

The theosophist is not immune to the prevailing tendencies of selfish and materialistic thought and feeling. These faults and weaknesses of the human nature at present are either active in greater or lesser degree, or lie dormant awaiting the right circumstances to exert their influence. There is either the work of forcing oneself out of these grooves and filling them up with right thought and feeling, or the need to be ever mindful of their potentiality. In this way, each one contributes to creating favorable conditions in the future when more aid can be given to individuals and humanity by the Great Founders of the Theosophical Movement.

As W. Q. Judge writes:

“We have, each one of us, to make ourselves a centre of light - a picture gallery from which shall be projected on the astral light such scenes, such influences, such thoughts, as may influence many for good, shall thus arouse a new current, and then finally result in drawing back the great and the good from other spheres, from beyond the earth.” [1]

Our greatest allies in this part of the cycle are perseverance and patience with ourselves and with the law of karma that has absolute sway over the affairs of individuals and humanity.

We may aspire to be companions and co-workers to the best of our capacity with the Elder Brothers of humanity who watch over the progress of the race and do what They can under law. The presence of so many centers of theosophical light, as we now have, is quite a remarkable thing in our age, or any age. However, the number of centers is not the primary importance. Rather, it is the power, radiance and brilliance of the light of the center under our influence that should be the main focus of work.

NOTE:

[1] “Letters That Have Helped Me”, William Q. Judge, The Theosophy Company, Los Angeles, California, 1946, p. 73.

When Action Produces Joy



Delay for “better conditions” or “another life” avails nothing. Our natures were engendered by action through the ages; only by action will they be changed. Conditions will not grow better by delay; they will grow worse - from the standpoint of Soul - and finally end in renunciation of the Path for this life and rebirth in the old darkness for another. The task of reform may seem impossible; but its beginning will never be any more possible than now. TRY!

[From the article “When Action Produces Joy”, by John Garrigues, which is available at www.TheosophyOnline.com .]

According to our readings of life, of time, and of divine law, so will be our actions. Belief governs conduct. It is the yardstick by which we measure the import of events and their value to ourselves. An hour of sunshine is the life of a gnat, a cloud is its tragedy, a drop of rain its extinction. A span of minutes is its standard of values.

It would seem then that religion, which is only another name for philosophy, is actually a standard of values. A religious belief is a yardstick by which we measure the import of events. If we conceive of human life as bounded by birth and by death, with nothingness before and annihilation after, it is obvious that all the events of that life will seem large in inverse proportion to the brevity of the period. A child cries for a broken toy because its conception of life is so narrow as to make the tiny mishap seem a tragedy. Its standard of values is inadequate. Enlarge our time conceptions of life and we dwarf the relative magnitudes of its events and completely change our angle of vision.

In the same way a religious or philosophic conception may change our entire estimate of self-interest. If we accept the idea of a perpetual and conscious individual life, we must at once rearrange our computations of value. If we believe that the perpetual and conscious individual life is governed by a precise law of cause and effect we shall be tranquil under the disabilities that we shall know to be self-created, and we shall be hopeful of a future in which there will be fewer seeds of ill to fructify.

If we recognize the unity of the life that sweeps through the universe we shall be careful to injure none of its manifestations, and we shall recognize that fraternity is not merely a sentiment but a compelling law that cannot be thwarted. And if we perceive the dominance of an unchanging and resistless law that moves inexorably towards its goal we shall have learned to cast out fear from our hearts. All these things are practical achievements. There is no one whom they do not concern. They come within the scope of the average human intellect. And they give to life a confidence, a strength, and a tranquility that can come from no other source.

Therefore it is evident that every man has some kind of a philosophy of life, even though it be unformulated, even though he be unaware of its existence. Every man without exception is trying to be happy, and his life is governed by some policy that he believes will conduce to his happiness. Every man has some time standard, usually the duration of his own life, or even the duration of his youth, by which he measures the importance of the things that happen to him.

Theosophy thus makes a double appeal to the average man. It tries to show him how he may acquire a true and a permanent happiness. And it tries to furnish him with a new time standard so that he may revise the relative values of his daily experiences. But Theosophy seeks to achieve its end, not by the imposition of dogmas nor by the weight of spiritual authority. It asks only for a courageous facing of known facts and for the inferences logically to be drawn from those facts. In other words, it appeals only to universal knowledge and to the reasoning faculty.

Let us then take the two groups of facts most apparent to us, that is to say the facts of consciousness and the facts of experience. It is obvious that consciousness and character are being continually changed by events of experience. Every event that befalls us adds somewhat to the knowledge that governs our future actions. In other words it changes our character, however slightly. And every such change increases our happiness, or detracts from it. So true is this that every man has made for himself a certain classification of the things

that he must not do because they bring unhappiness, and of the things that he ought to do because they bring happiness. He may be wholly wrong in his judgment, he may have based it upon ignorance, but at least he has attempted to reach a judgment, and to discriminate between the things that are good for him and the things that are had for him.

And every experience whether good or evil has changed his character. It is then evident that nature is trying to teach him something, that inasmuch as his character is being constantly changed by experience there must be somewhere in the great mind of nature a destination, a plan, an intention. If we see the foundations and the framework of an unfinished house we know them for exactly what they are, and we may even foresee the ultimate form and appearance of the house when the builder shall have finished his work. We know that somewhere there is an architect's plan, a blue print, that there is purpose and design behind every hammer stroke, that there is no detail too insignificant to find its place. The acorn bursting in the ground is the prediction of the oak tree.

Wherever there is motion or change there also there must be intention, a destination, and an architect's plan. Theosophy asks the average man to look at the changes in his own character, at the praise and blame of conscience which bring happiness and unhappiness, and so to ask himself what is the intention of evolutionary nature toward him, what is it that nature would have him be. In other words, what is the architect's plan of this unfinished human house. Surely there can be no other question so practical as this.

And as soon as we recognize that there is a plan, that we ourselves are uncompleted structures, we see at once that the limits of one earth life are pitifully inadequate for its completion. And it is a plan that can be completed nowhere else but on earth, since it concerns itself mainly with our bearing toward our fellow men. We have been born with certain characters, that is to say with certain tendencies in our bearing toward others. As we live through our lives these characters have been gradually changing by experience. Since experience is thus obviously the only factor in a change of character it is evident that the character with which we are born must have been fashioned at some time by experiences of the same nature as those that are now changing it. And since it is equally evident that our characters are still unfinished structures, far short of nature's design, the process of experiencing must be continued, and continued under like conditions to the present, that is to say, by human contact under earth conditions. And so we reach what may be called the central Theosophic tenet, that all evolution has a destination, and that it proceeds toward that destination through a process of reemodiment or reincarnation in which the law of ethical cause and effect holds sway: "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." And in this there is no dogma, no authority, no supernatural revelation. It is simply an irresistible deduction from obvious facts.

Now it would be possible to argue at great length in support of the contentions **(1)** that there is one, Universal Life sweeping through all the kingdoms of nature and that we ourselves are expressions of that One Life and separated from one another only by the illusions of the selfish personality. **(2)** That the method of evolution is through constant re-embodiments or reincarnations which are knit together by the law of cause and effect, such law assuming an ethical aspect in human evolution and producing such circumstances in each earth life as have been earned by the thoughts and acts of the lives that preceded it. **(3)** That all evolutionary movements are regulated by a precise and cyclic law, and that nowhere in the universe or in human life can there be such a thing as chance or a permanent injustice. It would be easy to show that these great postulates have been the basis of every religion that the world has ever

known and that they are commended alike by reason and by experience. But the present object is not to argue about these things but merely to state them, to leave them for consideration, and to suggest the effect that they must have upon the lives of those who accept them as truths.

The effect must be an immense and a radical one. In the first place they will change all our conceptions of time and therefore of the relative values of the events that move in time. Instead of imagining ourselves as coming at birth from an impenetrable darkness, with darkness for our destination, we shall now see ourselves as being's that have lived for ever, and who will live for ever, and in whom consciousness can never be extinguished even for a moment.

The memory of the brain may fail to bridge the abysses of time, but somewhere within the depths of our being, or rather upon its heights, we shall recognize the existence of a soul in which all memories of the past are stored, all knowledge and all power, and that nothing hides us from that radiance except the self-imposed limitations of personality and the love of self. In the presence of such a realization what room can there be for the paltry ambitions, greeds, fears, and griefs that now fill our tortured lives? Against that stupendous background of time all these things sink into insignificance and to their true values. They seemed large only when we viewed them against a background of a few score years, only when we measured them by the false standards of a few score years. Look at them now against the background of a conscious eternity and forever they lose their power to wound. At last we learn the true value of events, and we are lifted by that new wisdom beyond the reach of personal sorrow. We are no longer as children who cry over broken toys.

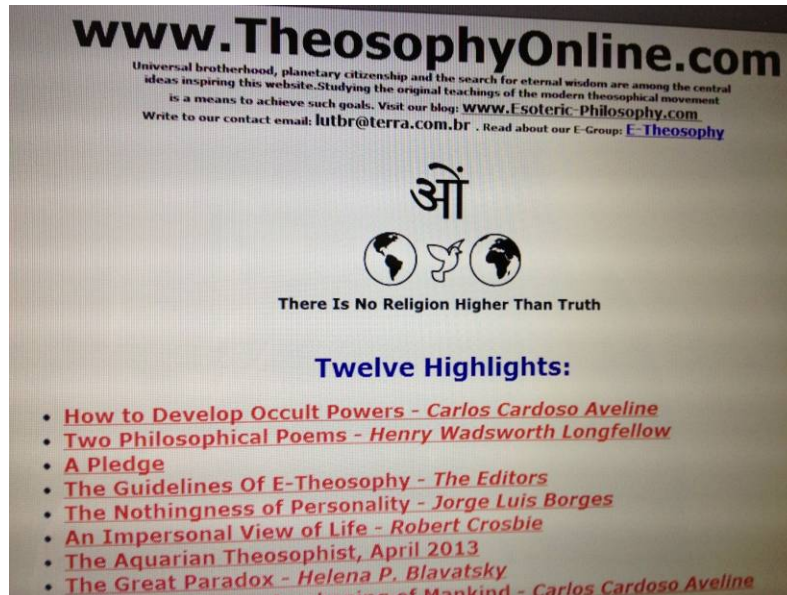
But the Theosophic philosophy will do more than this. The light of law will lift us forever beyond the reach of fear, because we shall know that a cruel or indifferent chance has no part nor lot in our fortunes, that we are masters of our fate and the captain of our soul.

And how pitifully, how abjectly, we now cringe before our fears. We are afraid of poverty, afraid of death, afraid of disease. We imagine ourselves as fortified citadels besieged by a pitiless and hostile nature. Terrors lie in wait for us in the dark places of life, and every corner has a foe. A perpetual paralysis of fear destroys our strength and hides the sunlight by its baleful shadows.

And how needless it all is! With what new confidence we move forward in the light of a law that is merciful because it is just, that declares its presence in the least of the events of our lives, that holds the universe in its grasp for the sake of the human soul, that inflicts pleasure and pain for no other purpose than to point out the only road that leads to happiness. This is no philosophy for the elect. It demands no large learning for its comprehension. It owes nothing to authority or to revelation. Its appeal is to every human being whose eyes are open to the facts of his own life, who can take but one step from the seen to the unseen.

Are we apprehensive that the adoption of a spiritual philosophy will militate against what we call our "success in life?" It would indeed be strange if ignorance were more profitable than knowledge, if weakness were a larger advantage than strength. The greatest of all success in life is reserved for those who know what life is, its origin, purpose, laws and destiny. Strength in our life work comes to those who ally themselves with nature, not to those who resist her: to those who keep her laws, not to those who violate them.

The New Texts in www.TheosophyOnline.com



We reproduce below the monthly report of www.TheosophyOnline.com and associated websites, valid for May 23rd.

There is one book in French, four articles in Italian and 30 texts in Spanish, among which two books. In English, we have **623** articles. These are the eight items published in the period between 22 April and 23 May:

1. **The Cycle of the Teacher** - *John Garrigues*
2. **On Guarding Alertness** - *Acharya Shantideva*
3. **Something Left Undone** - *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*
4. **Geoffrey Farthing and the Algeo Letters** - *Carlos Cardoso Aveline*
5. **Defending the Old Lady from Rome** - *Three Italian Theosophists*
6. **Real Knowledge** - *Damodar K. Mavalankar*
7. **How to Develop Occult Powers** - *Carlos Cardoso Aveline*
8. **The Aquarian Theosophist**, April 2013

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We have undertaken a high mission and a heavy task - not because we think ourselves so eminently fit, but because we see the need and there is no one else to do it; and we also know that we will not be left alone in the doing. So, what we have to give are the salient points, clear and definite (...) so that thought shall be directed to them; to make the points so striking that they cannot be passed over (...); and that they shall stand as facts, and facts only, before the mind, verifiable by anyone who cares enough to do so.

[Robert Crosbie, in "The Friendly Philosopher", Theosophy Co., p. 370.]

On Listening to Our Own Voice

Why Spend Your Life Letting Other People Manipulate You?

Eva Wong

Yang-Chu said:

If you live to be a hundred, it is considered a long life. However, only one in a thousand persons is that lucky. But if we take a person who has lived a hundred years and look at the time he has spent in his life, we will realize that a hundred years is not a long life. Out of these years, childhood and old age take up at least half the time. In addition, half the day he is asleep. Not to mention the hours during the day that he has idled away. What does that leave him? Moreover, if you take out the times when he is ill, sad, confused, suffering, and not feeling good, there isn't much time left that he can enjoy or be free.

Some people think they can find satisfaction in good food, fine clothes, lively music, and sexual pleasure. However, when they have all these things, they are not satisfied. They realize happiness is not simply having their material needs met. Thus, society has set up a system of rewards that go beyond material goods. These include titles, social recognition, status, and political power, all wrapped up in a package called self-fulfillment. Attracted by these prizes and goaded on by social pressure, people spend their short lives tiring body and mind to chase after these goals.

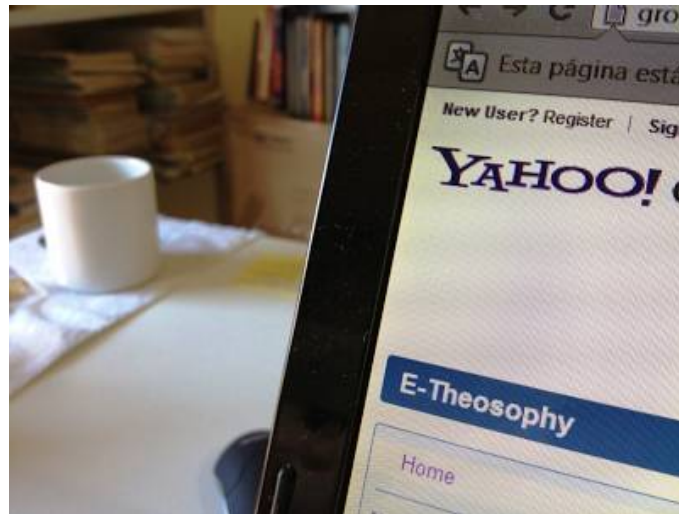
Perhaps this gives them the feeling that they have achieved something in their lives, but in reality they have sacrificed a lot in life. They can no longer see, hear, act, feel, or think from their hearts. Everything they do is dictated by whether it can get them social gains. In the end, they've spent their lives following other people's demands and never lived a life of their own. How different is this from the life of a slave or a prisoner?

The ancients understood that life is only a temporary sojourn in this world, and death a temporary departure. In our short time here, we should listen to our own voices and follow our own hearts. Why not be free and live your own life? Why follow other people's rules and live to please others? When something enjoyable comes your way, you should enjoy it fully. Don't be imprisoned by name or title, for social conventions can lead you away from the natural order of things. It doesn't matter whether you will be remembered in generations ahead, because you will not be there to see it.

Why spend your life letting other people manipulate you just to get a name and reputation? Why not let your life be guided by your own heart and live without the burdens of fame and recognition?

[The above text is reproduced from the volume "*Lieh-Tzu, A Taoist Guide to Practical Living*", by Eva Wong, Shambhala Dragon Editions, Boston and London, 2001, 247 pp., pp. 190-191, Chapter 73. Original title, given by Eva Wong: "Life - Temporarily Staying in the World; Death - Temporarily Leaving".]

From *E-Theosophy*, the Yahoo E-Group: How the Light Will be Shed



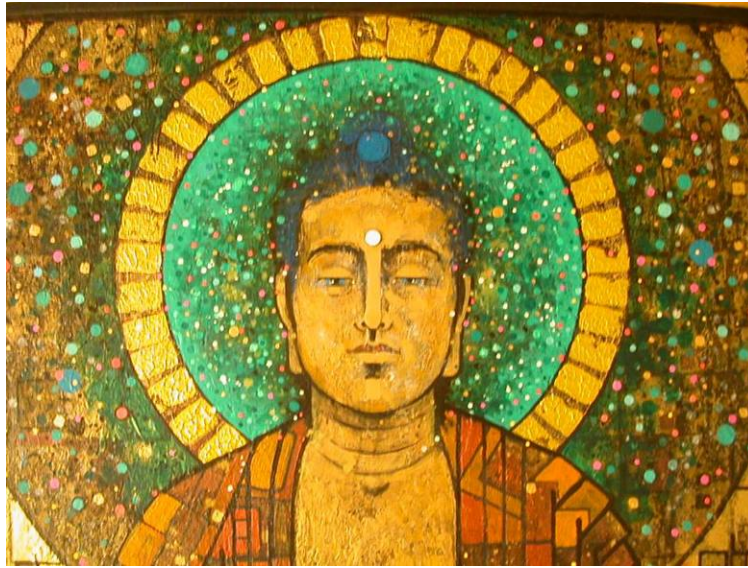
“The sun of Theosophy must shine for all, not for a part. There is more of this movement than you have yet had an inkling of, and the work of the T.S. is linked in with similar work that is secretly going on in all parts of the world. Even in the T.S. there is a division, managed by a Greek Brother about which not a person in the Society has a suspicion excepting the old woman and Olcott; and even he only knows it is progressing, and occasionally executes an order I send him in connection with it. (...) Europe will not be overlooked, never fear; but perhaps you even may not anticipate *how* the light will be shed there.”

[From ‘The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett’, T.U.P., Letter XLVII p. 271.]

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**Examine the complete collection of
“The Aquarian Theosophist”
at www.TheosophyOnline.com .**

Let's Live Happily...



“Let us, then, live happily we who possess nothing. Let us live like the Shining Ones nourished on joy. Victory breeds hatred; the vanquished dwell in suffering; but the tranquil man disregarding both victory and defeat lives happily.” [The Dhammapada]

[From the article “All Life Is Good”, by Carlos Cardoso Aveline, which can be read at www.TheosophyOnline.com .]

On Learning From Everything



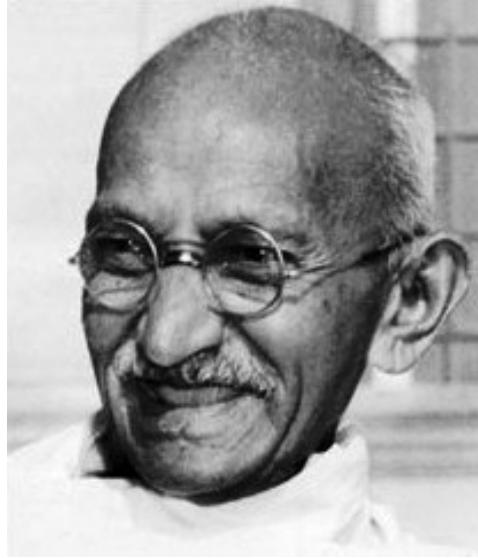
“Learn from all thou comest in contact with. Learn from the wicked as from the good; do, as the wise bee doeth, which extracts sweet honey from the bitterest plant, truly.”

[From the text “Seven Mongolian Aphorisms”, by Helena P. Blavatsky, which is available at www.TheosophyOnline.com .]

Reflections on Gandhi

Saints Should Be Judged Guilty Until They Are Proved Innocent

George Orwell



George Orwell (left) writes a unique and polemical essay on Mahatma Gandhi

Saints should always be judged guilty until they are proved innocent, but the tests that have to be applied to them are not, of course, the same in all cases.

In Gandhi's case the questions one feels inclined to ask are: to what extent was Gandhi moved by vanity - by the consciousness of himself as a humble, naked old man, sitting on a praying mat and shaking empires by sheer spiritual power - and to what extent did he compromise his own principles by entering politics, which of their nature are inseparable from coercion and fraud?

To give a definite answer one would have to study Gandhi's acts and writings in immense detail, for his whole life was a sort of pilgrimage in which every act was significant. But this partial autobiography, which ends in the nineteen-twenties, is strong evidence in his favor, all the more because it covers what he would have called the unregenerate part of his life and reminds one that inside the saint, or near-saint, there was a very shrewd, able person who could, if he had chosen, have been a brilliant success as a lawyer, an administrator or perhaps even a businessman.

At about the time when the autobiography first appeared I remember reading its opening chapters in the ill-printed pages of some Indian newspaper. They made a good impression on me, which Gandhi himself at that time did not. The things that one associated with him - home-spun cloth, "soul forces" and vegetarianism - were unappealing, and his medievalist program was obviously not viable in a backward, starving, over-populated country. It was also apparent that the British were making use of him, or thought they were making use of

him. Strictly speaking, as a Nationalist, he was an enemy, but since in every crisis he would exert himself to prevent violence - which, from the British point of view, meant preventing any effective action whatever - he could be regarded as "our man". In private this was sometimes cynically admitted. The attitude of the Indian millionaires was similar. Gandhi called upon them to repent, and naturally they preferred him to the Socialists and Communists who, given the chance, would actually have taken their money away. How reliable such calculations are in the long run is doubtful; as Gandhi himself says, "in the end deceivers deceive only themselves"; but at any rate the gentleness with which he was nearly always handled was due partly to the feeling that he was useful. The British Conservatives only became really angry with him when, as in 1942, he was in effect turning his non-violence against a different conqueror.

But I could see even then that the British officials who spoke of him with a mixture of amusement and disapproval also genuinely liked and admired him, after a fashion. Nobody ever suggested that he was corrupt, or ambitious in any vulgar way, or that anything he did was actuated by fear or malice. In judging a man like Gandhi one seems instinctively to apply high standards, so that some of his virtues have passed almost unnoticed. For instance, it is clear even from the autobiography that his natural physical courage was quite outstanding: the manner of his death was a later illustration of this, for a public man who attached any value to his own skin would have been more adequately guarded. Again, he seems to have been quite free from that maniacal suspiciousness which, as E. M. Forster rightly says in *A Passage to India*, is the besetting Indian vice, as hypocrisy is the British vice. Although no doubt he was shrewd enough in detecting dishonesty, he seems wherever possible to have believed that other people were acting in good faith and had a better nature through which they could be approached. And though he came of a poor middle-class family, started life rather unfavorably, and was probably of unimpressive physical appearance, he was not afflicted by envy or by the feeling of inferiority. Color feeling when he first met it in its worst form in South Africa, seems rather to have astonished him. Even when he was fighting what was in effect a color war, he did not think of people in terms of race or status. The governor of a province, a cotton millionaire, a half-starved Dravidian coolie, a British private soldier were all equally human beings, to be approached in much the same way. It is noticeable that even in the worst possible circumstances, as in South Africa when he was making himself unpopular as the champion of the Indian community, he did not lack European friends.

Written in short lengths for newspaper serialization, the autobiography is not a literary masterpiece, but it is the more impressive because of the commonplaceness of much of its material. It is well to be reminded that Gandhi started out with the normal ambitions of a young Indian student and only adopted his extremist opinions by degrees and, in some cases, rather unwillingly. There was a time, it is interesting to learn, when he wore a top hat, took dancing lessons, studied French and Latin, went up the Eiffel Tower and even tried to learn the violin - all this was the idea of assimilating European civilization as thoroughly as possible. He was not one of those saints who are marked out by their phenomenal piety from childhood onwards, nor one of the other kind who forsake the world after sensational debaucheries. He makes full confession of the misdeeds of his youth, but in fact there is not much to confess. As a frontispiece to the book there is a photograph of Gandhi's possessions at the time of his death. The whole outfit could be purchased for about 5 pounds, and Gandhi's sins, at least his fleshly sins, would make the same sort of appearance if placed all in one heap. A few cigarettes, a few mouthfuls of meat, a few annas pilfered in childhood from the maidservant, two visits to a brothel (on each occasion he got away without "doing anything"), one narrowly escaped lapse with his landlady in Plymouth, one outburst of temper - that is about the whole collection.

Almost from childhood onwards he had a deep earnestness, an attitude ethical rather than religious, but, until he was about thirty, no very definite sense of direction. His first entry into anything describable as public life was made by way of vegetarianism. Underneath his less ordinary qualities one feels all the time the solid middle-class businessmen who were his ancestors. One feels that even after he had abandoned personal ambition he must have been a resourceful, energetic lawyer and a hard-headed political organizer, careful in keeping down expenses, an adroit handler of committees and an indefatigable chaser of subscriptions. His character was an extraordinarily mixed one, but there was almost nothing in it that you can put your finger on and call bad, and I believe that even Gandhi's worst enemies would admit that he was an interesting and unusual man who enriched the world simply by being alive. Whether he was also a lovable man, and whether his teachings can have much for those who do not accept the religious beliefs on which they are founded, I have never felt fully certain.

Of late years it has been the fashion to talk about Gandhi as though he were not only sympathetic to the Western Left-wing movement, but were integrally part of it. Anarchists and pacifists, in particular, have claimed him for their own, noticing only that he was opposed to centralism and State violence and ignoring the other-worldly, anti-humanist tendency of his doctrines. But one should, I think, realize that Gandhi's teachings cannot be squared with the belief that Man is the measure of all things and that our job is to make life worth living on this earth, which is the only earth we have. They make sense only on the assumption that God exists and that the world of solid objects is an illusion to be escaped from. It is worth considering the disciplines which Gandhi imposed on himself and which - though he might not insist on every one of his followers observing every detail - he considered indispensable if one wanted to serve either God or humanity. First of all, no meat-eating, and if possible no animal food in any form. (Gandhi himself, for the sake of his health, had to compromise on milk, but seems to have felt this to be a backsliding.) No alcohol or tobacco, and no spices or condiments even of a vegetable kind, since food should be taken not for its own sake but solely in order to preserve one's strength. Secondly, if possible, no sexual intercourse. If sexual intercourse must happen, then it should be for the sole purpose of begetting children and presumably at long intervals. Gandhi himself, in his middle thirties, took the vow of brahmacharya, which means not only complete chastity but the elimination of sexual desire. This condition, it seems, is difficult to attain without a special diet and frequent fasting. One of the dangers of milk-drinking is that it is apt to arouse sexual desire. And finally - this is the cardinal point - for the seeker after goodness there must be no close friendships and no exclusive loves whatever.

Close friendships, Gandhi says, are dangerous, because "friends react on one another" and through loyalty to a friend one can be led into wrong-doing. This is unquestionably true. Moreover, if one is to love God, or to love humanity as a whole, one cannot give one's preference to any individual person. This again is true, and it marks the point at which the humanistic and the religious attitude cease to be reconcilable. To an ordinary human being, love means nothing if it does not mean loving some people more than others. The autobiography leaves it uncertain whether Gandhi behaved in an inconsiderate way to his wife and children, but at any rate it makes clear that on three occasions he was willing to let his wife or a child die rather than administer the animal food prescribed by the doctor. It is true that the threatened death never actually occurred, and also that Gandhi - with, one gathers, a good deal of moral pressure in the opposite direction - always gave the patient the choice of staying alive at the price of committing a sin: still, if the decision had been solely his own, he would have forbidden the animal food, whatever the risks might be. There must, he says, be some limit to what we will do in order to remain alive, and the limit is well on this side of

chicken broth. This attitude is perhaps a noble one, but, in the sense which - I think - most people would give to the word, it is inhuman. The essence of being human is that one does not seek perfection, that one is sometimes willing to commit sins for the sake of loyalty, that one does not push asceticism to the point where it makes friendly intercourse impossible, and that one is prepared in the end to be defeated and broken up by life, which is the inevitable price of fastening one's love upon other human individuals. No doubt alcohol, tobacco, and so forth, are things that a saint must avoid, but sainthood is also a thing that human beings must avoid. There is an obvious retort to this, but one should be wary about making it. In this yogi-ridden age, it is too readily assumed that "non-attachment" is not only better than a full acceptance of earthly life, but that the ordinary man only rejects it because it is too difficult: in other words, that the average human being is a failed saint. It is doubtful whether this is true. Many people genuinely do not wish to be saints, and it is probable that some who achieve or aspire to sainthood have never felt much temptation to be human beings. If one could follow it to its psychological roots, one would, I believe, find that the main motive for "non-attachment" is a desire to escape from the pain of living, and above all from love, which, sexual or non-sexual, is hard work. But it is not necessary here to argue whether the other-worldly or the humanistic ideal is "higher". The point is that they are incompatible. One must choose between God and Man, and all "radicals" and "progressives", from the mildest Liberal to the most extreme Anarchist, have in effect chosen Man.

However, Gandhi's pacifism can be separated to some extent from his other teachings. Its motive was religious, but he claimed also for it that it was a definitive technique, a method, capable of producing desired political results. Gandhi's attitude was not that of most Western pacifists. *Satyagraha*, first evolved in South Africa, was a sort of non-violent warfare, a way of defeating the enemy without hurting him and without feeling or arousing hatred. It entailed such things as civil disobedience, strikes, lying down in front of railway trains, enduring police charges without running away and without hitting back, and the like. Gandhi objected to "passive resistance" as a translation of *Satyagraha*: in Gujarati, it seems, the word means "firmness in the truth".

In his early days Gandhi served as a stretcher-bearer on the British side in the Boer War, and he was prepared to do the same again in the war of 1914-18. Even after he had completely abjured violence he was honest enough to see that in war it is usually necessary to take sides. He did not - indeed, since his whole political life centred round a struggle for national independence, he could not - take the sterile and dishonest line of pretending that in every war both sides are exactly the same and it makes no difference who wins. Nor did he, like most Western pacifists, specialize in avoiding awkward questions. In relation to the late war [1], one question that every pacifist had a clear obligation to answer was:

"What about the Jews? Are you prepared to see them exterminated? If not, how do you propose to save them without resorting to war?"

I must say that I have never heard, from any Western pacifist, an honest answer to this question, though I have heard plenty of evasions, usually of the "you're another" type. But it so happens that Gandhi was asked a somewhat similar question in 1938 and that his answer is on record in Mr. Louis Fischer's "Gandhi and Stalin". According to Mr. Fischer, Gandhi's view was that the German Jews ought to commit collective suicide, which "would have aroused the world and the people of Germany to Hitler's violence." After the war he justified himself: the Jews had been killed anyway, and might as well have died significantly. One has the impression that this attitude staggered even so warm an admirer as Mr. Fischer, but Gandhi was merely being honest. If you are not prepared to take life, you must often be

prepared for lives to be lost in some other way. When, in 1942, he urged non-violent resistance against a Japanese invasion, he was ready to admit that it might cost several million deaths.

At the same time there is reason to think that Gandhi, who after all was born in 1869, did not understand the nature of totalitarianism and saw everything in terms of his own struggle against the British government. The important point here is not so much that the British treated him forbearingly as that he was always able to command publicity. As can be seen from the phrase quoted above, he believed in “arousing the world”, which is only possible if the world gets a chance to hear what you are doing. It is difficult to see how Gandhi’s methods could be applied in a country where opponents of the regime disappear in the middle of the night and are never heard of again. Without a free press and the right of assembly, it is impossible not merely to appeal to outside opinion, but to bring a mass movement into being, or even to make your intentions known to your adversary. Is there a Gandhi in Russia at this moment? And if there is, what is he accomplishing? [2] The Russian masses could only practise civil disobedience if the same idea happened to occur to all of them simultaneously, and even then, to judge by the history of the Ukraine famine, it would make no difference. But let it be granted that non-violent resistance can be effective against one’s own government, or against an occupying power: even so, how does one put it into practise internationally? Gandhi’s various conflicting statements on the late war seem to show that he felt the difficulty of this. Applied to foreign politics, pacifism either stops being pacifist or becomes appeasement. Moreover the assumption, which served Gandhi so well in dealing with individuals, that all human beings are more or less approachable and will respond to a generous gesture, needs to be seriously questioned. It is not necessarily true, for example, when you are dealing with lunatics. Then the question becomes: Who is sane? Was Hitler sane? And is it not possible for one whole culture to be insane by the standards of another? And, so far as one can gauge the feelings of whole nations, is there any apparent connection between a generous deed and a friendly response? Is gratitude a factor in international politics?

These and kindred questions need discussion, and need it urgently, in the few years left to us before somebody presses the button and the rockets begin to fly. [3] It seems doubtful whether civilization can stand another major war, and it is at least thinkable that the way out lies through non-violence. It is Gandhi’s virtue that he would have been ready to give honest consideration to the kind of question that I have raised above; and, indeed, he probably did discuss most of these questions somewhere or other in his innumerable newspaper articles. One feels of him that there was much he did not understand, but not that there was anything that he was frightened of saying or thinking. I have never been able to feel much liking for Gandhi, but I do not feel sure that as a political thinker he was wrong in the main, nor do I believe that his life was a failure. It is curious that when he was assassinated, many of his warmest admirers exclaimed sorrowfully that he had lived just long enough to see his life work in ruins, because India was engaged in a civil war which had always been foreseen as one of the byproducts of the transfer of power. But it was not in trying to smooth down Hindu-Moslem rivalry that Gandhi had spent his life. His main political objective, the peaceful ending of British rule, had after all been attained. As usual the relevant facts cut across one another. On the other hand, the British did get out of India without fighting, an event which very few observers indeed would have predicted until about a year before it happened. On the other hand, this was done by a Labour government, and it is certain that a Conservative government, especially a government headed by Churchill, would have acted differently. But if, by 1945, there had grown up in Britain a large body of opinion sympathetic to Indian independence, how far was this due to Gandhi’s personal influence? And if, as may

