinking behind our decision was not our own and not what we wanted. Again, knowing what leads us to decisions and the choices they represent is in itself the highest freedom.

Freedom to be yourself is the highest of all freedoms. Spiritual teaching speaks of the inner self – in Hindu terms, the Self would be seen to be God or Brahman, and Atman the inner personal self – lower case – but the real discovery is that Brahman and Atman are the same. To have discovered that the Universal is within is to find Freedom unannealed. We are alone and aware – we make decisions that are totally the decisions that reflect our own personal freedom and the right to make the choices that lie behind the exercise of freedom.

To be yourself is not an action of selfishness. All spiritual guidance points to the extraordinary individuality of each one of us – as one Indian master puts it “God does not make carbon copies” – our duty is to explore what that means for each of us. Very few of us ever get to any major point of discovery but the few who do are the masters

of life. The duty of the man of freedom is compassion (to a Buddhist) or “agape” to the Christian – the endless mindfulness of the other in the highest willingness to find unity at all times and in all places – and it is in that freedom that we find the opportunity to lead fulfilled lives that are both deeply satisfying to the individual and richly enlarging to the world. It needs to be said, let me add, that being able to find unity with the other, turns on loving oneself - first. You cannot give what you do not have first within yourself.

Ask of all decisions whether it is a decision that reflects the making of free choice or whether it is the outcome of the programming of another age, inflicted by others (perhaps, even with the best of intentions) but now exhausted and diminishing.

The Freeman or the Freewoman will live well and will meet his or her own being in all the fullness of it. A great challenge of significant daring and much adventure, but, at the end, a life of total satisfaction.

The Burdens of Responsibility

Any discussion of human potential will have to deal, if it is to be honest, with the other side, so to speak, of that potential. It is the ugly word that the world seems to do its best to overlook, responsibility.

It is a word that I hesitate even to define. It acknowledges that we are the creators, moment by moment, of all that we are and shall become, and that all our tomorrows are written in our todays. We are constantly making choices, to do this or to do that, or indeed not to do this or not to do that, and when we are trying hardest to avoid making decisions and living our choices, they are coming back to haunt us, whether we like it or not. I am not entirely comfortable with the Manichean view of good and evil and the Church's passion for sin and death, but I am sure that the Eastern view of "come-back" (one of the many interpretations of that essentially untranslatable word *karma*) is an accurate reflection of the nature of all that we are and all that we do.

The essential element is to grasp that life is unchanging change and that in acknowledging that rich paradox we are simply applying reality to our lives. Either we are going to move with the flow of that change and to welcome it and indeed to find in it sources of adventure and opportunity, or we are going to find ourselves in situations of burden where the dead weight of the anchors we have sought to put down will destroy us. Successful living, and it is a rarity, never ceases to aver that there is constant movement in our situations and that it is in recognising the fact, we find ourselves free. Maturity is the celebration of uncertainty.

Responsibility demands of us a willingness to recall the treasured words of William Ernest Henley, penned in 1875,

*"I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul."*

Remember at all times that the man or woman who is seen to be successful in life in whatever may be his or her calling, from the management of large enterprise or the administration of government or the one whose failures are seen so sadly I find on so many street corners in overwhelmingly prosperous Germany, is there as a result of conscious choice. "To be or not to be" may be one of the most famous lines in all of English literature but it remains the quintessential question for each of us to answer. We are successful either in whatever we are or in whatever we are not, and how we got there is entirely the consequence of our own choices and their manifestations.

One final point to make is that one has to recognise that in the flow of the river of life, there are events over which we have exercised no control and which can exact from us enormous prices. There does seem to be something of good fortune or lack of it in our lives but, whether we like it or not, we are to respond with all that we are to such situations. There are endless stories of human successes against all the odds. These tales have a mythic quality as they remind us of the greatness in all of us, however ill the circumstances in which we may have to manifest that greatness.

I believe in your greatness. The question of larger import, perhaps, is “Do you?”