

WE NEED THEIR VOICES TODAY!

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May 31, 2017

## Introduction

This book is a collection of biographical sketches showing people whose wise voices from the past can help to guide us today. All of the women and men, brief glimpses of whose lives and ideas are portrayed here, gave a high place to compassion. None of them was a slave to greed. We need their voices today!

### Compassion and Greed: Two sides of Human Nature

Humans are capable of great compassion and unselfishness. Mothers and fathers make many sacrifices for the sake of their families. Kind teachers help us through childhood, and show us the right path. Doctors and nurses devote themselves to the welfare of their patients.

Sadly there is another, side to human nature, a darker side. Human history is stained with the blood of wars and genocides. Today, this dark, aggressive side of human nature threatens to plunge our civilization into an all-destroying thermonuclear war.

Humans often exhibit kindness to those who are closest to themselves, to their families and friends, to their own social group or nation. By contrast, the terrible aggression seen in wars and genocides is directed towards outsiders. Human nature seems to exhibit what might be called “tribalism”: altruism towards one’s own group; aggression towards outsiders. Today this tendency towards tribalism threatens both human civilization and the biosphere.

Greed, in particular the greed of corporations and billionaire oligarchs, is driving human civilization and the biosphere towards disaster.

The greed of giant fossil fuel corporations is driving us towards a tipping point after which human efforts to control climate change will be futile because feedback loops will have taken over. The greed of the military industrial complex is driving us towards a Third World War that might develop into a catastrophic thermonuclear war. The greed of our financial institutions is also driving us towards economic collapse, as we see in the case of Greece.

Until the start of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries, human society maintained a more or less sustainable relationship with nature. However, with the beginning of the industrial era, traditional ways of life, containing elements of both social and environmental ethics, were replaced



Figure 1: *Greed is driving us towards disaster.*

by the money-centered, growth-oriented life of today, from which these vital elements are missing.

According to the followers of Adam Smith (1723-1790), self-interest (even greed) is a sufficient guide to human economic actions. The passage of time has shown that Smith was right in many respects. The free market, which he advocated, has turned out to be the optimum prescription for economic growth. However, history has also shown that there is something horribly wrong or incomplete about the idea that self-interest alone, uninfluenced by ethical and ecological considerations, and totally free from governmental intervention, can be the main motivating force of a happy and just society. There has also proved to be something terribly wrong with the concept of unlimited economic growth.

The Industrial Revolution marked the start of massive human use of fossil



Figure 2: ... *but compassion can save us.*

fuels. The stored energy from several hundred million years of plant growth began to be used at roughly a million times the rate at which it had been formed. The effect on human society was like that of a narcotic. There was a euphoric (and totally unsustainable) surge of growth of both population and industrial production. Meanwhile, the carbon released into the atmosphere from the burning of fossil fuels began to duplicate the conditions which led to the 5 geologically-observed mass extinctions, during each of which more than half of all living species disappeared forever.

The Stern Report Discussion Paper of 2006 stated that “Melting of permafrost in the Arctic could lead to the release of huge quantities of methane. Dieback of the Amazon forest could mean that the region starts to emit rather than to absorb greenhouse gases. These feedbacks could lead to warming that is at least twice as fast as current high-emission projections, leading to temperatures higher than seen in the last 50 million years.”

The greed of giant fossil fuel corporations has recently led them to conduct

large-scale advertising campaigns to convince the public that anthropogenic climate change is not real. These corporations own vast oil, coal and gas reserves that must be kept in the ground if we are to avoid catastrophic global warming. It does not seem to bother the fossil fuel giants that if the earth is made uninhabitable, future generations of both humans and animals will perish.

When the United Nations was established in 1945, the purpose of the organization was to abolish the institution of war. This goal was built into many of the articles of the UN Charter. Accordingly, throughout the world, many War Departments were renamed and became Departments of Defense. But the very name is a lie. In an age of nuclear threats and counter-threats, populations are by no means protected. Ordinary citizens are just hostages in a game for power and money. It is all about greed.

Why is war continually threatened? Why is Russia threatened? Why is war with Iran threatened? Why fan the flames of conflict with China? Is it to protect civilians? Absolutely not! In a thermonuclear war, hundreds of millions of civilians would die horribly everywhere in the world, also in neutral countries. What is really being protected are the profits of arms manufacturers. As long as there are tensions; as long as there is a threat of war, military budgets are safe; and the profits of arms makers are safe. The people in several democracies, for example the United States, do not rule at the moment. Greed rules.

Greed and lack of ethics are built into the structure of corporations. By law, the Chief Executive Officer of a corporation must be entirely motivated by the collective greed of the stockholders. He must maximize profits. Nothing must count except the bottom line. If the CEO abandons this single-minded chase after corporate profits for ethical reasons, or for the sake of humanity or the biosphere or the future, he (or she) must, by law, be fired and replaced.

Occasionally, for the sake of their public image, corporations seem to do something for other motives than their own bottom line, but it is usually window dressing. For example, Shell claims to be supporting research on renewable energy. Perhaps there is indeed a small renewable energy laboratory somewhere in that vast corporation; but the real interest of the organization is somewhere else. Shell is sending equipment on a large scale to drill for more and more environment-destroying oil in the Arctic.

What does Christianity say about greed? Wikipedia states that “The seven deadly sins, also known as capital vices or cardinal sins, is a classi-

fication of vices (part of Christian ethics) that has been used since early Christian times to educate and instruct Christians concerning fallen humanity's tendency to sin. In the currently recognized version, the sins are usually given as wrath, greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy and gluttony. Each is a form of Idolatry-of-Self wherein the subjective reigns over the objective."

Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote: "Greed is a sin against God, just as all mortal sins, in as much as man condemns things eternal for the sake of temporal things".

In the New Testament, we can find many passages condemning greed, for example:

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Timothy 6:10

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal." Mathew 6:19

In his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, and on his recent visit to South America, Pope Francis has spoken strongly against economic activity that lacks both social and environmental ethics.

Much depends on whether we are able to break the power that corporations and extremely rich oligarchs now hold over our governments and our mass media. Pope Francis has shown by example what a world leader of courage and honesty can do. Most of us are not in such a position, but each person can do his or her best to restore democracy where it has been lost to corporate money and greed. If the mass media have sold themselves to the highest bidder, we can make our own media. If most politicians are corrupt, we can make our own political movements. As Shelly said, "We are many, they are few".

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# Chapter 1

## Saint Francis of Assisi

### The life of Saint Francis

Saint Francis of Assisi was born in 1181 in the Italian hilltop town of Assisi. His father, Pietro di Bernardone, was a prosperous silk merchant, and his mother Pica de Bourlemont, was a noblewoman from Provence. Saint Francis was originally called Giovanni, but his father later renamed him Francesco because of his successful business dealings in France and his admiration for all things French.

After leading the ordinary (somewhat dissolute) life of a wealthy young man of that period, Saint Francis underwent a religious conversion, following which he renounced his inheritance and embraced a life of poverty. Although not ordained as a priest, he began teaching what he believed to be the true Christian message. He soon acquired a small group of followers, and he traveled with them to Rome to ask Pope Innocent III for permission to found a new religious order. During his life, Saint Francis founded three religious orders.

Saint Francis continued to preach, and is even said to have preached to birds and animals, whom he regarded as his sisters and brothers. His attitude towards nature can be seen in his “Canticle of the Sun”:

### *Canticle of the Sun*

*Most High, all powerful, good Lord,  
Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor,  
and all blessing.*

*To You alone, Most High, do they belong,  
and no man is worthy to mention Your name.*



Figure 1.1: *Saint Francis preaching to the birds in a painting by Giotto (public domain).*

*Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures,  
especially through my lord Brother Sun,  
who brings the day; and you give light through him.  
And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor!  
Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.*

*Praise be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon  
and the stars, in heaven you formed them  
clear and precious and beautiful.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,  
and through the air, cloudy and serene,  
and every kind of weather through which  
You give sustenance to Your creatures.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,  
which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,  
through whom you light the night and he is beautiful  
and playful and robust and strong.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth,  
who sustains us and governs us and who produces  
varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.*

*Praised be You, my Lord,  
through those who give pardon for Your love,  
and bear infirmity and tribulation.*

*Blessed are those who endure in peace  
for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.*

*Praised be You, my Lord,  
through our Sister Bodily Death,  
from whom no living man can escape.*

*Woe to those who die in mortal sin.  
Blessed are those whom death will  
find in Your most holy will,  
for the second death shall do them no harm.*

*Praise and bless my Lord,  
and give Him thanks  
and serve Him with great humility.*

## **Canonization**

Pope Gregory IX canonized Francis on 16 July 1228. Along with Saint Catherine of Sienna, he was designated Patron saint of Italy. He later became associated with patronage of animals and the natural environment, and it became customary for Catholic and Anglican churches to hold ceremonies blessing animals on his feast day of 4 October.

### ***A prayer of Saint Francis***

*Blessed is he who loves and does not therefore desire to be loved;  
Blessed is he who fears and does not therefore desire to be feared;  
Blessed is he who serves and does not therefore desire to be served;  
Blessed is he who behaves well toward others and does not desire that others  
behave well toward him;*

**Saint Francis, friend of all life on earth, friend of the earth itself,  
true interpreter of Christian ethics, we need your voice today!**

## Chapter 2

# William Blake

### Education as an engraver and printmaker

William Blake was born in 1757 in the Soho district of London. He was the third of seven children, two of whom died in infancy. His parents, who were English Dissenters, seem to have been reasonable wealthy during his childhood, since his father was able to purchase many books for him. Among these were books of engravings and drawings through which Blake became familiar with the works of Michelangelo, Raphael and Albrecht Dürer.

Recognizing their son's extremely independent temperament and his gifts as an artist, his parents sent him to an ordinary school only long enough to learn reading and writing, after which he was tutored at home by his mother, and later apprenticed to an engraver and printmaker. After he had finished his apprenticeship, the young Blake became a student at the Royal Academy. Finally, he opened his own engraving and printmaking shop.

Blake continued to read avidly on topics of all kinds, but was most influenced by his studies of the Bible.

### Marriage

In 1782, while recovering from the pain of a rejected marriage proposal, Blake met Catherine Boucher, who was five years his junior. He told Catherine about the pain he had experienced and asked "Do you pity me?" When she answered that she did, Blake replied "Then I love you".

Blake's marriage to Catherine was an extremely happy one. She was illiterate, but he taught her to read and write. Later he also trained her as an engraver. She was an invaluable help to him, and she lifted his spirits whenever he was burdened by misfortunes. She said of her husband, "He is always in Heaven".

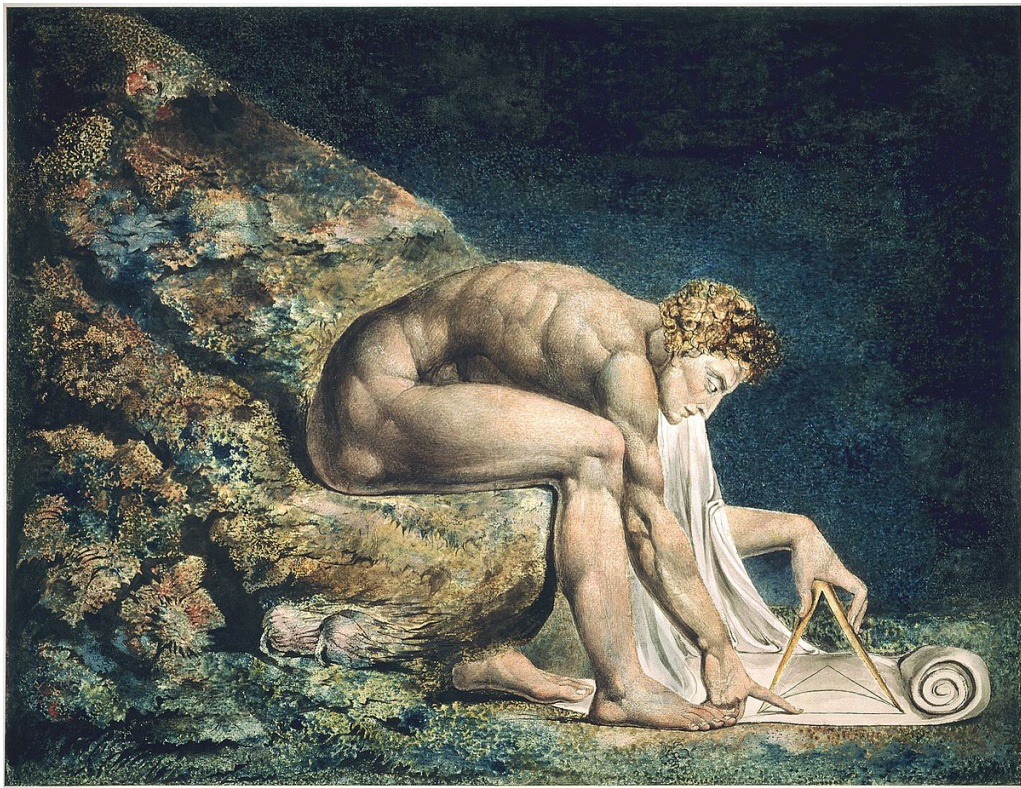


Figure 2.1: *Newton depicted in a print by William Blake (public domain).*



## Political activity

William Blake's first collection of poems, *Poetical Sketches*, was printed around 1783. After his father's death, Blake and former fellow apprentice James Parker opened a print shop in 1784, and began working with radical publisher Joseph Johnson. Johnson's house was a meeting-place for some leading English intellectual dissidents of the time: theologian and scientist Joseph Priestley, philosopher Richard Price, artist John Henry Fuseli, early feminist Mary Wollstonecraft and English-American revolutionary Thomas Paine. Along with William Wordsworth and William Godwin, Blake had great hopes for the French and American revolutions, but despaired with the rise of Robespierre and the Reign of Terror in France.

Blake illustrated *Original Stories from Real Life* (2nd edition, 1791) by Mary Wollstonecraft. They seem to have shared some views on sexual equality and the institution of marriage, but there is no evidence proving without doubt that they actually met. In 1793 Blake published *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, in which he condemned the cruel absurdity of enforced marriage without love and defended the right of women to complete self-fulfilment.

## Some verses from *Auguries of Innocence*

*To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
 And a Heaven in a Wild Flower  
 Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
 And Eternity in an hour  
 A Robin Red breast in a Cage  
 Puts all Heaven in a Rage  
 A Dove house filled with Doves & Pigeons  
 Shudders Hell thr' all its regions  
 A dog starvd at his Masters Gate  
 Predicts the ruin of the State  
 A Horse misusd upon the Road  
 Calls to Heaven for Human blood  
 Each outcry of the hunted Hare  
 A fibre from the Brain does tear  
 A Skylark wounded in the wing  
 A Cherubim does cease to sing  
 The Game Cock clipd & armd for fight  
 Does the Rising Sun affright  
 Every Wolfs & Lions howl  
 Raises from Hell a Human Soul*

*The wild deer, wandring here & there  
Keeps the Human Soul from Care  
The Lamb misusd breeds Public Strife  
And yet forgives the Butchers knife  
The Bat that flits at close of Eve  
Has left the Brain that wont Believe  
The Owl that calls upon the Night  
Speaks the Unbelievers fright  
He who shall hurt the little Wren  
Shall never be belovd by Men  
He who the Ox to wrath has moved  
Shall never be by Woman loved  
The wanton Boy that kills the Fly  
Shall feel the Spiders enmity  
He who torments the Chafers Sprite  
Weaves a Bower in endless Night  
The Catterpillar on the Leaf  
Repeats to thee thy Mothers grief  
Kill not the Moth nor Butterfly  
For the Last Judgment draweth nigh  
He who shall train the Horse to War  
Shall never pass the Polar Bar  
The Beggars Dog & Widows Cat  
Feed them & thou wilt grow fat  
The Gnat that sings his Summers Song  
Poison gets from Slanders tongue  
The poison of the Snake & Newt  
Is the sweat of Envys Foot  
The poison of the Honey Bee  
Is the Artists Jealousy  
The Princes Robes & Beggars Rags  
Are Toadstools on the Misers Bags  
A Truth thats told with bad intent  
Beats all the Lies you can invent  
The Whore & Gambler by the State  
Licencd build that Nations Fate  
The Harlots cry from Street to Street  
Shall weave Old Englands winding Sheet  
The Winners Shout the Losers Curse  
Dance before dead Englands Hearse  
Every Night & every Morn*



*Some to Misery are Born  
Every Morn and every Night  
Some are Born to sweet delight  
Some are Born to sweet delight  
Some are Born to Endless Night.*

### ***Jerusalem***

*And did those feet in ancient time  
Walk upon England's mountains green?  
And was the holy Lamb of God  
On England's pleasant pastures seen?*

*And did the Countenance Divine  
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?  
And was Jerusalem builded here  
Among these dark Satanic Mills?*

*Bring me my bow of burning gold!  
Bring me my arrows of desire!  
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!  
Bring me my chariot of fire!*

*I will not cease from mental fight,  
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In England's green and pleasant land.*

### ***London***

*I wandered through each chartered street  
Near which the chartered Thames doth flow.  
A mark in every face I meet,  
marks of weakness, marks of woe.*

*In every cry of every man,  
In every infant's cry of fear,  
In every voice, in every ban,*

*The mind-forged manacles I hear.*

*How the chimney-sweeper's cry  
Every blackening church appalls,  
And how the hapless soldier's sigh  
Runs in blood down palace-walls.*

*But most, through midnight streets I hear  
How the youthful harlot's curse  
Blasts the new-born infant's tear,  
And blights with plagues the marriage-hearse.*

**William Blake, sublime visionary poet and artist, voice of the poor,  
voice of nature, we need your voice today!**

# Chapter 3

## Thomas Paine

### Early life

Thomas Paine was born in 1737 in Thetford, Norfolk, England. His father was a manufacturer of rope stays used on ships, and after attending grammar school, Paine was apprenticed to his father. Later, he held a variety of positions in England, including excise officer and school-teacher.

Paine also opened a tobacco shop, but it failed, and the resulting financial difficulties put Paine in danger of debtor's prison. He was saved from this fate by Benjamin Franklin, to whom he had been introduced by a fellow excise officer. Franklin suggested to Paine that he should emigrate to America, and he set sail in 1774.

Thomas Paine barely survived the voyage to America. The water on board had been polluted with typhoid fever, and when the ship arrived in Pennsylvania, Paine was so ill that he had to be carried ashore. Franklin's physician nursed the sick man back to health. Paine then became a citizen of Pennsylvania, and in 1775 he found work as editor of the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, a post which he filled with distinction.

### Common sense, 1776

In Pennsylvania, Thomas Paine became an enthusiastic supporter American independence movement, and in 1776 he published an immensely successful pamphlet entitled *Common Sense*. Ultimately half a million copies of this pamphlet were sold in the American colonies, whose population at that time was only 2.5 million. In proportion to the total population, Paine's pamphlet sold more copies than any printed work ever published in America, before or since.

Besides readers who owned copies of *Common Sense*, many others heard it read aloud in homes or taverns. The revolution against the English monarchy

had already started, but Paine's pamphlet encouraged enlistment in George Washington's Continental Army and it supplied the the colonists with strong arguments for independence, Because of this, Paine is often called "the father of the American Revolution".

In his introduction to *Common Sense*, Paine wrote: "The cause of America is, to a great extent, the cause of all mankind. Many circumstances have, and will, arise, which are not local but universal, and through which principles all lovers of mankind are affected, and in the event of which their affections are interested. The laying of a country desolate with fire and sword, declaring war against the natural rights of all mankind, and extirpating the defenders thereof from the face of the earth, is the concern of every man to whom nature hath given the power of feeling; of which class, regardless of party censure, is the author."

In the main body of the pamphlet he opposed the idea the the English constitution is a good for America: "I know that it is difficult to get over long standing prejudices, yet if we suffer ourselves to examine the component parts of the English constitution, we shall find them to be the base remains of two ancient tyrannies, compounded with some new republican materials.

First: The remains of the monarchical tyrrany in the person of the king.

Secondly: The remains of the aristocratical tyrrany in the persons of the peers.

Thirdly: The new republican materials in the persons of the commons, on whose virtue depends the freedom of England.""

"There is something exceedingly ridiculous in the composition of monarchy; it first excludes a man from the means of information, yet empowers him to act in cases where the highest judgement is required. The state of a king shuts him off from the world; yet the business of a king requires him to know it thoroughly; whereof the different parts, by opposing and destroying each other, prove the whole character to be absurd and useless."

"That the crown is the overbearing part of the English constitution, needs not be mentioned, and that it derives its whole consequence merely from being the giver of places and pensions is self-evident, whereof, although we have been wise enough to shut an lock a door against absolute monarchy, we at the same time have been foolish enough to put the crown in possession of the key."

## **The Rights of Man, (1791)**

The Continental Congress sought financial help from France to support the revolutionary war against England. Thomas Paine was sent to France as one of two negotiators. He landed there in March 1781 and returned to America in August with 2.5 million livres in silver, as part of a "present" of 6 million and a loan of 10 million.

Paine returned to England in 1787 and he soon became involved a debate concerning the French Revolution. In 1790, the conservative writer Edmond Burke issued a pamphlet entitled *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Burke's pamphlet was an argument for retaining traditional methods of government. Since they had evolved slowly and had been tested over long periods of time, Burke argued, traditional forms of government were more trustworthy than institutions that was newly invented.

Burke's pamphlet provoked a storm of refutations, and Thomas Paine joined the chorus with a pamphlet entitled *The Rights of Man*. He first offered this pamphlet to the liberal publisher Joseph Johnson. However, Johnson had been warned by government agents that if he printed anything by Paine, he would be speedily imprisoned. Paine himself was warned by William Blake that if he returned to his lodgings, he too would be imprisoned. Blake advised him to flee to France.

Before leaving for France, Paine entrusted *The Rights of Man* to another printer, J.S. Jordan, who risked arrest by publishing it. Nearly a million copies were sold! Details of the publication were handled by William Godwin, Thomas Brand Hollis and Thomas Holcroft, all of whom were close friends of Paine.

In England, Thomas Paine was tried *in absentia* for seditious libel for writing *The Rights of Man*, and he was convicted of seditious libel against the King. Of course he could not be arrested and hanged by the English government, because he was in France.

Despite not being able to speak French, Paine was elected to the French National Convention. However, France at that time was not a safe place, since rival revolutionary factions were fighting for control of the country. Paine was arrested in 1793 by Robespierre's party because he supported the rival Girondists. After narrowly escaping execution, Paine was finally released from prison through the diplomatic efforts of the future American President, James Monroe. Thus Paine survived the critical days until the fall of Robespierre, after which he lived safely in France for a number of years.

In his 90,000-word book, *The Rights of Man*, Paine argued that human rights originate in Nature, thus, rights cannot be granted via political charter, because that implies that rights are legally revocable, hence, would be privileges:

"It is a perversion of terms", Paine wrote, "to say that a charter gives rights. It operates by a contrary effect - that of taking rights away. Rights are inherently in all the inhabitants; but charters, by annulling those rights, in the majority, leave the right, by exclusion, in the hands of a few... They... consequently are instruments of injustice ... The fact, therefore, must be that the individuals, themselves, each, in his own personal and sovereign right,



Figure 3.1: *Thomas Paine in a portrait by Mathew Pratt (Wikupedia).*

entered into a contract with each other to produce a government: and this is the only mode in which governments have a right to arise, and the only principle on which they have a right to exist.”

Thomas Paine argued that government’s only purpose is safeguarding the individual’s safety and inherent, inalienable rights; each societal institution that does not benefit the nation is illegitimate - especially monarchy and aristocracy.

Many of these ideas were already circulating during the Enlightenment period, for example in John Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government*. Paine developed these ideas further, helped by conversations with Thomas Jefferson, who was also in Paris at that time.

In the final part of *The Rights of Man*, Paine proposes that a reformed English Constitution should be drafted, along the lines of the American Constitution. He advocated the elimination of aristocratic titles, a budget without military allocations, lower taxes and subsidized education for the poor, and a progressively weighted and increased income tax for the wealthy.

## The Impact of Thomas Paine’s Ideas

Napoleon claimed that he slept with a copy of Paine’s *The Rights of Man* under his pillow. Napoleon was once friendly with Paine, but when he assumed the title of Emperor, Paine denounced him as a charlatan.

Abraham Lincoln’s writing style was very much influenced by Paine’s. Roy Basler, the editor of Lincoln’s papers, said: “Paine had a strong influence on Lincoln’s style: No other writer of the eighteenth century, with the exception of Jefferson, parallels more closely the temper or gist of Lincoln’s later thought. In style, Paine above all others affords the variety of eloquence which, chastened and adapted to Lincoln’s own mood, is revealed in Lincoln’s formal writings-”

Thomas Edison wrote: “I have always regarded Paine as one of the greatest of all Americans. Never have we had a sounder intelligence in this republic ... It was my good fortune to encounter Thomas Paine’s works in my boyhood ... it was, indeed, a revelation to me to read that great thinker’s views on political and theological subjects. Paine educated me, then, about many matters of which I had never before thought. I remember, very vividly, the flash of enlightenment that shone from Paine’s writings, and I recall thinking, at that time, ‘What a pity these works are not today the schoolbooks for all children!’ My interest in Paine was not satisfied by my first reading of his works. I went back to them time and again, just as I have done since my boyhood days.”

The Uriguaian national hero Jose Gervasio Artigas became familiar with and embraced Paine’s ideas.[98] In turn, many of Artigas’s writings drew di-

rectly from Paine's, including the Instructions of 1813, which Uruguayans consider to be one of their country's most important constitutional documents; it was one of the earliest writings to articulate a principled basis for an identity independent of Buenos Aires.

Interestingly, like his lifelong friend and mentor Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine was also an inventor. Single-span iron bridges designed by him have been constructed in many parts of the world, and he contributed to the improvement of the steam engine.

In 2002, Paine was voted number 34 of "100 Greatest Britons" in a public poll conducted by the BBC.

**Thomas Paine, defender of democracy, defender of human rights, defender of ordinary citizens against the tyranny of oligarchies, we need your voice today!**



# Chapter 4

## Thomas Jefferson

### Jefferson's Education

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) was born in the British Colony of Virginia. His father, Peter Jefferson, who was a planter and surveyor, died when Thomas Jefferson was 14 years old, and Thomas inherited an estate of approximately 5000 acres.

At the age of 16, Jefferson entered the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg Virginia. His studies there included mathematics and philosophy. He became familiar with John Locke, Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton. Jefferson also improved his knowledge of languages and his skill in playing the violin. He graduated in two years and afterwards studied law. Jefferson was an avid reader, and his personal library ultimately included 6,500 books.

When the British government passed the Intolerable Acts in 1774, Jefferson wrote a resolution calling for a day of fasting and prayer in protest, as well as a boycott of all British goods. He later expanded this into a larger publication with the title *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*.

### Monticello

In 1768, Jefferson began construction his home, Monticello, on a hilltop overlooking his estate. It was a large mansion in the Paladian style, designed by Jefferson. He worked to improve it throughout most of his life. It is now a much-visited museum and national monument.

In 1772, Jefferson married his third cousin, the 23-year old widow Martha Wayles Skelton. The marriage was an extremely happy one, and they had six children. However, weakened by the birth of her last child, Martha died at the age of 33. Before her death she made her heartbroken husband promise never to marry again because she could not bear to think of her children being brought up by a stepmother. Through Martha, Jefferson inherited an

additional estate of 11,000 acres, but he also inherited the debts of the estate, and this contributed to his financial worries.

## **Political service to Virginia and to the United States**

At 33, Jefferson represented Virginia at the Continental Congress, where he was one of the youngest delegates. He was the main author of the *Declaration of Independence*. In writing it, he drew on his deep knowledge of Enlightenment thought, for example the writings of John Locke and Montaigne.

As a Virginia legislator, Jefferson drafted a law for religious freedom. He also served as Virginia's wartime governor (1779-1781).

In 1785, Jefferson became the United States' Minister to France. Later, from 1790 to 1793 he served as Secretary of State under President George Washington. He was America's second Vice President, under John Adams. Finally, from 1801 to 1809 he served as the third President of the United States.

## **A few things that Thomas Jefferson said**

*I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever.*

*Educate and inform the whole mass of the people... They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty.*

*We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*

*Do you want to know who you are? Don't ask. Act! Action will delineate and define you.*

*I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past.*

*I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion.*

*The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only object of good government.*

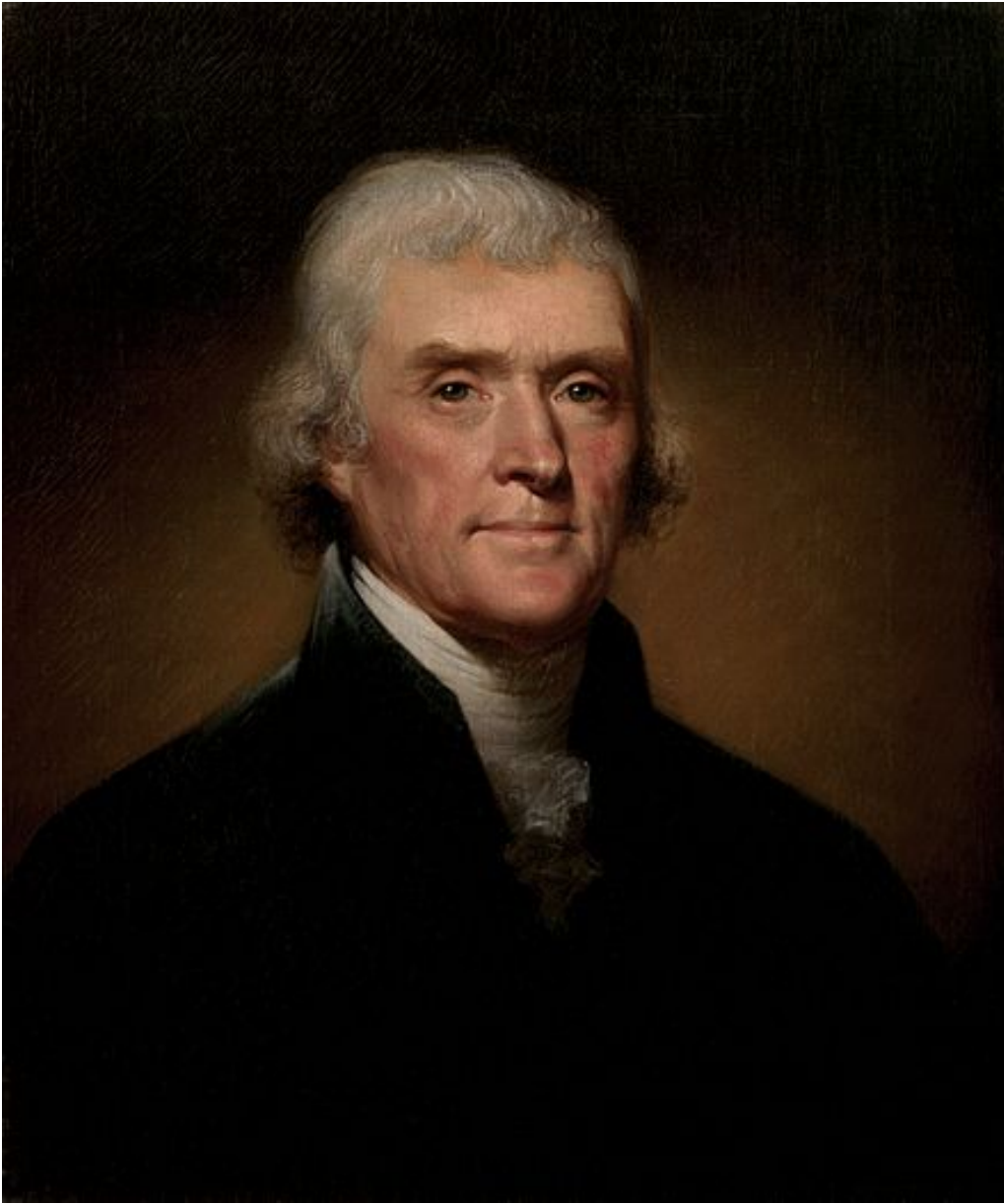


Figure 4.1: *Thomas Jefferson in a painting by R. Peale (Wikipedia).*

*I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend.*

*All, too, will bear in mind this sacred principle, that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will to be rightful must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal law must protect, and to violate would be oppression.*

*Our country is now taking so steady a course as to show by what road it will pass to destruction, to wit: by consolidation of power first, and then corruption, its necessary consequence.*

*Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the form of kings to govern him? Let history answer this question.*

*The world is indebted for all triumphs which have been gained by reason and humanity over error and oppression. Conquest is not in our principles. It is inconsistent with our government.*

*The spirit of this country is totally adverse to a large military force. I have seen enough of one war never to wish to see another.*

*I have sworn upon the altar of God, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.*

*If there is one principle more deeply rooted in the mind of every American, it is that we should have nothing to do with conquest.*

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...*

**Thomas Jefferson, architect of American democracy, we need your voice today!**

# Chapter 5

## Mary Wollstonecraft

### The first of a new genus

Mary Wollstonecraft was born in London in 1759. Although her family had a comfortable income during her childhood, Mary's father later lost his fortune through speculation, and the family entered a period of severe financial difficulties. He also subjected his wife to physical violence, and Mary often slept in front of her mother's door in order to protect her.

Because of the family's financial problems, Mary was forced to take a number of jobs which she found very distasteful, for example as companion to an unpleasant old lady. However, while working, she tried her hand as a writer, producing a children's book, *Original Stories From Real Life* (1788), and two pioneering feminist books, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* and *Mary: A Fiction* (1788).

Mary Wollstonecraft then bravely decided to try to support herself through writing. As she wrote to her sister, had decided to become the first of a new genus: a professional female writer. Having learned French and German, she translated Necker's *Of the Importance of Religious Opinions* and Saltzman's *Elements of Morality for the Use of Children*. Mary was helped in her new career by the liberal publisher, Joseph Johnson, who was also the publisher of Thomas Paine and William Godwin. Mary met these already famous authors at Johnson's dinner parties, and conversations with them helped to expand her knowledge and ambitions. Joseph Johnson was a very brave man. By publishing the works of radical authors, he was risking arrest by England's repressive government. In her letters, Mary described Johnson as "a father and brother".



Figure 5.1: *Mary Wollstonecraft in a painting by John Opie (public domain).*

## Scandalous love affairs

Mary Wollstonecraft had two scandalous love affairs. At that time, according to the strict rules for female behavior, these placed her completely outside the bounds of society.

The first of these unconventional love affairs was with the already married artist Henry Fuseli. Mary proposed to Fuseli's wife that all three of them should live together, but (not surprisingly) Fuseli's wife rejected this plan in horror and forced her husband to break off the relationship with Mary.

Mary then decided to travel to France, where the French Revolution had just taken place. She arrived there in 1792, about a month before the execution of Louis XVI. There she fell passionately in love with an American adventurer, Gilbert Imlay, with whom she had a daughter named Fanny. When Britain declared war on France in 1794, Imlay registered Mary as his wife in order to protect her from the French authorities, even though they were not married.

## Vindication of the Rights of Women

While in France, Mary Wollstonecraft had written *An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution*, which was published in London in 1794. She also wrote *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and *Vindication of the Rights of Man* (1792). Both of these were replies to Edmund Burke's argument for conservatism, *Reflection on the Revolution in France*. In her book on the rights of women, Mary wrote:

"My main argument is built on this simple principle, that if [woman] be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue; for truth must be common to all",

Wollstonecraft contends that society will degenerate without educated women, particularly because mothers are the primary educators of young children. She attributes the problem of uneducated women to men and

"...a false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men who [consider] females rather as women than human creatures"

"Taught from their infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and, roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison"

"I then would fain convince reasonable men of the importance of some of my remarks; and prevail on them to weigh dispassionately the whole tenor of my observations. I appeal to their understandings; and, as a fellow-creature, claim, in the name of my sex, some interest in their hearts. I entreat them to assist to emancipate their companion, to make her a help meet for them! Would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship

instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable mothers: in a word, better citizens. ”

### **Return to England and marriage to William Godwin**

When France became too dangerous, Imlay had traveled to London, and Mary joined him there in 1794, hoping to continue their relationship. When he rejected her, she attempted suicide. In another attempt to win Imlay’s affections. Mary traveled to Norway to take care of Imlay’s business dealings there. But when she returned to London, Imlay once again rejected her, and she once again attempted suicide. Once again was saved, this time by someone who saw her leap from a bridge into the Thames.

Gradually recognizing that her pursuit of Imlay was hopeless, Mary resumed her writing career, encouraged, as before by the brave publisher Joseph Johnson. At Johnson’s parties she once again met the famous novelist and philosopher William Godwin. This time, they both formed a higher opinion of each other than at their first meeting. A passionate love affair developed between them, and when Mary became pregnant, they were married. Tragically, Mary Wollstonecraft died in childbirth. Her daughter with William Godwin would later become the wife of Godwin’s admirer, the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. Mary Shelley continued the family tradition by becoming a famous author: She created the masterpiece *Frankenstein*.

**Mary Wollstonecraft, pioneering advocate of the rights of women and all human rights, we need your voice today!**



# Chapter 6

## William Godwin

### *Political Justice*

In 1793 the English novelist and philosopher William Godwin published an enormously optimistic book, *Political Justice*. As the eighteenth century neared its end, this book became the focus of hopes for political reform and the center of the debate on human progress. Godwin was lifted briefly to enormous heights of fame and adulation, from which he plunged, a few years later, into relative obscurity.

In *Political Justice*, Godwin predicted a future society where scientific progress would liberate humans from material want. Godwin predicted that in the future, with the institution of war abolished, with a more equal distribution of property, and with the help of scientific improvements in agriculture and industry, much less labour would be needed to support life. Luxuries are at present used to maintain artificial distinctions between the classes of society, Godwin wrote, but in the future values will change; humans will live more simply, and their efforts will be devoted to self-fulfillment and to intellectual and moral improvement, rather than to material possessions. With the help of automated agriculture, the citizens of a future society will need only a few hours a day to earn their bread.

Godwin went on to say, “The spirit of oppression, the spirit of servility and the spirit of fraud - these are the immediate growth of the established administration of property. They are alike hostile to intellectual improvement. The other vices of envy, malice, and revenge are their inseparable companions. In a state of society where men lived in the midst of plenty, and where all shared alike the bounties of nature, these sentiments would inevitably expire. The narrow principle of selfishness would vanish. No man being obliged to guard his little store, or provide with anxiety and pain for his restless wants, each would lose his own individual existence in the thought of the general good.

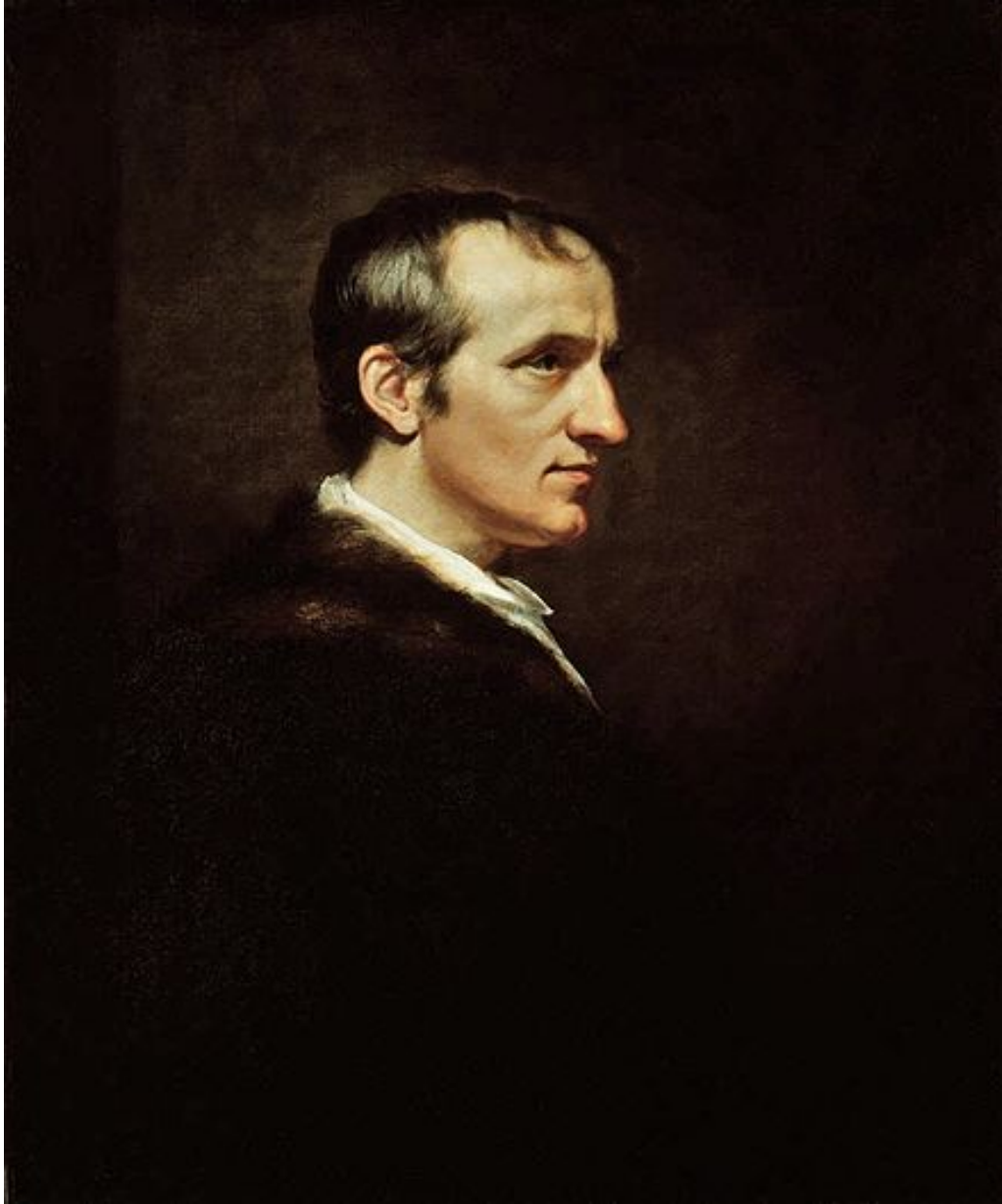


Figure 6.1: *William Godwin in a painting by James Northcote (Wikipedia).*

No man would be the enemy of his neighbor, for they would have nothing to contend; and of consequence philanthropy would resume the empire which reason assigns her. Mind would be delivered from her perpetual anxiety about corporal support, and free to expatiate in the field of thought which is congenial to her. Each man would assist the inquiries of all.”

Godwin insisted that there is an indissoluble link between politics, ethics and knowledge. *Political Justice* is an enthusiastic vision of what humans could be like at some future period when the trend towards moral and intellectual improvement has lifted men and women above their their present state of ignorance and vice. Much of the savage structure of the penal system would then be unnecessary, Godwin believed. (At the time when he was writing, there were more than a hundred capital offenses in England, and this number had soon increased to almost two hundred. The theft of any object of greater value than ten shillings was punishable by hanging.)

In its present state, Godwin wrote, society decrees that the majority of its citizens “should be kept in abject penury, rendered stupid with ignorance and disgustful with vice, perpetuated in nakedness and hunger, goaded to the commission of crimes, and made victims to the merciless laws which the rich have instituted to oppress them”. But human behavior is produced by environment and education, Godwin pointed out. If the conditions of upbringing were improved, behavior would also improve. In fact, Godwin believed that men and women are subject to natural laws no less than the planets of Newton’s solar system. “In the life of every human”, Godwin wrote, “there is a chain of causes, generated in that eternity which preceded his birth, and going on in regular procession through the whole period of his existence, in consequence of which it was impossible for him to act in any instance otherwise than he has acted.”

The chain of causality in human affairs implies that vice and crime should be regarded with the same attitude with which we regard disease. The causes of poverty, ignorance, vice and crime should be removed. Human failings should be cured rather than punished. With this in mind, Godwin wrote, “our disapprobation of vice will be of the same nature as our disapprobation of an infectious distemper.”

With improved environment and education, humans will reach a higher moral level. But what is morality? Here Godwin draws heavily on his Christian background, especially on the moral principles of the Dissenting community. The Parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates the central principle of Christian ethics: We must love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves; but our neighbor is not necessarily a member of our immediate circle. He or she may be distant from us, in culture, in ethnic background or in geographical distance. Nevertheless, that person is still our neighbor, a member of the human family,

and our duty to him or her is no less than our duty to those who are closest to us. It follows that narrow loyalties must be replaced or supplemented by loyalty to the interests of humanity as a whole.

Godwin predicted that in a future society, with the institution of war abolished, with a more equal distribution of property, and with the help of scientific improvements in agriculture and industry, much less labour would be needed to support life. Luxuries were used to maintain artificial distinctions between the classes of society but in the future, Godwin said, values would change; humans would live more simply, and their efforts would be devoted to self-fulfilment and to intellectual and moral improvement, rather than to securing material possessions. With the help of automated agriculture, the citizens of a future society would need only a few hours a day to earn their bread.

Judging the benevolence of our actions is the responsibility of each individual conscience, Godwin says, not the responsibility of the State, and the individual must follow his or her conscience even if it conflicts with the dictates of the State. Each individual case should be judged by itself. If our institutions and laws meet the criteria of benevolence, justice and truth, we should give them our enthusiastic support; if not, we should struggle to change them. In giving personal judgement such a dominant role, Godwin anticipates the ideas of Thoreau, Tolstoy and Gandhi.

The exercise of individual judgement requires great honesty and objectivity. In order for the power of truth and reason to overcome prejudice and error, Godwin says, it is necessary for each person always to speak and act with complete sincerity. Even the degree of insincerity necessary for elegant manners is wrong in Godwin's opinion.

Starting with these ethical principles, Godwin proceeds with almost mathematical logic to deduce the consequences, intoxicated by his enthusiasm and not stopping even when the conclusions to which he is driven conflict with conventional wisdom and intuition. Godwin predicted that in a future society, with the institution of war abolished, with a more equal distribution of property, and with the help of scientific improvements in agriculture and industry, much less labour would be needed to support life. Luxuries were used to maintain artificial distinctions between the classes of society but in the future, Godwin said, values would change; humans would live more simply, and their efforts would be devoted to self-fulfilment and to intellectual and moral improvement, rather than to securing material possessions. With the help of automated agriculture, the citizens of a future society would need only a few hours a day to earn their bread. For example, he denies that humans have rights and maintains that they only have duties.

Regarding the right to dispose of private property as one chooses, Godwin says: "To whom does any article, suppose a loaf of bread, justly belong? I

have an hundred loaves in my possession, and in the next street there is a poor man expiring with hunger, to whom one of these loaves would be a means of preserving his life. If I withhold this loaf from him, am I not unjust? If I impart it, am I not complying with what justice demands?"

In other words, according to Godwin, our duty to act for the benefit of humanity implies a sacrifice of our private rights as individuals. Private property is not really our own, to be used as we wish; it is held in trust, to be used where it will do the greatest amount of good for humanity as a whole.

Godwin also denies that several commonly admired virtues really are virtues. Keeping promises, he says, is not a virtue because at any given moment we have a duty to do the greatest possible good through our actions. If an act is good, we should do it because we believe it to be good, not because we have promised to do it; and a promise should not force us to perform an act which we believe to be bad. A virtuous person therefore does not make promises. Similarly, Godwin maintains that gratitude is a vice since it distorts our judgement of the benevolence of our actions. When he heard of Godwin's doctrine on gratitude, Edmund Burke remarked "I would save him from that vice by not doing him any service!"

Godwin saw the system of promises, loyalty, and gratitude as a means by which individual judgement can be suspended and tyranny maintained. People can be forced to act against their consciences because of promises which they have made or services which they have received. An example of this is the suspension of private ethical judgement which follows a soldier's induction into an army. We should perform an act, Godwin maintains, not because of fear of punishment or hope of reward or in return for favors that we have received, but rather because we believe the act to be of the highest benefit to humanity as a whole.

Many of our political institutions may be needed now, Godwin said, because of mankind's present faults; but in the future, when humanity has reached a higher level of perfection, they will be needed less and less. The system of nation states might then be replaced by a loose federation of small communities, within each of which problems could be resolved by face-to-face discussion. Regarding this future ideal system, Godwin writes: "It is earnestly to be desired that each man was wise enough to govern himself without the interference of any compulsory restraint; and since government in its best state is an evil, the object principally to be aimed at is, that we should have as little of it as the general peace of human society will permit."

Godwin predicted that in a future society, with the institution of war abolished, with a more equal distribution of property, and with the help of scientific improvements in agriculture and industry, much less labour would be needed to support life. Luxuries were used to maintain artificial distinctions between

the classes of society but in the future, Godwin said, values would change; humans would live more simply, and their efforts would be devoted to self-fulfilment and to intellectual and moral improvement, rather than to securing material possessions. With the help of automated agriculture, the citizens of a future society would need only a few hours a day to earn their bread.

*Political Justice* is a vision or prophesy of what human life might be like, not in the world as it is but in an ideal world of the future. As Godwin's disciple, Percy Bysshe Shelley, later expressed it in his verse-drama *Prometheus Unbound*,

*The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains  
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man  
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,  
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king  
Over himself; just, gentle, wise...  
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man  
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,  
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king  
Over himself; just, gentle, wise...*

## **Enormous instant fame; The New Philosophy**

The quarto edition of *Political Justice* was a best seller and the book was soon republished in a less expensive octavo edition which sold equally well. It was pirated in Ireland, Scotland, and America and hundreds of groups of workers who could not afford to buy the book individually bought joint copies, which then circulated among the subscribers or were read aloud to groups. The doctrines advocated in *Political Justice* were soon being called the 'New Philosophy'.

Godwin became famous overnight: "I was nowhere a stranger", he wrote later, "...I was everywhere received with curiosity and kindness. If temporary fame ever was an object worthy to be coveted by the human mind, I certainly obtained it in a degree that has seldom been exceeded."

Godwin's friend, the essayist William Hazlitt, described this sudden burst of fame in the following words: "... he blazed as a sun in the firmament of reputation; no-one was more talked of, more looked up to, more sought after, and wherever liberty, truth, justice was the theme, his name was not far off".

William Wordsworth read *Political Justice* in 1794 and was greatly influenced by it. Between February and August 1795, Wordsworth met Godwin seven times for long private discussions. Much of Wordsworth's writing from

the Great Decade shows the mark of Godwin's ideas, as can be seen, for example in the following lines from *The Prelude*:

*How glorious! in self-knowledge and self-rule,  
To look through all the frailties of the world,  
And, with a resolute mastery shaking off  
Infirmities of nature, time and place,  
Build social upon personal Liberty,  
Which, to the blind restraints of general laws  
Superior, magisterially adopts  
One guide, the light of circumstances, flashed  
Upon an independent intellect*

## Things as they are

On 26 May 1794, Godwin added to his already great reputation by publishing a powerful and original psychological novel, *Things as They Are*, later renamed *Caleb Williams*. Godwin's purpose in writing this novel was to illustrate some of the themes of *Political Justice* and to bring his ideas to readers who might not be directly interested in philosophy.

In *Caleb Williams*, Godwin makes several literary innovations which were to influence such writers as Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Dickens, Balzac, and Victor Hugo. *Caleb Williams* is, in fact, the ancestor of the modern thriller and detective story.

## A few hangings needed to cast a chill over discussion

Godwin had written a Preface to *Caleb Williams* in which he said: "The question now afloat in the world respecting THINGS AS THEY ARE, is the most interesting which can be presented to the human mind. While one party pleads for reformation and change, the other extols in the warmest terms the existing constitution of society... It is now known to philosophers that the spirit and character of a government intrudes itself into every rank of society. But this is a truth highly worthy to be communicated to persons whom books of philosophy and science are never likely to reach. Accordingly it was proposed in the invention of the following work, to comprehend, as far as the progressive nature of a single story would allow, a general review of the modes of domestic and unrecorded" - .

This Preface was never printed, because Godwin's publisher, Crosby, was afraid of prosecution. In fact, the publication of *Caleb Williams* coincided with

a decision by Pitt's government that a few hangings were needed in order to cast a chill on public discussion of political reform. On the day of publication, orders went out for the arrest of Godwin's friends in the reform movement, Hardy, Thelwall, and Horne Tooke. Although the radical leaders were arrested in May, habeas corpus was suspended, and it was not until 2 October 1794 that a charge was brought against them. A few days later, on a trip to Warwickshire, Godwin heard that his closest friend, Thomas Holcroft, also had been arrested.

Godwin hurried back to London and locked himself in his home, studying the charges that had been brought by Lord Chief Justice Eyre against Holcroft and the others. The charge was high treason and the law under which Eyre brought this charge had been passed in the fourteenth century, during the reign of Edward III. It defined high treason as 'any act which could 'compass or imagine the Death of a King'. The penalty for this offense was to be hanged by the neck, to be cut down while still living, to be disembowelled, to have one's bowels burnt before one's eyes, and then to be beheaded and quartered. It was rumored that as soon as the 12 prisoners were convicted, 800 further arrest warrants were ready to go out and Godwin's own name might well have been among them.

Godwin soon saw that Eyre's argument involved an unprecedented broadening of the definition of high treason. Essentially Eyre was arguing that the actions of the accused might cause events in England to follow the same course as in France, where Louis XVI had recently been executed. On 21 October Godwin published an anonymous article in the *Morning Chronicle* entitled *Cursory Strictures on the Charge Delivered by Lord Chief Justice Eyre*. It was a carefully written legal argument, completely different in style from anything that Godwin had written previously. In this article, he argued that in broadening the interpretation of high treason without precedent, Eyre was in effect creating a new law and judging the prisoners *ex post facto*. It was especially necessary for high treason to have a narrow definition, Godwin pointed out, since a broad definition could lead to the abridgement of all English civil liberties.

After the publication of *Cursory Strictures* it became clear to everyone that Eyre's charge lay outside the boundary of the law and that it would probably not be upheld. Nevertheless, the atmosphere in the courtroom was tense as the jury returned its verdicts. As soon as Holcroft was acquitted, he left the dock and went to sit beside Godwin. The artist, Sir Thomas Lawrence, made a sketch of the two friends sitting side-by-side and waiting for the verdict on the other prisoners, Godwin's bending and contemplative figure contrasting with Holcroft's upright and defiant stance. In the end, all charges were dropped.



## William and Mary

Soon after these dramatic events, William Godwin met Mary Wollstonecraft for a second time. On 8 January 1796, Mary Hayes, a friend and admirer of Mary Wollstonecraft, invited her to tea together with William Godwin and Thomas Holcroft. The tea was a success, and Godwin found Mary Wollstonecraft very much changed from the carelessly dressed and irritating woman who had dominated the conversation at Johnson's dinner when he had wanted to hear Thomas Paine. Now, several years later, she had become much more attractive. Mary's beauty and her charming, intelligent conversation won Godwin's heart. He also greatly admired her recently published book, *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*.

On 13 February, Godwin called on Mary Wollstonecraft, but she was not at home. On 14 April, she broke the social rules of the time and returned his call. During the next few months they often appeared together at literary and artistic dinners in London. They had many friends in common and both of them had many admirers of the opposite sex. Godwin was not a tall man and his nose was rather large. On the other hand, he had fine eyes and a high, impressive brow; his manners had become more gallant and fame is a powerful aphrodisiac. A number of attractive intellectual women fluttered around him. Mary's admirers included the poet Robert Southey, the distinguished artist John Opie, and Godwin's closest friend, Thomas Holcroft.

Gradually, during the spring and summer of 1796, the friendship between Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin deepened into love. Outwardly, nothing was changed. Both partners were hard at work, Godwin preparing a new edition of *Political Justice* and Mary writing a novel, *The Wrongs of Woman*. Like *Caleb Williams*, Mary's novel was designed to illustrate the themes of the New Philosophy. They kept their relationship a secret, continued to live separately, and continued to meet their friends as before, but they had become lovers. For Godwin, this was the first real love affair of his life and he was at first very awkward, afraid of the strong emotions he was experiencing. Mary tenderly and good-humouredly guided him through his difficulties.

As winter approached, a crisis occurred: Johnson, Mary's publisher insisted that she should settle her debts and refused to give her more credit. At the same time, Mary realized that she was pregnant. She experienced some of the harsh penalties with which English society of that time punished unwed mothers. Many of her former friends had dropped away. Her remaining friends called her Mrs Imlay, maintaining the fiction that she had been legally married; but with the new baby no such cover would be possible. Johnson offered a solution: He knew of a rich but somewhat elderly admirer who was willing to solve all of Mary's problems, both financial and social, by marrying her.

Mary felt insulted and would not hear of this solution. In her books she had often denounced marriage for the sake of property as 'legalized prostitution'. Instead, she asked Godwin to marry her. He did this in spite of his own disapproval of the institution of marriage as practised at that time in Europe, an institution which he had called 'the most odious of all monopolies'.

Godwin and Mary were in fact extremely happy together. They were not at all alike: He relied on reason, while she placed more trust in her emotions. These differences meant that each revealed a new world for the other. For Godwin, Mary opened a world of strong feelings; and he acquired from her a taste for the writings of Rousseau, whom she called 'the Prometheus of Sentiment'. Godwin was never the same again. All his later novels and books of philosophy were to stress the importance of domestic affections and sensitivity to the force of emotion.

### **Mary's tragic death in childbirth**

Mary's baby was due at the end of August 1797. She insisted that no doctor was needed, only a midwife. After a long labour, she gave birth to a baby girl at 11 p.m. and Godwin was overjoyed that all had gone well. However, at 2 a.m. the midwife warned Godwin that his wife was still in danger, since the afterbirth had not yet appeared. A doctor was sent for; and following the accepted medical practice of the time, he removed the afterbirth surgically. Mary at first seemed to be recovering well; but in a few days it became clear that she was fatally ill with an infection, very likely the result of the operation to remove the afterbirth. On 10 September she died, brave and affectionate to the end. In her last words, she spoke of Godwin as 'the kindest, best man in the world'.

Godwin was left heartbroken by Mary's death. In a letter to Holcroft he wrote: "My wife is now dead. I firmly believe that there does not exist her equal in the world. I know from experience that we were formed to make each other happy. I have not the least expectation that I can now ever know happiness again". In his sorrow, he sat rereading Mary's books and letters, seeming to hear her voice again through the words that she had written.

Soon Godwin found consolation for his grief by editing the unpublished works of his dead wife and by writing her biography. Believing strongly in the principle of absolute honesty, he tried to describe her life and work as simply and as accurately as he could, not hiding her human weaknesses, but at the same time doing full justice to her stature as a great pioneer of woman's rights. He included her letters to Imlay, and a description of an affair between Mary and the Swiss artist Fuseli, which had taken place before her departure for France.

On 29 January 1798, Johnson published Godwin's *Memoirs of the Author of the Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, together with four small volumes of Mary's posthumous works, including her unfinished novel, *The Wrongs of Woman*.

## The wave of hope crashes down

Godwin's moving and honest portrait of his wife is one of his most enduring and readable books but its honesty shocked his contemporaries more than anything else that he had written. The *European Magazine*, for example, said that it would be read "with disgust by every female who has any pretensions to delicacy; with detestation by everyone attached to the interests of religion and morality; and with indignation by any one who might feel any regard for the unhappy woman, whose frailties should have been buried in oblivion".

This reaction against the *Memoirs* was part of a much more general reaction against all liberal ideas. In 1798, Napoleon's armies were victorious on the continent, and the French were massing their forces for an invasion of England. Napoleon believed that the ordinary people of England would welcome him as a liberator and, in fact, the English government was facing a mutiny in its own navy, massive riots, and rebellion in Ireland. The Establishment was fighting for its life and was not in the mood to make fine distinctions about whether the blows that it struck were above or below the belt. Pitt and Grenville had already introduced the 'Gagging Acts', which effectively put an end to freedom of speech and assembly. The government now sponsored, by means of a secret subsidy, the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, a periodical which savagely attacked all of the leading liberals in turn, including both William and Mary.

Godwin had been carried to great heights by the wave of hope which accompanied the French Revolution; and as the wave crashed he was carried down with it. Despite the abuse and ridicule which were increasingly heaped upon him, he maintained a philosophical attitude, confident that he had already made a permanent contribution to the idea of human progress. His ideas, and those of his pioneering wife Mary Wollstonecraft, can speak to our present dangerous situation.

**William Godwin, believer in liberty, absolute honesty and unselfish service to humanity as a whole, we need your voice today!**



# Chapter 7

## The Marquis de Condorcet

### A vision of human progress

In France the Marquis de Condorcet had written an equally optimistic book, *Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique des Progrès de l'Esprit Humain*. Condorcet's optimism was unaffected even by the fact that at the time when he was writing he was in hiding, under sentence of death by Robespierre's government. Like Godwin's *Political Justice*, this book offers an optimistic vision of how human society can be improved. Together, the two books provoked Malthus to write his book on population.

### Condorcet becomes a mathematician

Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet, was born in 1743 in the town of Ribemont in southern France. He was born into an ancient and noble family of the principality of Orange but there was nothing in his background to suggest that he might one day become a famous scientist and social philosopher. In fact, for several generations before, most of the men in the family had followed military or ecclesiastical careers and none were scholars.

After an initial education received at home from his mother, Condorcet was sent to his uncle, the Bishop of Lisieux, who provided a Jesuit tutor for the boy. In 1758 Condorcet continued his studies with the Jesuits at the College of Navarre. After he graduated from the College, Condorcet's powerful and independent intelligence suddenly asserted itself. He announced that he intended to study mathematics. His family was unanimously and violently opposed to this idea. The privileges of the nobility were based on hereditary power and on a static society. Science, with its emphasis on individual talent and on progress, undermined both these principles. The opposition of Condorcet's family is therefore understandable but he persisted until they gave in.

From 1765 to 1774, Condorcet focused on science. In 1765, he published his first work on mathematics entitled *Essai sur le calcul intégral*, which was well received, launching his career as a mathematician. He would go on to publish many more papers, and in 1769, at the age of 26, he was elected to the Academie royale des Sciences (French Royal Academy of Sciences)

Condorcet worked with Leonhard Euler and Benjamin Franklin. He soon became an honorary member of many foreign academies and philosophic societies including the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences (1785), Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1792), and also in Prussia and Russia.

## **Human rights and scientific sociology**

In 1774, at the age of 31, Condorcet was appointed inspector general of the Paris mint by his friend, the economist Turgot. From this point on, Condorcet shifted his focus from the purely mathematical to philosophy and political matters. In the following years, he took up the defense of human rights in general, and of women's and blacks' rights in particular (an abolitionist, he became active in the Society of the Friends of the Blacks in the 1780s). He supported the ideals embodied by the newly formed United States, and proposed projects of political, administrative and economic reforms intended to transform France.

The year 1785 saw the publication of Condorcet's highly original mathematical work, *Essai sur l'application de l'analyse à la probabilité des décisions rendues à la pluralité des voix*, in which he pioneered the application of the theory of probability in the social sciences. A later, much enlarged, edition of this book extended the applications to games of chance. Through these highly original works, Condorcet became a pioneer of scientific sociology.

In 1786, Condorcet married one of the most beautiful women of the time, Sophie de Grouchy (1764-1822). Condorcet's position as Inspector-General of the Mint meant that they lived at the Hotel des Monnaies. Mme Condorcet's salon there was famous.

## **The French Revolution**

Ever since the age of 17, Condorcet had thought about questions of justice and virtue and especially about how it is in our own interest to be both just and virtuous. Very early in his life he had been occupied with the idea of human perfectibility. He was convinced that the primary duty of every person is to contribute as much as possible to the development of mankind, and that by making such a contribution, one can also achieve the greatest possible



Figure 7.1: *The Marquis de Condorcet (public domain).*

personal happiness. When the French Revolution broke out in 1789 he saw it as an unprecedented opportunity to do his part in the cause of progress and he entered the arena wholeheartedly.

Condorcet was first elected as a member of the Municipality of Paris; and then, in 1791, he became one of the six Commissioners of the Treasury. Soon afterwards he was elected to the Legislative Assembly, of which he became first the Secretary and finally the President. In 1792, Condorcet proposed to the Assembly that all patents of nobility should be burned. The motion was carried unanimously; and on 19 June his own documents were thrown on a fire with the others at the foot of a statue of Louis XIV.

Condorcet was one of the chief authors of the proclamation which declared France to be a republic and which summoned a National Convention. As he remained above the personal political quarrels that were raging at the time, Condorcet was elected to the National Convention by five different constituencies. When the Convention brought Louis XVI to trial, Condorcet maintained that, according to the constitution, the monarch was inviolable and that the Convention therefore had no legal right to try the King. When the King was tried despite these protests, Condorcet voted in favor of an appeal to the people.

## **Drafting a new constitution for France**

In October 1792, when the Convention set up a Committee of Nine to draft a new constitution for France, Condorcet sat on this committee as did the Englishman, Thomas Paine. Under sentence of death in England for publishing his pamphlet *The Rights of Man*, Paine had fled to France and had become a French citizen. He and Condorcet were the chief authors of a moderate (Gerondist) draft of the constitution. However, the Jacobin leader, Robespierre, bitterly resented being excluded from the Committee of Nine and, when the Convention then gave the responsibility for drafting the new constitution to the Committee for Public Safety, which was enlarged for this purpose by five additional members. The result was a hastily produced document with many glaring defects. When it was presented to the Convention, however, it was accepted almost without discussion. This was too much for Condorcet to stomach and he published anonymously a letter entitled *Advice to the French on the New Constitution*, in which he exposed the defects of the Jacobin constitution and urged all Frenchmen to reject it. After the constitution was presented to the Assembly, he and his followers succeeded in having it shelved without a vote.

The Convention then gave the responsibility for drafting the new constitution to the Committee for Public Safety, which was enlarged for this purpose



by five additional members. The result was a hastily produced document with many glaring defects. When it was presented to the Convention, however, it was accepted almost without discussion. This was too much for Condorcet to stomach and he published anonymously a letter entitled *Advice to the French on the New Constitution*, in which he exposed the defects of the Jacobin constitution and urged all Frenchmen to reject it.

## Hiding from Robespierre's Terror

Condorcet's authorship of this letter was discovered and treated as an act of treason. On 8 July 1793, Condorcet was denounced in the Convention; and an order was sent out for his arrest. The officers tried to find him, first at his town house and then at his house in the country but, warned by a friend, Condorcet had gone into hiding.

The house where Condorcet took refuge was at Rue Servandoni, a small street in Paris leading down to the Luxembourg Gardens, and it was owned by Madame Vernet, the widow of a sculptor. Madame Vernet, who sometimes kept lodgings for students, had been asked by Condorcet's friends whether she would be willing to shelter a proscribed man. 'Is he a good man?', she had asked; and when assured that this was the case, she had said, 'Then let him come at once. You can tell me his name later. Don't waste even a moment. While we are speaking, he may be arrested.' She did not hesitate, although she knew that she risked death, the penalty imposed by the Convention for sheltering a proscribed man.

## Condorcet writes the *Esquisse*

Although Robespierre's agents had been unable to arrest him, Condorcet was sentenced to the guillotine *in absentia*. He knew that in all probability he had only a few weeks or months to live and he began to write his last thoughts, racing against time. Hidden in the house at Rue Servandoni, and cared for by Madame Vernet, Condorcet returned to a project which he had begun in 1772, a history of the progress of human thought, stretching from the remote past to the distant future. Guessing that he would not have time to complete the full-scale work he had once planned, he began a sketch or outline: *Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique des progrès de l'Esprit Humain*.

Condorcet's *Esquisse*, is an enthusiastic endorsement of the idea of infinite human perfectibility which was current among the philosophers of the 18th century, and in this book, Condorcet anticipated many of the evolutionary ideas of Charles Darwin. He compared humans with animals, and found many common traits. Condorcet believed that animals are able to think, and even

to think rationally, although their thoughts are extremely simple compared with those of humans. He also asserted that humans historically began their existence on the same level as animals and gradually developed to their present state. Since this evolution took place historically, he reasoned, it is probable, or even inevitable, that a similar evolution in the future will bring mankind to a level of physical, mental and moral development which will be as superior to our own present state as we are now superior to animals.

In his *Esquisse*, Condorcet called attention to the unusually long period of dependency which characterizes the growth and education of human offspring. This prolonged childhood is unique among living beings. It is needed for the high level of mental development of the human species; but it requires a stable family structure to protect the young during their long upbringing. Thus, according to Condorcet, biological evolution brought into existence a moral precept, the sanctity of the family.

Similarly, Condorcet maintained, larger associations of humans would have been impossible without some degree of altruism and sensitivity to the suffering of others incorporated into human behavior, either as instincts or as moral precepts or both; and thus the evolution of organized society entailed the development of sensibility and morality.

Condorcet believed that ignorance and error are responsible for vice; and he listed what he regarded as the main mistakes of civilization: hereditary transmission of power, inequality between men and women, religious bigotry, disease, war, slavery, economic inequality, and the division of humanity into mutually exclusive linguistic groups.

Condorcet believed the hereditary transmission of power to be the source of much of the tyranny under which humans suffer; and he looked forward to an era when republican governments would be established throughout the world. Turning to the inequality between men and women, Condorcet wrote that he could see no moral, physical or intellectual basis for it. He called for complete social, legal, and educational equality between the sexes.

Condorcet predicted that the progress of medical science would free humans from the worst ravages of disease. Furthermore, he maintained that since perfectibility (i.e. evolution) operates throughout the biological world, there is no reason why mankind's physical structure might not gradually improve, with the result that human life in the remote future could be greatly prolonged. Condorcet believed that the intellectual and moral facilities of man are capable of continuous and steady improvement; and he thought that one of the most important results of this improvement will be the abolition of war.

At the end of his *Esquisse*, Condorcet said that any person who has contributed to the progress of mankind to the best of his ability becomes immune to personal disaster and suffering. He knows that human progress is inevitable

and can take comfort and courage from his inner picture of the epic march of mankind, through history, towards a better future.

Shortly after Condorcet completed the *Esquisse*, he received a mysterious warning that soldiers of the Convention were on their way to inspect Madame Vernet's house. Wishing to spare his generous hostess from danger, he disguised himself as well as he could and slipped past the portress. However, Condorcet had only gone a few steps outside the house when he was recognized by Madame Verdet's cousin, who risked his life to guide Condorcet past the sentinels at the gates of Paris, and into the open country beyond.

Condorcet wandered for several days without food or shelter, hiding himself in quarries and thickets. Finally, on 27 March 1794, hunger forced him to enter a tavern at the village of Clamart, where he ordered an omelette. When asked how many eggs it should contain, the exhausted and starving philosopher replied without thinking, 'twelve'. This reply, together with his appearance, excited suspicion. He was asked for his papers and, when it was found that he had none, soldiers were sent for and he was arrested. He was taken to a prison at Bourg-la-Reine, but he was so weak that he was unable to walk there, and had to be carried in a cart. The next morning, Condorcet was found dead on the floor of his cell. The cause of his death is not known with certainty. It was listed in official documents as congestion sanguine, congestion of the blood but the real cause may have been cold, hunger, exhaustion or poison. Many historians believe that Condorcet was murdered by Robespierre's agents, since he was so popular that a public execution would have been impossible.

After Condorcet's death the currents of revolutionary politics shifted direction. Robespierre, the leader of the Terror, was himself soon arrested. The execution of Robespierre took place on 25 July 1794, only a few months after the death of Condorcet.

Condorcet's *Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique des Progrès de l'Esprit Humain* was published posthumously in 1795. In the post-Thermidor reconstruction, the Convention voted funds to have it printed in a large edition and distributed throughout France, thus adopting the *Esquisse* as its official manifesto. Condorcet's name will always be linked with this small prophetic book. It was destined to establish the form in which the eighteenth-century idea of progress was incorporated into Western thought, and (as we shall see) it provoked Robert Malthus to write *An Essay on the Principle of Population*.

**Nicolas Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet, definer of the idea of progress, defender of human rights and the rights of all living things, we need your voice today!**



# Chapter 8

## Thomas Robert Malthus

### A debate between father and son

T.R. Malthus' *Essay on The Principle of Population*, the first edition of which was published in 1798, was one of the the first systematic studies of the problem of population in relation to resources. Earlier discussions of the problem had been published by Botero in Italy, Robert Wallace in England, and Benjamin Franklin in America. However Malthus' *Essay* was the first to stress the fact that, in general, powerful checks operate continuously to keep human populations from increasing beyond their available food supply. In a later edition, published in 1803, he buttressed this assertion with carefully collected demographic and sociological data from many societies at various periods of their histories.

The publication of Malthus' *Essay* coincided with a wave of disillusionment which followed the optimism of the Enlightenment. The utopian societies predicted by the philosophers of the Enlightenment were compared with reign of terror in Robespierre's France and with the miseries of industrial workers in England; and the discrepancy required an explanation.

The optimism which preceded the French Revolution, and the disappointment which followed a few years later, closely paralleled the optimistic expectations of our own century, in the period after the Second World War, when it was thought that the transfer of technology to the less developed parts of the world would eliminate poverty, and the subsequent disappointment when poverty persisted.

Science and technology developed rapidly in the second half of the twentieth century, but the benefits which they conferred were just as rapidly consumed by a global population which today is increasing at the rate of one billion people every fourteen years. Because of the close parallel between the optimism and disappointments of Malthus' time and those of our own, much light can be



Figure 8.1: *Thomas Robert Malthus (Wikipedia)!*.

thrown on our present situation by rereading the debate between Malthus and his contemporaries.

Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834) came from an intellectual family: His father, Daniel Malthus, was a moderately well-to-do English country gentleman, an enthusiastic believer in the optimistic ideas of the Enlightenment, and a friend of the philosophers Henry Rousseau, David Hume and William Godwin. The famous book on population by the younger Malthus grew out of conversations with his father.

In 1793, Robert Malthus was elected a fellow of Jesus College, and he also took orders in the Anglican Church. He was assigned as Curate to Okewood Chapel in Surrey. This small chapel stood in a woodland region, and Malthus' illiterate parishioners were so poor that the women and children went without shoes. They lived in low thatched huts made of woven branches plastered with mud. The floors of these huts were of dirt, and the only light came from tiny window openings. Malthus' parishioners diet consisted almost entirely of bread. The children of these cottagers developed late, and were stunted in growth. Nevertheless, in spite of the harsh conditions of his parishioners' lives, Malthus noticed that the number of births which he recorded in the parish register greatly exceeded the number of deaths. It was probably this fact which first turned his attention to the problem of population.

Robert Malthus lived with his parents at Albury, about nine miles from Oakwood, and it was here that the famous debates between father and son took place. As Daniel Malthus talked warmly about Godwin, Condorcet, and the idea of human progress, the mind of his son, Robert, turned to the unbalance between births and deaths which he had noticed among his parishioners at Okewood Chapel. He pointed out to his father that no matter what benefits science might be able to confer, they would soon be eaten up by population growth.

Regardless of technical progress, the condition of the lowest social class would remain exactly the same: The poor would continue to live, as they always had, on the exact borderline between survival and famine, clinging desperately to the lower edge of existence. For them, change for the worse was impossible since it would loosen their precarious hold on life; their children would die and their numbers would diminish until they balanced the supply of food. But any change for the better was equally impossible, because if more nourishment should become available, more of the children of the poor would survive, and the share of food for each of them would again be reduced to the precise minimum required for life.

Observation of his parishioners at Okewood had convinced Robert Malthus that this sombre picture was a realistic description of the condition of the poor in England at the end of the 18th century. Techniques of agriculture and

industry were indeed improving rapidly; but among the very poor, population was increasing equally fast, and the misery of society's lowest class remained unaltered.

## **Publication of the first essay in 1798**

Daniel Malthus was so impressed with his son's arguments that he urged him to develop them into a small book. Robert Malthus' first essay on population, written in response to his father's urging, was only 50,000 words in length. It was published anonymously in 1798, and its full title was *An Essay on the Principle of Population, as it affects the future improvement of society, with remarks on the speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet, and other writers*. Robert Malthus' *Essay* explored the consequences of his basic thesis: that "the power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man".

"That population cannot increase without the means of subsistence", Robert Malthus wrote, "is a proposition so evident that it needs no illustration. That population does invariably increase, where there are means of subsistence, the history of every people who have ever existed will abundantly prove. And that the superior power cannot be checked without producing misery and vice, the ample portion of these two bitter ingredients in the cup of human life, and the continuance of the physical causes that seem to have produced them, bear too convincing a testimony."

In order to illustrate the power of human populations to grow quickly to enormous numbers if left completely unchecked, Malthus turned to statistics from the United States, where the population had doubled every 25 years for a century and a half. Malthus called this type of growth "geometrical" (today we would call it "exponential"); and, drawing on his mathematical education, he illustrated it by the progression 1,2,4,8,16,32,64,128,256,..etc. In order to show that, in the long run, no improvement in agriculture could possibly keep pace with unchecked population growth, Malthus allowed that, in England, agricultural output might with great effort be doubled during the next quarter century; but during a subsequent 25-year period it could not again be doubled. The growth of agricultural output could at the very most follow an arithmetic (linear) progression, 1,2,3,4,5,6,..etc.

Because of the overpoweringly greater numbers which can potentially be generated by exponential population growth, as contrasted to the slow linear progression of sustenance, Malthus was convinced that at almost all stages of human history, population has not expanded freely, but has instead pressed painfully against the limits of its food supply. He maintained that human numbers are normally held in check either by "vice or misery". (Malthus



classified both war and birth control as forms of vice.) Occasionally the food supply increases through some improvement in agriculture, or through the opening of new lands; but population then grows very rapidly, and soon a new equilibrium is established, with misery and vice once more holding the population in check.

Like Godwin's *Political Justice*, Malthus' *Essay on the Principle of Population* was published at exactly the right moment to capture the prevailing mood of England. In 1793, the mood had been optimistic; but by 1798, hopes for reform had been replaced by reaction and pessimism. Public opinion had been changed by Robespierre's Reign of Terror and by the threat of a French invasion. Malthus' clear and powerfully written essay caught the attention of readers not only because it appeared at the right moment, but also because his two contrasting mathematical laws of growth were so striking.

One of Malthus' readers was William Godwin, who recognized the essay as the strongest challenge to his utopian ideas that had yet been published. Godwin several times invited Malthus to breakfast at his home to discuss social and economic problems. (After some years, however, the friendship between Godwin and Malthus cooled, the debate between them having become more acrimonious.)

In 1801, Godwin published a reply to his critics, among them his former friends James Mackintosh and Samuel Parr, by whom he recently had been attacked. His *Reply to Parr* also contained a reply to Malthus: Godwin granted that the problem of overpopulation raised by Malthus was an extremely serious one. However, Godwin wrote, all that is needed to solve the problem is a change of the attitudes of society. For example we need to abandon the belief "that it is the first duty of princes to watch for (i.e. encourage) the multiplication of their subjects, and that a man or woman who passes the term of life in a condition of celibacy is to be considered as having failed to discharge the principal obligations owed to the community".

"On the contrary", Godwin continued, "it now appears to be rather the man who rears a numerous family that has to some degree transgressed the consideration he owes to the public welfare". Godwin suggested that each marriage should be allowed only two or three children or whatever number might be needed to balance the current rates of mortality and celibacy. This duty to society, Godwin wrote, would surely not be too great a hardship to be endured, once the reasons for it were thoroughly understood.

### **The second essay, published in 1803**

Malthus' small essay had captured public attention in England, and he was anxious to expand it with empirical data which would show his principle of

population to be valid not only in England in his own day, but in all societies and all periods. He therefore traveled widely, collecting data. He also made use of the books of explorers, such as Cook and Vancouver.

Malthus second edition - more than three times the length of his original essay on population - was ready in 1803. Book I and Book II of the 1803 edition of Malthus' *Essay* are devoted to a study of the checks to population growth which have operated throughout history in all the countries of the world for which he possessed facts.

In his first chapter, Malthus stressed the potentially enormous power of population growth contrasted the slow growth of the food supply. He concluded that strong checks to the increase of population must almost always be operating to keep human numbers within the bounds of sustenance. He classified the checks as either preventive or positive, the preventive checks being those which reduce fertility, while the positive checks are those which increase mortality. Among the positive checks, Malthus listed "unwholesome occupations, severe labour and exposure to the seasons, extreme poverty, bad nursing of children, great towns, excesses of all kinds, the whole train of common diseases and epidemics, wars, plague, and famine".

In the following chapters of Books I, Malthus showed in detail the mechanisms by which population is held at the level of sustenance in various cultures. He first discussed primitive hunter-gatherer societies, such as the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego, Van Diemens Land and New Holland, and those tribes of North American Indians living predominantly by hunting. In hunting societies, he pointed out, the population is inevitably very sparse: "The great extent of territory required for the support of the hunter has been repeatedly stated and acknowledged", Malthus wrote, "...The tribes of hunters, like beasts of prey, whom they resemble in their mode of subsistence, will consequently be thinly scattered over the surface of the earth. Like beasts of prey, they must either drive away or fly from every rival, and be engaged in perpetual contests with each other...The neighboring nations live in a perpetual state of hostility with each other. The very act of increasing in one tribe must be an act of aggression against its neighbors, as a larger range of territory will be necessary to support its increased numbers. The contest will in this case continue, either till the equilibrium is restored by mutual losses, or till the weaker party is exterminated or driven from its country... Their object in battle is not conquest but destruction. The life of the victor depends on the death of the enemy". Malthus concluded that among the American Indians of his time, war was the predominant check to population growth, although famine, disease and infanticide each played a part.

In Book II, Malthus turned to the nations of Europe, as they appeared at the end of the 18th century, and here he presents us with a different pic-

ture. Although in these societies poverty, unsanitary housing, child labour, malnutrition and disease all took a heavy toll, war produced far less mortality than in hunting and pastoral societies, and the preventive checks, which lower fertility, played a much larger roll.

Malthus painted a very dark panorama of population pressure and its consequences in human societies throughout the world and throughout history: At the lowest stage of cultural development are the hunter-gatherer societies, where the density of population is extremely low. Nevertheless, the area required to support the hunters is so enormous that even their sparse and thinly scattered numbers press hard against the limits of sustenance. The resulting competition for territory produces merciless intertribal wars.

The domestication of animals makes higher population densities possible; and wherever this new mode of food production is adopted, human numbers rapidly increase; but very soon a new equilibrium is established, with the population of pastoral societies once more pressing painfully against the limits of the food supply, growing a little in good years, and being cut back in bad years by famine, disease and war.

Finally, agricultural societies can maintain extremely high densities of population; but the time required to achieve a new equilibrium is very short. After a brief period of unrestricted growth, human numbers are once more crushed against the barrier of limited resources; and if excess lives are produced by overbreeding, they are soon extinguished by deaths among the children of the poor.

Malthus was conscious that he had drawn an extremely dark picture of the human condition. He excused himself by saying that he has not done it gratuitously, but because he was convinced that the dark shades really are there, and that they form an important part of the picture. He did allow one ray of light, however: By 1803, his own studies of Norway, together with personal conversations with Godwin and the arguments in Godwin's *Reply to Parr*, had convinced Malthus that "moral restraint" should be included among the possible checks to population growth. Thus he concluded Book II of his 1803 edition by saying that the checks which keep population down to the level of the means of subsistence can all be classified under the headings of "moral restraint, vice and misery". (In his first edition he had maintained that vice and misery are the only possibilities).

## Replies to Malthus

The second edition of Malthus' *Essay* was published in 1803. It provoked a storm of controversy, and a flood of rebuttals. In 1803 England's political situation was sensitive. Revolutions had recently occurred both in America

and in France; and in England there was much agitation for radical change, against which Malthus provided counter-arguments. Pitt and his government had taken Malthus' first edition seriously, and had abandoned their plans for extending the Poor Laws. Also, as a consequence of Malthus' ideas, England's first census was taken in 1801. This census, and subsequent ones, taken in 1811, 1821 and 1831, showed that England's population was indeed increasing rapidly, just as Malthus had feared. (The population of England and Wales more than doubled in 80 years, from an estimated 6.6 million in 1750 to almost 14 million in 1831.) In 1803, the issues of poverty and population were at the center of the political arena, and articles refuting Malthus began to stream from the pens of England's authors.

William Coleridge planned to write an article against Malthus, and he made extensive notes in the margins of his copy of the *Essay*. In one place he wrote: "Are Lust and Hunger both alike Passions of physical Necessity, and the one equally with the other independent of the Reason and the Will? Shame upon our race that there lives an individual who dares to ask the Question." In another place Coleridge wrote: "Vice and Virtue subsist in the agreement of the habits of a man with his Reason and Conscience, and these can have but one moral guide, Utility, or the virtue and Happiness of Rational Beings". Although Coleridge never wrote his planned article, his close friend Robert Southey did so, using Coleridge's notes almost verbatim. Some years later Coleridge remarked: "Is it not lamentable - is it not even marvelous - that the monstrous practical sophism of Malthus should now have gained complete possession of the leading men of the kingdom! Such an essential lie in morals - such a practical lie in fact it is too! I solemnly declare that I do not believe that all the heresies and sects and factions which ignorance and the weakness and wickedness of man have ever given birth to, were altogether so disgraceful to man as a Christian, a philosopher, a statesman or citizen, as this abominable tenet."

In 1812, Percy Bysshe Shelley, who was later to become William Godwin's son-in-law, wrote: "Many well-meaning persons... would tell me not to make people happy for fear of over-stocking the world... War, vice and misery are undoubtedly bad; they embrace all that we can conceive of temporal and eternal evil. Are we to be told that these are remedyless, because the earth would in case of their remedy, be overstocked?" A year later, Shelley called Malthus a "priest, eunuch, and tyrant", and accused him, in a pamphlet, of proposing that "... after the poor have been stript naked by the tax-gatherer and reduced to bread and tea and fourteen hours of hard labour by their masters.. the last tie by which Nature holds them to benignant earth (whose plenty is garnered up in the strongholds of their tyrants) is to be divided... They are required to abstain from marrying under penalty of starvation..."

whilst the rich are permitted to add as many mouths to consume the products of the poor as they please”

Godwin himself wrote a long book (which was published in 1820) entitled *Of Population, An Enquiry Concerning the Power and Increase in the Number of Mankind, being an answer to Mr. Malthus*. One can also view many of the books of Charles Dickens as protests against Malthus’ point of view. For example, *Oliver Twist* gives us a picture of a workhouse “administered in such a way that the position of least well-off independent workers should not be worse than the position of those supported by parish assistance.”

Among the 19th century authors defending Malthus was Harriet Martineau, who wrote: “The desire of his heart and the aim of his work were that domestic virtue and happiness should be placed within the reach of all... He found that a portion of the people were underfed, and that one consequence of this was a fearful mortality among infants; and another consequence the growth of a recklessness among the destitute which caused infanticide, corruption of morals, and at best, marriage between pauper boys and girls; while multitudes of respectable men and women, who paid rates instead of consuming them, were unmarried at forty or never married at all. Prudence as to time of marriage and for making due provision for it was, one would think, a harmless recommendation enough, under the circumstances.”

## The Irish Potato Famine of 1845

Meanwhile, in Ireland, a dramatic series of events had occurred, confirming the ideas of Malthus. Anti-Catholic laws prevented the Irish cottagers from improving their social position; and instead they produced large families, fed almost exclusively on a diet of milk and potatoes. The potato and milk diet allowed a higher density of population to be supported in Ireland than would have been the case if the Irish diet had consisted primarily of wheat. As a result, the population of Ireland grew rapidly: In 1695 it had been approximately one million, but by 1821 it had reached 6,801,827. By 1845, the population of Ireland was more than eight million; and in that year the potato harvest failed because of blight. All who were able to do so fled from the country, many emigrating to the United States; but two million people died of starvation. As the result of this shock, Irish marriage habits changed, and late marriage became the norm, just as Malthus would have wished. After the Potato Famine of 1845, Ireland maintained a stable population of roughly four million.

Malthus continued a life of quiet scholarship, unperturbed by the heated public debate which he had caused. At the age of 38, he married a second cousin. The marriage produced only three children, which at that time was considered to be a very small number. Thus he practiced the pattern of late

marriage which he advocated. Although he was appointed rector of a church in Lincolnshire, he never preached there, hiring a curate to do this in his place. Instead of preaching, Malthus accepted an appointment as Professor of History and Political Economy at the East India Company's College at Haileybury. This appointment made him the first professor of economics in England, and probably also the first in the world. Among the important books which he wrote while he held this post was *Principles of Political Economy, Considered with a View to their Practical Application*. Malthus also published numerous revised and expanded editions of his *Essay on the Principle of Population*. The third edition was published in 1806, the fourth in 1807, the fifth in 1817, and the sixth in 1826.

In the societies that Malthus describes, we can see a clear link not only between population pressure and poverty, but also between population pressure and war. Undoubtedly this is why the suffering produced by poverty and war saturates so much of human history. Stabilization of population through birth control offers a key to eliminating this suffering.

## **Population stabilization and sustainability**

Does the contrast between the regions of our contemporary world mean that Malthus has been "proved wrong" in some regions and "proved right" in others? To answer this question, let us re-examine the basic assertion which Malthus puts forward in Books I and II of the 1803 version of his *Essay*. His basic thesis is that the maximum natural fertility of human populations is greatly in excess of replacement fertility. This being so, Malthus points out, human populations would always increase exponentially if they were not prevented from doing so by powerful and obvious checks.

In general, Malthus tells us, populations cannot increase exponentially because the food supply increases slowly, or is constant. Therefore, he concludes, in most societies and almost all periods of history, checks to population growth are operating. These checks may be positive, or they may be preventive, the positive checks being those which raise the death rate, while the preventive checks lower the birth rate. There are, however, Malthus says, exceptional periods of history when the populations of certain societies do actually increase exponentially because of the opening of new lands or because of the introduction of new methods of food production. As an example, he cites the growth of the population of the United States, which doubled every 25 years over a period of 150 years.

We can see, from this review of Malthus' basic thesis, that his demographic model is flexible enough to describe all of the regions of our contemporary world: If Malthus were living today, he would say that in countries with low

birth and death rates and stable populations, the checks to population growth are primarily preventive, while in countries with high death rates, the positive checks are important. Finally, Malthus would describe our rapidly-growing global population as the natural result of the introduction of improved methods of food production in the developing countries. We should notice, however, that the flexibility of Malthus' demographic model first appears in the 1803 version of his *Essay*: In the 1798 version, he maintained “..that population does invariably increase, where there are means of subsistence..” and “that the superior power (of population) cannot be checked without producing misery and vice..” This narrower model of population did not agree with Malthus' own observations in Norway in 1799, and therefore in his 1803 *Essay* he allowed more scope for preventive checks, which included late marriage and moral restraint as well as birth control (which he classified under the heading of “vice”).

Today we are able to estimate the population of the world at various periods in history, and we can also make estimates of global population in prehistoric times. Looking at the data, we can see that the global population of humans has not followed an exponential curve as a function of time, but has instead followed a hyperbolic trajectory. At the time of Christ, the population of the world is believed to have been approximately 220 million. By 1500, the earth contained 450 million people, and by 1750, the global population exceeded 700 million. As the industrial and scientific revolution has accelerated, global population has responded by increasing at a break-neck speed: In 1930, the population of the world reached two billion; in 1958 three billion; in 1974 four billion; in 1988 five billion, and in 1999, six billion. Today, roughly a billion people are being added to the world's population every fourteen years.

**Thomas Robert Malthus, mathematician and economist, warning voice, we need your voice today!**





## Chapter 9

# Percy Bysshe Shelley

### **A pioneer of non-violent resistance to tyranny**

Largely unrecognized during his lifetime, Shelley is today considered to be one of the major English-language poets. Less well known is the fact that he was a pioneer of non-violent resistance to tyranny, whose ideas influenced Henry David Thoreau, Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was the eldest legitimate son of Sir Timothy Shelley, Baronet and Whig Member of Parliament. His mother was a wealthy Sussex landowner. Shelley was thus the heir to a baronetcy and a large estate. He had a happy childhood, but was unhappy at Eton College, where he was regularly mobbed because of his strong principles and his refusal to take part in sports.

In 1810, after graduating from Eton, Shelley became a student at Oxford University. Legend has it that he attended only one lecture. However, while at Oxford, he was extremely active as a writer, publishing a series of books: the Gothic novel, *Zastrozzi* (1810), *St. Irvyne; or, The Rosicrucian: A Romance* (dated 1811), *Original Poetry by Victor and Cazire* (written together with his sister Elizabeth ) and a collection of poetry entitled *Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson* (written in collaboration with Thomas Jefferson Hogg).

### **Expelled from Oxford**

All these books could have been considered subversive by the Oxford authorities, but no action was taken. However, when Shelley anonymously published *The Necessity of Atheism* in 1811, the University authorities threatened to expel him if he did not renounce his authorship. Shelley refused and was expelled. His influential father then intervened, and persuaded the authorities to reinstate his son if he would renounce his authorship as well as the principles expressed in the pamphlet. However, Shelley once again refused. This led to an estrangement between father and son.

Sir Thomas cut off his son's allowance, and from then on, Shelley's financial circumstances became precarious. He was still the heir to an estate with an income of 6,000 pounds per year, in those days an enormous sum, and could (and did) borrow money against his future inheritance, but the amount that he could raise in that way was limited.

### Godwin's disciple

After being expelled from Oxford, Shelley visited the poet Robert Southey, who informed him that William Godwin was still alive. Shelley who had always been an ardent admirer of Godwin's writing, was greatly excited by the news, and he immediately contacted Godwin, offering himself as a disciple.

At that time, England was going through a period of reaction against the excesses of the French Revolution, and Godwin's books and articles were no longer popular. Left with two infant daughters to care for after the death of his wife, Godwin had been driven to marry his neighbor, Mary Jane Claremont, a widow who herself had a young daughter. Thus, when Shelley arrived at Godwin's household he met three attractive young girls, Fanny Imlay, Jane Claremont and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin. All three had been educated by Godwin.

Here is Jane Claremont's description of the household: 'All the family worked hard, learning and studying: we all took the liveliest interest in the great questions of the day. Common topics, gossiping, scandal, found no entrance in our circle for we had been taught by Mr. Godwin to think it the greatest misfortune to be fond of the world, or worldly pleasures or of luxury or money; and that there was no greater happiness than to think well of those around us, to love them, and to delight in being useful or pleasing to them'.

'The name of Godwin has been used to excite in me feelings of reverence and admiration', the 20-year-old Shelley had written in his letter to Godwin. '...I had enrolled your name on the list of the honourable dead. I had felt regret that the glory of your being had passed from this earth of ours. It is not so. You still live, and I firmly believe are still planning the welfare of human kind'.

'I am young', Shelley wrote, 'You have gone before me, I doubt not a veteran to me in the years of persecution. Is it strange that, defying persecution as I have done, I should outstep the limits of custom's prescription, and endeavour to make my desire useful by friendship with William Godwin?'

Godwin answered immediately, and in the voluminous correspondence which followed he soon recognized Shelley's genius.

Inspired by Godwin's *Political Justice*, Shelley had decided to devote both his life and his fortune to political reform. (The fortune, however, was only a

distant future prospect.) In his letters, Godwin advised slow changes through education as the best means of reform but Shelley's whole temperament rebelled against caution and gradualism.

During the spring of 1812 Shelley wrote *An Address to the Irish People* and travelled to Ireland to work for the cause of Catholic emancipation. He assured the worried Godwin that the pamphlet contained 'no religion but benevolence, no cause but virtue, no party but the world'. Shelley soon found himself so surrounded by beggars and government spies that he was forced to leave Ireland.

Shelley's letters had by this time captured the imagination of the entire Godwin household, and whenever a new one arrived with its familiar handwriting, all three daughters and Mary Jane waited excitedly 'on tiptoe' to know the news. Shelley, who dreamed of establishing a utopian community of free and enlightened friends, invited Godwin to come to Devon for a visit and Godwin (who was in the habit of making a small excursion during his summer vacation) did so; but after a terrible journey by boat in stormy weather he arrived at Lynemouth only to find Shelley gone. Alarmed by the arrest of his servant Dan (who had been posting Shelley's *Declaration of Rights* and his ballad *The Devil's Walk*), the young poet had left quietly with his entourage before he himself was arrested.

## A wild romance

In 1814, Shelley had lodgings in Fleet Street but, between May and July, he lived mainly with the Godwin family. Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin was at that time sixteen and a half years old and extremely pretty, with long blond hair and her father's expressive eyes. She had just returned from Scotland, where she had lived for two years with family friends, ostensibly for the sake of her health. Probably the real reason for Mary's stay in Scotland was friction with her step-mother: Mary's affection for her father had been enough to excite the jealousy of the new Mrs Godwin.

Shelley was immediately electrified by meeting Mary. As she told him of her daydreams, of her writing, and of the wild Scottish landscapes which she had just experienced, Mary seemed to him to combine the emotional sensitivity of Mary Wollstonecraft with the imagination and mental power of William Godwin. In an ode to Mary, Shelley wrote:

*They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth,  
Of glorious parents, thou aspiring Child.  
I wonder not, for One then left this earth  
Whose life was like a setting planet mild,*

*Which clothed thee in a radiance undefiled  
Of its departing glory, still her fame  
Shines on thee through the tempests dark and wild  
Which shake these latter days; and thou canst claim  
The shelter from thy Sire of an immortal name.*

For her part, Mary was fascinated by the openness, generosity and warmth of the brilliant young writer who was her father's best-loved disciple. In her copy of Shelley's revolutionary poem *Queen Mab*, she wrote: 'This book is sacred to me... I love the author beyond all power of expression...'

Because of her step-mother's jealousy, it was uncomfortable for Mary to be at home; and she was in the habit of taking a book to the old St Pancras churchyard where her mother was buried. Shelley followed her there and under the willow tree beside Mary Wollstonecraft's grave they declared their love for each other. Meanwhile, Mary's step-sister Jane, who had stage-managed the meeting, watched from a distant tombstone. Jane was (of course) also in love with Shelley and Fanny, the third sister, was in love with him too.

On 28 July 1814, Godwin awoke to find a note on his dressing table: Shelley had eloped with Mary and, amazingly, he and Mary had taken Jane with them. Mary was 16 years old, Jane 15, and Shelley 21.

The fugitives had left at five in the morning and hurried to Dover where they embarked for France in a small boat. After a stormy and dangerous night on the Channel, they arrived at Calais. Meanwhile, Mrs Godwin set off in pursuit, hoping to rescue Jane and with the help of information from the London stables, she traced the runaways to their lodgings in Calais. Jane spent the next night with her mother, but in the morning she decided firmly to continue with Mary and Shelley.

Why had Shelley and Mary taken Jane? For one thing, Jane was the only one of the three who spoke fluent French and she was good at making practical arrangements. Shelley also thought that Jane needed to be rescued from the influence of the new Mrs Godwin. 'I am not in the least in love with her', Shelley is said to have explained, "but she is a nice little girl, and her mother is such a vulgar, commonplace woman, without an idea of philosophy. I do not think she is a proper person to form the mind of a young girl.'

After arriving in Paris, Shelley, Mary and Jane bought a mule and they set out for Switzerland, sometimes riding the mule but for the most part walking. Switzerland was the country of Rousseau and the setting of Godwin's novel, *Fleetwood*. They hoped that it would prove to be a land of enlightenment and freedom. After a few weeks in Switzerland, however, Shelley's financial problems forced them to return to England. Mary later described the journey in her *History of a Six Week's Tour*.

## Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

Jane now changed her name to one which she considered to be more romantic: Claire. Since she was no longer permitted a share of Shelley, Claire decided to capture a poet of her own and with remarkable resourcefulness and determination she managed to seduce Lord Byron, then at the height of his fame. This was an extraordinary accomplishment since Byron was being pursued by hordes of fashionable and beautiful women, including the famous Lady Caroline Lamb. However, Byron was soon forced to leave England because of scandals resulting from his affairs, especially his relationship with his half-sister Augusta.

On 2 May 1816, Shelley and Mary left England too, planning never to return. Shelley's financial position had improved following the death of his grandfather in 1815. Shelley and Mary took Claire Clairmont with them. She was already pregnant with Lord Byron's child, although probably none of them knew it. They headed for Geneva, hoping to meet Lord Byron there. Claire was anxious to show off her catch to Shelley and the two poets were looking forward to meeting each other. Although Shelley was not yet famous as a writer, Byron had read and admired his work

Byron had rented a large house called Villa Diodati, near Lake Geneva, and he was staying there with his personal physician, Dr Polidori. Shelley, Mary and Claire found quarters at the nearby Maison Chapuis, and before long the whole Villa Diodati group had settled into a routine of excursions on the lake or walks along the shore, followed by long evenings of conversation at Villa Diodati. Whenever the weather was bad, as it frequently was that summer, Shelley, Mary and Claire spent the night at Diodati instead of returning to Maison Chapuis. Because of Byron's fame, their movements were followed avidly by scandalized English tourists, who spent hours looking at the party through field-glasses and telescopes. Stories of a 'league of incest' filtered back to England; and the rumors had some foundation, since Byron had resumed his affair with Claire. He looked down on her, but Claire was very pretty, and, as Byron explained, 'I could not exactly play the stoic with a woman who has scrambled eight hundred miles to unphilosophize me'.

Byron was writing the third canto of *Childe Harold*, and in the evenings he often read new sections of it to the others. The romantic mood of the poem and the splendor of the distant Alps contributed to the atmosphere of the summer evenings at Diodati.

Byron also retold for his friends the myth of Prometheus Porphyros, which he had translated from Aeschylus at Harrow. In this myth, Prometheus steals the sacred fire of the gods and gives it to mankind. Punished by Zeus, Prometheus is chained forever to a rock in the Caucasus, while an eagle tears

out his vitals. A later version of the myth, Prometheus Plasticator, was popular among the Romans, and in this later version, Prometheus creates or recreates mankind by giving life to a figure of clay.

Both Byron and Shelley recognized the symbolic possibilities of the myth. Prometheus had already been used as a symbol of the creative artist but Shelley, with his interest in science, saw that Prometheus could also stand as a symbol for scientific creativity. Benjamin Franklin had recently performed the famous experiment in which he flew a kite during a thunderstorm, thus drawing down lightning and showing it to be identical with electricity. Franklin, Shelley realized, could be thought of as a modern Prometheus, who defied the thunderbolts of Zeus and brought the sacred fire of the gods down from heaven for the use of mankind.

The weather worsened at Diodati, and for many days, heavy rain and lightning confined the party to the villa. To pass the time, they read aloud to each other from a book of German ghost stories. The storm outside and the strange Gothic stories had a strong effect on Shelley's imagination, and one night he rushed out of the room with a cry of terror, explaining later that he had seen a vision of a woman with eyes instead of breasts.

'We will each write a ghost story', Byron said, and his idea was adopted with enthusiasm. Dr Polidori began a tale of a skull-headed woman; and both Byron and Shelley began stories too but, being poets, they soon tired of writing prose. Mary was unable to think of an idea sufficiently horrible to produce terror in a reader. Every morning she was asked whether she had found a theme and she was forced to answer sadly that she had not.

Meanwhile, Byron and Shelley continued to talk of the possibilities of the myth of Prometheus, especially as a symbol for scientific creativity. Perhaps, one day, science might achieve the Promethean feat of creating life. Shelley was especially interested in experiments with electricity, such as the discovery by Galvani that an electrical current could cause the legs of a dismembered frog to move.

'Many and long were the conversations between Lord Byron and Shelley', Mary wrote later. Finally, well past midnight, Mary went to bed; but she was unable to sleep. Images from the conversation, to which she had been an attentive but almost silent listener, passed uncontrollably through her mind. Later, remembering this half-waking dream, she wrote:

I saw, with shut eyes, but acute mental vision, I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world.

Mary realized that she had found her theme. In fact, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, not yet 19 years old, had discovered an enduring symbol for science out of control, science pursued without regard for its social consequences. The next day, encouraged by Shelley, she began to write *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*,

### ***Ozymandias***

*I met a traveller from an antique land,  
 Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
 Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,  
 Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,  
 And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
 Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
 Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
 The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;  
 And on the pedestal, these words appear:  
 My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;  
 Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!  
 Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
 Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare  
 The lone and level sands stretch far away.*

### **The Peterloo Massacre**

Shelley wrote his poem *The Masque of Anarchy* in response to the Peterloo Massacre, which took place at St. Peter's field, Manchester on the 16th of August 1819. Cavalry soldiers of the government charged a crowd of 50,000 citizens who were peacefully assembled to ask for better representation in Parliament. They were suffering from unemployment and from famine produced by the Corn Laws. The cavalry slashed down hundreds of the protesters with their sabres, including women and children. Shelley's poem advocating non-violent resistance to tyranny was an inspiration to Thoreau, Tolstoy and Gandhi. Here is the poem:

*Stand ye calm and resolute,  
 Like a forest close and mute,  
 With folded arms and looks which are  
 Weapons of unvanquished war.*

*And if then the tyrants dare,*



Figure 9.1: *Percy Bysshe Shelley in a portrait by Alfred Clint (Wikipedia).*



*Let them ride among you there;  
Slash, and stab, and maim and hew;  
What they like, that let them do.*

*With folded arms and steady eyes,  
And little fear, and less surprise,  
Look upon them as they slay,  
Till their rage has died away:*

*Then they will return with shame,  
To the place from which they came,  
And the blood thus shed will speak  
In hot blushes on their cheek:*

*Rise, like lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number!  
Shake your chains to earth like dew  
Which in sleep had fallen on you:  
Ye are many, they are few!*

### **A few verses from *Prometheus Unbound***

*This is the day, which down the void abyss  
At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's despotism,  
And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep:  
Love, from its awful throne of patient power  
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour  
Of dead endurance, from the slippery, steep,  
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs  
And folds over the world its healing wings.*

*Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,  
These are the seals of that most firm assurance  
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;  
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,  
Mother of many acts and hours, should free  
The serpent that would clasp her with his length;  
These are the spells by which to re-assume  
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.*

*To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;  
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;  
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;  
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;  
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be  
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;  
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.*

**Percy Bysshe Shelley, major poet, social reformer, pioneer of non-violent resistance to tyranny, we need your voice today!**

# Chapter 10

## Robert Owen

### **A pioneer of social reform**

During the early phases of the Industrial Revolution in England, the workers suffered greatly. Enormous fortunes were made by mill and mine owners, while workers, including young children, were paid starvation wages for cruelly long working days. However, trade unions, child labor laws, and the gradual acceptance of birth control finally produced a more even distribution of the benefits of industrialization.

One of the most interesting pioneers of these social reforms was Robert Owen (1771-1858), who is generally considered to have been the father of the Cooperative Movement. Although in his later years not all of his projects developed as he wished, his life started as an amazing success story. Owen's life is not only fascinating in itself; it also illustrates some of the reforms that occurred between 1815 and 1850.

Robert Owen was born in Wales, the youngest son of a family of iron-mongers and saddle-makers. He was a very intelligent boy, and did well at school, but at the age of 9, he was apprenticed to a draper, at first in Wales. Later, at the age of 11, he was moved to London, where he was obliged to work eighteen hours a day, six days a week, with only short pauses for meals. Understandably, Robert Owen found this intolerable, and he moved again, this time to Manchester, where he again worked for a draper.

### **An almost unbelievable success story**

While in Manchester, Robert Owen became interested in the machines that were beginning to be used for spinning and weaving. He borrowed a hundred pounds from his brother, and entered (as a partner) a small business that made these machines. After two years of moderate success as a small-scale industrialist, Owen saw the newspaper advertisement of a position for manager

of a large spinning mill, owned by a Mr. Drinkwater. "I put on my hat" Owen wrote later, "and proceeded straight to Mr. Drinkwater's counting house." "How old are you?", he asked. "Twenty this May", was my reply. "How often do you get drunk in the week?"... "I was never", I said, "drunk in my life", blushing scarlet at this unexpected question. "What salary do you ask?" "Three hundred a year", was my reply. "What?", Mr. Drinkwater said with some surprise, repeating the words, "Three hundred pounds! I have had this morning I know not how many seeking the situation and I do not think that all of their askings would amount to what you require." "I cannot be governed by what others seek", said I, "and I cannot take less."

Apparently impressed by Robert Owen's success as a small-scale industrialist, and perhaps also impressed by his courage, Mr. Drinkwater hired him. Thus, at the age of 19, Owen became the manager of a large factory. Mr. Drinkwater had no cause to regret his decision, since his new manager quickly became the boy wonder of Manchester's textile community. Within six months, Drinkwater offered Owen a quarter interest in his business.

After several highly successful years in his new job, Robert Owen heard of several mills that were for sale in the village of New Lanark, near to Glasgow. The owner, Mr. Dale, happened to be the father of the girl with whom Robert Owen had fallen in love. Instead of directly asking Dale for permission to marry his daughter, Owen (together with some business partners) first purchased the mills, after which he won the hand of the daughter.

## **New Lanarck, a Utopian community**

Ownership of the New Lanark mills gave Robert Owen the chance to put into practice the ideas of social reform that he had been developing throughout his life. Instead of driving his workers by threats of punishment, and instead of subjecting them to cruelly long working hours (such as he himself had experienced as a draper's apprentice in London), Owen made the life of his workers at New Lanark as pleasant as he possibly could. He established a creche for the infants of working mothers, free medical care, concerts, dancing, music-making, and comprehensive education, including evening classes.

Rather than the usual squalid one-room houses for workers, neat two-room houses were built. Garbage was collected regularly instead of being thrown into the street. New Lanark also featured pleasant landscaped areas.

Instead of leading to bankruptcy, as many of his friends predicted, Robert Owen's reforms led to economic success. Owen's belief that a better environment would lead to better work was vindicated. The village, with its model houses, schools and mills, became internationally famous as a demonstration that industrialism need not involve oppression.



Figure 10.1: *Robert Owen (public domain).*

Crowds of visitors made the journey over narrow roads from Glasgow to learn from New Lanark and its visionary proprietor. Among the twenty thousand visitors who signed the guest-book between 1815 and 1825 were the Grand Duke Nicholas of Russia (who later became Czar Nicholas I), and Princes John and Maximilian of Austria.

Robert Owen's ideas of social reform can be seen in the following extract from an "Address to the Inhabitants of New Lanark", which he presented on New Year's Day, 1816: "What ideas individuals may attach to the term 'Millennium' I know not; but I know that society may be formed so as to exist without crime, without poverty, with health greatly improved, with little, if any, misery. and with intelligence and happiness increased a hundredfold; and no obstacle whatsoever intervenes at this moment except ignorance to prevent such a state of society from becoming universal."

## **Owen's solution to the national crisis**

Robert Owen believed that these principles could be applied not only in New Lanark but also in the wider world. He was soon given a chance to express this belief. During the years from 1816 to 1820, apart from a single year, business conditions in England were very bad, perhaps as a result of the Napoleonic Wars, which had just ended. Pauperism and social unrest were widespread, and threatened to erupt into violence. A committee to deal with the crisis was formed under the leadership of the Dukes of Kent and York.

Because of Owen's reputation, he was asked for his opinion, but the committee was hardly expecting the answer that they received from him. Robert Owen handed the two Dukes and the other committee members a detailed plan for getting rid of pauperism by making paupers productive. They were to be settled in self-governing Villages of Cooperation, each with between 800 and 1,200 inhabitants. Each family was to have a private apartment, but there were to be common sitting rooms, reading rooms and kitchens. Near to the houses, there were to be gardens tended by the children, and farther out, fields to be cultivated by the adults. Still farther from the houses, there was to be a small factory.

Owen's idea for governmentally-planned paupers' collectives was at first rejected out of hand. The early 19th century was, after all, a period of unbridled laissez-faire economics. Owen then bombarded the Parliament with pamphlets advocating his scheme. Finally a committee was formed to try to raise the money to establish one Village of Cooperation as an experiment; but the money was never raised.

## **New Harmony: Utopia on the banks of the Wabash**

Unwilling to accept defeat, Robert Owen sold his interest in New Lanark and sailed for America, where he believed that his social experiment would have a better chance of success. He bought the town of Harmonie and 30,000 acres of land on the banks of the Wabash River in Indiana. There he established a Village of Cooperation which he named “New Harmony” He dedicated it on the 4th of July, 1826. It remained a collective for only two years, after which individualism reasserted itself. Owen’s four sons and one of his daughters made their homes in New Harmony, and it also became the home of numerous scientists, writers and artists.

Owen’s son, Robert Dale Owen, became a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, where he introduced the bill establishing the Smithsonian Institution. In 1862 he wrote an eloquent letter to Abraham Lincoln urging emancipation of the slaves. Three days later, probably influenced by Owen’s letter, Lincoln read the Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet. Another son, Richard Owen, served as President of the University of Indiana, and was later elected as the first President of Purdue University.

## **Founding the Cooperative Movement**

When Robert Owen returned to England shortly after dedicating New Harmony, he found that he had become a hero of the working classes. They had read his writings avidly, and had begun to establish cooperatives, following his principles. There were both producer’s cooperatives and consumer’s cooperatives. In England, the producer’s cooperatives failed, but in Denmark they succeeded, as we will discuss below.

One of the early consumer’s cooperatives in England was called the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers. It was founded by 28 weavers and other artisans, who were being forced into poverty by mechanization. They opened a small cooperative store selling butter, sugar, flour, oatmeal and candles. After a few months, they also included tobacco and tea. From this small beginning, the Cooperative Movement grew, finally becoming one of the main pillars of the British Labour Party.

## **A national labour union**

Robert Owen’s attention now turned from cooperatives to the embryonic trade union movement, which was struggling to establish itself in the face of fierce governmental opposition. He assembled the leaders of the working class movement and proposed the formation of the “Grand National Moral Union of Pro-

ductive and Useful Classes”. The name was soon shortened to “The Grand National Consolidated Trades Union” or simply the “Grand National”.

Owen’s Grand National was launched in 1833, and its membership quickly grew to half a million. It was the forerunner of modern nationwide trade unions, but it lasted only two years. Factory-owners saw the Grand National as a threat, and they persuaded the government to prosecute it under anti-union laws. Meanwhile, internal conflicts helped to destroy the Grand National. Owen was accused of atheism by the working class leaders, and he accused them of fermenting class hatred.

Robert Owen’s influence helped to give raw laissez faire capitalism a more human face, and helped to spread the benefits of industrialization more widely. Through the work of other reformers like Owen, local trade unions succeeded, both in England and elsewhere; and in the end, successful national unions were finally established. The worst features of the early Industrial Revolution were moderated by the growth of the trade union movement, by child labor laws, by birth control and by a minimum wage law.

**Robert Owen, pioneer of the cooperative movement, pioneer of social end economic reform, we need your voice today!**



# Chapter 11

## John Stuart Mill

### He was not allowed to have a childhood

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) showed his genius at an early age, and his father, the Utilitarian philosopher and political economist James Mill, immediately began to groom him to replace Jeremy Bentham as the leader of the Utilitarian movement. From the age of 3 onwards, Mill was deliberately kept away from children of his own age and made to spend all his waking hours in study. Play was not allowed, since it would break the habit of continual diligence.

At the age of three, Mill was taught Greek. By the time he reached eight, he had read Aesop's Fables, Xenophon's Anabasis, and all the works of Herodotus. He was also acquainted with Lucian, Diogenes Laërtius, Isocrates and six dialogues of Plato, in their original language. Furthermore, he had also read a great deal of history in English and had been taught arithmetic, physics and astronomy.

When he was twelve, Mill began a thorough study of the scholastic logic, at the same time reading Aristotle's logical treatises in the original language. At thirteen, he was introduced to political economy and studied the classical economists Adam Smith and David Ricardo. In fact Ricardo, who was a close friend of his father, used to invite the young Mill to his house for a walk in order to talk about political economy.

At the age of fourteen, Mill spent a year in France, where he attended the winter courses on chemistry, zoology, logic of the Faculté des Sciences, as well as taking a course of the higher mathematics. He also met the economist Jean-Baptiste Say, a friend of his father, and the political philosopher Henri Saint-Simon.



Figure 11.1: *John Stuart Mill and his stepdaughter Helen Taylor, with whom he worked for fifteen years after the death of his wife, Harriet Taylor Mills (Wikipedia).*

## Limits to growth

John Stuart Mill pioneered the concept of a steady-state economy. He realized that on a finite earth, neither the population nor the economy of humans can continue to grow forever. In 1848 (when there were just over one billion people in the world), he described the optimal global population in the following words:

“The density of population necessary to enable mankind to obtain, in the greatest degree, all the advantages of cooperation and social intercourse, has, in the most populous countries, been attained. A population may be too crowded, although all be amply supplied with food and raiment.”

“... Nor is there much satisfaction in contemplating the world with nothing left to the spontaneous activity of nature; with every rood of land brought into cultivation, which is capable of growing food for human beings; every flowery waste or natural pasture plowed up, all quadrupeds or birds which are not domesticated for man’s use exterminated as his rivals for food, every hedgerow or superfluous tree rooted out, and scarcely a place left where a wild shrub or flower could grow without being eradicated as a weed in the name of improved agriculture. If the earth must lose that great portion of its pleasantness which it owes to things that the unlimited increase of wealth and population would extirpate from it, for the mere purpose of enabling it to support a larger, but

not better or happier population, I sincerely hope, for the sake of posterity, that they will be content to be stationary, long before necessity compels them to it.”

## **Contributions to Utilitarian theory**

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) had written that “it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong”. Mill refined this basic principle of Utilitarianism by pointing out the difference between higher pleasures, for example moral or intellectual pleasures, and lower ones, such as pleasures of the flesh. Mill remarked that “It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, are of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question.”

## **Ideas on economics and on individual liberty**

According to David Ricardo’s “Iron Law of Wages”, laborers must always live on the exact borderline between starvation and survival. Wages, Ricardo argued, are determined by the laws of supply and demand. If wages increase above the starvation level, more children of workers survive, the supply of workers increases, and the wages fall once more.

Mill rebelled against Ricardo’s dismal “Iron Law” by pointing out that although the means of production might be regulated by the necessities of economics, social conscience can determine the way in which the goods are distributed. (Later Mahatma Gandhi extended this idea by pointing out that social conscience can also play a role in the way that goods are produced).

John Stuart Mill also contributed importantly to the idea of individual liberty as opposed to unlimited control by the state or by social opinion. He is the author of the following powerful and influential principle:

“The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.”

## **Opposition to slavery**

Regarding slavery, Mill wrote: “This absolutely extreme case of the law of force, condemned by those who can tolerate almost every other form of arbitrary power, and which, of all others, presents features the most revolting to the feeling of all who look at it from an impartial position, was the law of civilized and Christian England within the memory of persons now living:

and in one half of Angle-Saxon America three or four years ago, not only did slavery exist, but the slave trade, and the breeding of slaves expressly for it, was a general practice between slave states. Yet not only was there a greater strength of sentiment against it, but, in England at least, a less amount either of feeling or of interest in favour of it, than of any other of the customary abuses of force: for its motive was the love of gain, unmixed and undisguised: and those who profited by it were a very small numerical fraction of the country, while the natural feeling of all who were not personally interested in it, was unmitigated abhorrence.”

### **Member of Parliament and advocate of for votes for women**

During the years between 1865 and 1868, John Stuart Mill served simultaneously as a Member of Parliament and as Lord Rector of the University of St. Andrews. In Parliament, Mill was the first person to call for votes for women. His motion was defeated, but it set an important precedent. Mills may have been influenced by his wife, Harriet Taylor Mills, who was a brilliant person in her own right.

Together with his wife and stepdaughter, Mills composed a book entitled *The Subjugation of Women*, which was completed in 1861. It contains a passage arguing that “the legal subordination of one sex to another - is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a system of perfect equality, admitting no power and privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.

### **Some quotations**

*Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing.*

*A person may cause evil to others not only by his actions but by his inaction, and in either case he is justly accountable to them for the injury.*

*I have learned to seek my happiness by limiting my desires, rather than in attempting to satisfy them.*

*In this age, the mere example of non-conformity, the mere refusal to bend the knee to custom, is itself a service. Precisely because the tyranny of opinion is such as to make eccentricity a reproach, it is desirable, in order to break through that tyranny, that people should be eccentric. Eccentricity has always abounded when and where strength of character has abounded; and the amount*

*of eccentricity in a society has generally been proportional to the amount of genius, mental vigor, and moral courage which it contained. That so few now dare to be eccentric, marks the chief danger of the time.*

*The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it. Each is the proper guardian of his own health, whether bodily, or mental or spiritual. Mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves, than by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest.*

*The peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.*

*It still remains unrecognized, that to bring a child into existence without a fair prospect of being able, not only to provide food for its body, but instruction and training for its mind, is a moral crime, both against the unfortunate offspring and against society; and that if the parent does not fulfil this obligation, the State ought to see it fulfilled, at the charge, as far as possible, of the parent.*

*It is not because men's desires are strong that they act ill; it is because their consciences are weak*

*Every man who says frankly and fully what he thinks is so far doing a public service. We should be grateful to him for attacking most unsparingly our most cherished opinions.*

*Those only are happy (I thought) who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness; on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit, followed not as a means, but as itself an ideal end. Aiming thus at something else, they find happiness by the way. The enjoyments of life (such was now my theory) are sufficient to make it a pleasant thing, when they are taken en passant, without being made a principal object.*

*However, positive anyone's persuasion may be, not only of the faculty but of the pernicious consequences, but (to adopt expressions which I altogether con-*

*demn) the immorality and impiety of opinion -yet if, in pursuance of that private judgement, though backed by the public judgement of his country or contemporaries, he prevents the opinion from being heard in its defense, he assumes infallibility. And so far from the assumption being less objectionable or less dangerous because the opinion is called immoral or impious, this is the case of all others in which it is most fatal.*

*Whatever we may think or affect to think of the present age, we cannot get out of it; we must suffer with its sufferings, and enjoy with its enjoyments; we must share in its lot, and, to be either useful or at ease, we must even partake its character.*

*The principle itself of dogmatic religion, dogmatic morality, dogmatic philosophy, is what requires to be rooted out; not any particular manifestation of that principle. The very corner-stone of an education intended to form great minds, must be the recognition of the principle, that the object is to call forth the greatest possible quantity of intellectual power, and to inspire the intensest love of truth.*

*What is called the Law of Nations is not properly law, but a part of ethics: a set of moral rules, accepted as authoritative by civilized states.*

*If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.*

**John Stuart Mill, economist with a social and ecological conscience, defender of individual liberty, pioneering advocate of the rights of women, we need your voice today!**

# Chapter 12

## Henry David Thoreau

In the distant future (and perhaps even in the not-so-distant future) industrial civilization will need to abandon its relentless pursuit of unnecessary material goods and economic growth. Modern society will need to re-establish a balanced and harmonious relationship with nature. In preindustrial societies harmony with nature is usually a part of the cultural tradition. In our own time, the same principle has become central to the ecological counter-culture while the main-stream culture thunders blindly ahead, addicted to wealth, power and growth.

In the 19th century the American writer, Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), pioneered the concept of a simple life, in harmony with nature. Today, his classic book, *Walden*, has become a symbol for the principles of ecology, simplicity, and respect for nature.

Thoreau was born in Concord Massachusetts, and he attended Harvard from 1833 to 1837. After graduation, he returned home, worked in his family's pencil factory, did odd jobs, and for three years taught in a progressive school founded by himself and his older brother, John. When John died of lockjaw in 1842, Henry David was so saddened that he felt unable to continue the school alone.

### **Nonviolent civil disobedience**

Thoreau refused to pay his poll tax because of his opposition to the Mexican War and to the institution of slavery. Because of his refusal to pay the tax (which was in fact a very small amount) he spent a night in prison. To Thoreau's irritation, his family paid the poll tax for him and he was released. He then wrote down his ideas on the subject in an essay entitled *The Duty of Civil Disobedience*, where he maintains that each person has a duty to follow his own individual conscience even when it conflicts with the orders of his

government.

In his essay, Thoreau said: “A common and natural result of an undue respect for law is that you may see a file of soldiers, colonel, captain, corporal, privates, powder-monkeys, and all marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against their wills, ay, against their common sense and consciences, which makes it very steep marching indeed, and produces a palpitation of the heart. They have no doubt that it is a damnable business in which they are concerned; they are all peaceably inclined. Now, what are they? Men at all? or small movable forts and magazines, at the service of some unscrupulous man in power?”

“Under a government that which imprisons any unjustly”, Thoreau wrote, “the true place for a just man is in prison.” Civil Disobedience influenced Tolstoy, Gandhi and Martin Luther King, and it anticipated the Nuremberg Principles.

## **Harmony with nature**

Thoreau became the friend and companion of the transcendentalist writer Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 1882), who introduced him to a circle of New England writers and thinkers that included Ellery Channing, Margaret Fuller and Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Nathaniel Hawthorne described Thoreau in the following words: “Mr. Thorow [sic] is a keen and delicate observer of nature, a genuine observer, which, I suspect, is almost as rare a character as even an original poet; and Nature, in return for his love, seems to adopt him as her especial child, and shows him secrets which few others are allowed to witness. He is familiar with beast, fish, fowl, and reptile, and has strange stories to tell of adventures, and friendly passages with these lower brethren of mortality. Herb and flower, likewise, wherever they grow, whether in garden, or wild wood, are his familiar friends. He is also on intimate terms with the clouds and can tell the portents of storms. It is a characteristic trait, that he has a great regard for the memory of the Indian tribes, whose wild life would have suited him so well; and strange to say, he seldom walks over a plowed field without picking up an arrow-point, a spear-head, or other relic of the red men, as if their spirits willed him to be the inheritor of their simple wealth.”

## **Walden, an experiment in simple living**

At Emerson’s suggestion, Thoreau opened a journal, in which he recorded his observations concerning nature and his other thoughts. Ultimately the journal contained more than 2 million words. Thoreau drew on his journal when



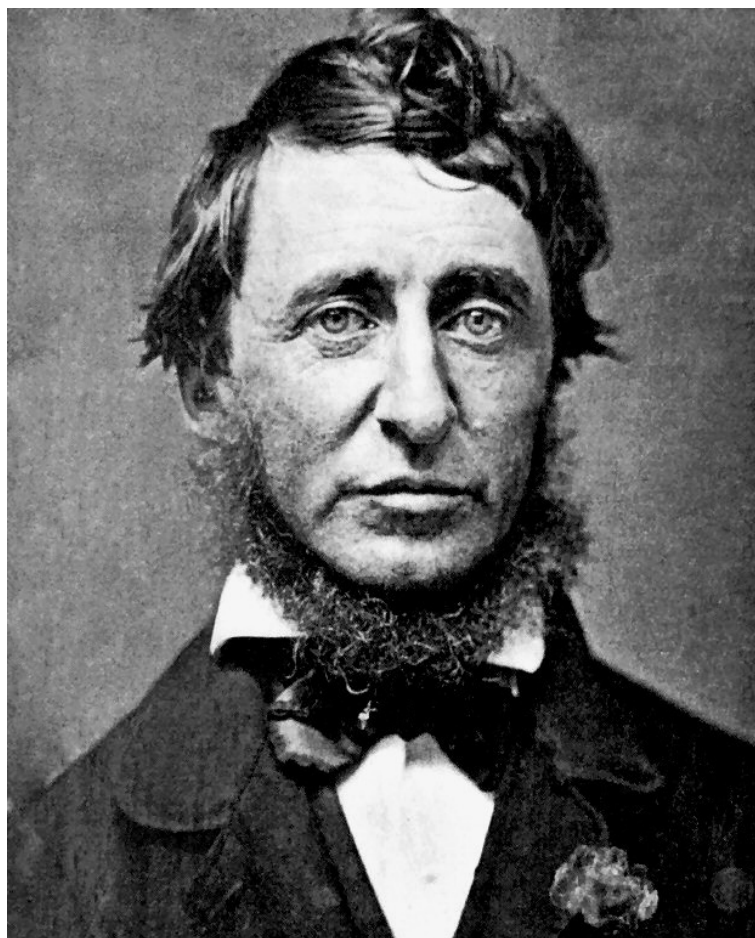


Figure 12.1: *Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). Public domain, Wikimedia Commons*

writing his books and essays, and in recent years, many previously unpublished parts of his journal have been printed.

From 1845 until 1847, Thoreau lived in a tiny cabin that he built with his own hands. The cabin was in a second-growth forest beside Walden Pond in Concord, on land that belonged to Emerson. Thoreau regarded his life there as an experiment in simple living. He described his life in the forest and his reasons for being there in his book *Walden*,

“Most of the luxuries”, Thoreau wrote, “and many of the so-called comforts of life, are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind. With respect to luxuries, the wisest have ever lived a more simple and meager life than the poor. The ancient philosophers, Chinese, Hindoo, Persian, and Greek, were a class than which none has been poorer in outward riches, none so rich in inward.”

Elsewhere in *Walden*, Thoreau remarks, “It is never too late to give up your prejudices”, and he also says, “Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed, and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer.” Other favorite quotations from Thoreau include “Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth”, “Beware of all enterprises that require new clothes”, “Most men lead lives of quiet desperation” and “Men have become tools of their tools.”

Thoreau’s closeness to nature can be seen from the following passage, written by his friend Frederick Willis, who visited him at Walden Pond in 1847, together with the Alcott family: “He was talking to Mr. Alcott of the wild flowers in Walden woods when, suddenly stopping, he said: ‘Keep very still and I will show you my family.’ Stepping quickly outside the cabin door, he gave a low and curious whistle; immediately a woodchuck came running towards him from a nearby burrow. With varying note, yet still low and strange, a pair of gray squirrels were summoned and approached him fearlessly. With still another note several birds, including two crows flew towards him, one of the crows nestling upon his shoulder. I remember that it was the crow resting close to his head that made the most vivid impression on me, knowing how fearful of man this bird is. He fed them all from his hand, taking food from his pocket, and petted them gently before our delighted gaze; and then dismissed them by different whistling, always strange and low and short, each wild thing departing instantly at hearing his special signal.”

### **Thoreau’s views on religion**

Towards the end of his life, when he was very ill, someone asked Thoreau whether he had made his peace with God. “We never quarreled”, he answered.

In an essay published by the Atlantic Monthly in 1853, Thoreau described a pine tree in Maine with the words: "It is as immortal as I am, and perchance will go to as high a heaven, there to tower above me still." However, the editor (James Russell Lowell) considered the sentence to be blasphemous, and removed it from Thoreau's essay.

In one of his essays, Thoreau wrote: "If a man walk in the woods for love of them half of each day, he is in danger of being regarded as a loafer; but if he spends his whole day as a speculator, shearing off those woods and making the earth bald before her time, he is esteemed an industrious and enterprising citizen."

## **A few more things that Thoreau said**

*It is the beauty within us that makes it possible for us to recognize the beauty around us. The question is not what you look at, but what you see.*

*Simplify your life. Don't waste the years struggling for things that are unimportant. Don't burden yourself with possessions. Keep your needs and wants simple and enjoy what you have. Don't destroy your peace of mind by looking back, worrying about the past. Live in the present. Simplify!*

*Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you've imagined.*

*Happiness is like a butterfly; the more you chase it, the more it will elude you, but if you turn your attention to other things, it will come and sit softly on your shoulder.*

*Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth.*

*The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation. From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats. A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them, for this comes after work. But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things.*

*You must live in the present, launch yourself on every wave, find your eternity in each moment. Fools stand on their island of opportunities and look toward another land. There is no other land; there is no other life but this*

*Be not simply good, be good for something,*

*Books are the treasured wealth of the world and the fit inheritance of generations and nations.*

*If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.*

*If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music he hears, however measured or far away.*

*The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when one asked me what I thought, and attended to my answer.*

*We need the tonic of wildness...At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be indefinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature.*

**Henry David Thoreau, pioneer of nonviolent civil disobedience, pioneer of environmentalism, we need your voice today!**

# Chapter 13

## Count Leo Tolstoy

Leo Tolstoy was born in 1828. While he was still a child, his parents died, and he became Count Tolstoy, with responsibility for the family estate at Yasnaya Polyana. As a young man, he was attracted to the gay and worldly social life of Moscow, but his diary during this period shows remorse over his pursuit of sensual pleasures. Disgusted with himself, he entered the army, and during idle periods he began his career as a writer. While still a soldier, he published a beautiful nostalgic work entitled “Childhood” as well as a number of skillful stories describing army life.

### **Schools and textbooks for peasants**

At the age of 28, Tolstoy left the army and spent a brief period as a literary idol in St. Petersburg. He then became concerned about lack of education among Russian peasants, and he traveled widely in Europe, studying educational theory and methods. Returning to Yasnaya Polyana, he established schools for the peasants, published an educational magazine and compiled a number of textbooks whose simplicity and attractiveness anticipated modern teaching methods.

### **Tolstoy’s great novels**

Tolstoy married in 1862 at the age of 34. His wife, Sonya Bers, shared his wide intellectual interests, and they had a happy family life with thirteen children<sup>1</sup>. During this period, Tolstoy managed his estate with much success, and he produced his great literary masterpieces “War and Peace” and “Anna Karenina”. He modeled the characters in “War and Peace” after members of his own family. For example, Tolstoy’s famous heroine, Natassia, is modeled after his sister-in-law, Tanya Bers. Pierre in “War and Peace” and Levin in

“Anna Karenina” reflect Tolstoy’s own efforts to understand the meaning of life, his concern with the misery of the Russian peasants, and his ultimate conclusion that true happiness and peace of mind can only be found in a simple life devoted to the service of others.

### **Search for life’s meaning**

By the time Tolstoy had finished “Anna Karenina”, he had become very dissatisfied with the life that he was leading. Despite having achieved in great measure all of the goals for which humans usually strive, he felt that his existence lacked meaning; and in 1879 he even contemplated suicide. He looked for life’s purpose by systematically studying the writings of scientists and philosophers, but he could not find an answer there that satisfied him.

Finally Tolstoy found inspiration in the humble and devout lives of the peasants. He decided that the teachings of Jesus, as recorded in the New Testament, could provide the answer for which he was searching. Tolstoy published an account of his spiritual crisis in a book entitled “A Confession”, in which he says:

“I searched for enlightenment everywhere in the hard-won accumulated knowledge of mankind. I searched passionately and long, not in a lazy way, but with my whole soul, day and night. I searched like a drowning man looking for safety - and found nothing. I searched all the sciences, and not only did I find nothing, but I also came to the conclusion that everyone who, like myself, had searched in the sciences for life’s meaning had also found nothing.”

“I then diligently studied the teachings of Buddhism and Islam in the holy books of those religions; but most of all I studied Christianity as I met it in the holy Scriptures and in the living Christians around me...”

### **Love for the poor**

“I began to approach the believers among the poor, simple ignorant people: pilgrims, monks and peasants... The whole life of Christians of our own circle seemed to be a contradiction of their faith. By contrast, the whole life of Christians of the peasant class was an affirmation of the view of life which their religious faith gave to them. I looked more and more deeply into the faith of these people, and the more deep my insight became, the more I became convinced that they had a genuine belief, that their faith was essential to them, and that it was their faith alone which gave their life a meaning and made it possible for them to live... I developed a love for these simple people.”

Moved by the misery of the urban poor whom he encountered in the slums of Moscow, Tolstoy wrote: “Between us, the rich and the poor, there is a wall

of false education, and before we can help the poor, we must first tear down that wall. I was forced to the conclusion that our own wealth is the true cause of the misery of the poor.”

## **What Then Must We Do?**

Tolstoy’s book, “What Then Must We Do?”, tells of his experiences in the slums and analyses the causes of poverty. Tolstoy felt that the professed Christian belief of the Czarist state was a thin cosmetic layer covering a structure that was fundamentally built on violence. Violence was used to maintain a huge gap between the rich and the poor, and violence was used in international relations. Tolstoy felt especially keenly the contradiction between Christianity and war. In a small book entitled “The Kingdom of God is Within Us” he wrote:

### **The contradiction between Christianity and war**

“All other contradictions are insignificant compared with the contradiction which now faces humankind in international relations. and which cries out for a solution, since it brings the very existence of civilization into danger. This is the contradiction between the Christian conscience and war.”

“All of the Christian peoples of the world, who all follow one and the same spiritual life, so that any good and fruitful thought which is put forward in any corner of the world is immediately communicated to all of Christendom, where it arouses feelings of pride and happiness in us regardless of our nationality; we who simply love the thinkers, humanitarians, and poets of other countries; we who not only admire their achievements, but also feel delight in meeting them and greet them with friendly smiles; we will all be forced by the state to participate in a murderous war against these same people, a war which if it does not break out today will do so tomorrow.”

“...The sharpest of all contradictions can be seen between the government’s professed faith in the Christian law of the brotherhood of all humankind, and the military laws of the state, which force each young man to prepare himself for enmity and murder, so that each must be simultaneously a Christian and a gladiator.”

### **Banned and excommunicated**

Tolstoy’s writings on Christianity and on social questions were banned by the public censor, and he was excommunicated from the Russian Orthodox Church. However, his universally recognized stature as one of the world’s

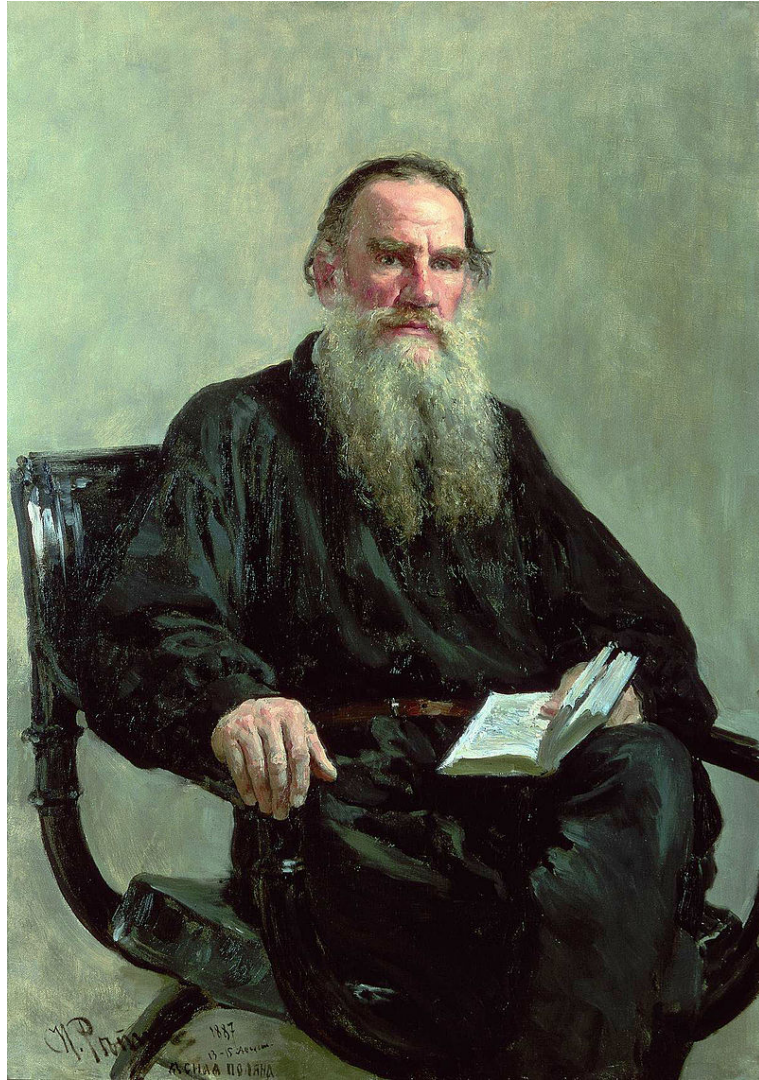


Figure 13.1: *Portrait of Count Leo Tolstoy made in 1887 by Ilya Repin. Public domain, Wikimedia Commons*



greatest writers was undiminished, and his beliefs attracted many followers, both inside and outside of Russia.

## **Tolstoy and Gandhi**

In 1894, the young Indian lawyer, Mohandas K. Gandhi, (who was then working for the civil rights of Indians in South Africa), read Tolstoy's books on Christianity and was greatly influenced by them. Gandhi wrote a review of "The Kingdom of God is Within Us", and in 1909 he sent Tolstoy an account of the activities of the civil rights movement in South Africa. He received a reply in which Tolstoy said:

"...The longer I live, and especially now, when I vividly feel the nearness of death, the more I want to tell others what I feel so particularly clearly and what to my mind is of great importance, namely that which is called passive resistance, but which is in reality nothing else but the teaching of love, uncorrupted by false interpretations. That love, i.e. the striving for the union of human souls and the activity derived from that striving, is the highest and only law of human life, and in the depth of his soul every human being knows this (as we most clearly see in children); he knows this until he is entangled in the false teachings of the world. This law was proclaimed by all, by the Indian as by the Chinese, Hebrew, Greek and Roman sages of the world. I think that this law was most clearly expressed by Christ, who plainly said that in this alone is all the law and the prophets'..." "...The peoples of the Christian world have solemnly accepted this law, while at the same time they have permitted violence and built their lives on violence; and that is why the whole life of the Christian peoples is a continuous contradiction between what they profess, and the principles on which they order their lives - a contradiction between love accepted as the law of life, and violence which is recognized and praised, acknowledged even as a necessity in different phases of life, such as the power of rulers, courts, and armies..."

## **Nonviolent resistance to governmental violence**

Tolstoy believed that violence can never under any circumstances be justified, and that therefore an individual's resistance to governmental violence must be passive and non-violent. He also believed that each individual ought to reduce his needs to a minimum in order to avoid exploiting the labor of others.

Tolstoy gave up meat, alcohol, tobacco, and hunting. He began to clean his own room, wore simple peasant clothes, worked in the fields, and made his own boots. He participated in famine relief, and he would have liked to give away all of his great wealth to feed the poor, but bowing to the protests of

his family, he gave his wealth to them instead. Because he had been unable to convert his family to his beliefs, Tolstoy left home secretly on a November night in 1910, accompanied, like King Lear, by his youngest daughter. He died of pneumonia a few days later at a remote railway junction.

**Count Leo Tolstoy, great author and humanist, pioneer of nonviolent resistance, we need your voice today!**

# Chapter 14

## Mahatma Gandhi

If humans are ever to achieve a stable global society in the future, they will have to become much more modest in their economic behavior and much more peaceful in their politics. For both modesty and peace, Gandhi is a useful source of ideas. The problems with which he struggled during his lifetime are extremely relevant to us in the 21st Century, when both nuclear and ecological catastrophes threaten the world.

### **Avoiding escalation of conflicts**

Today we read almost every day of killings that are part of escalating cycles of revenge and counter-revenge, for example in the Middle East. Gandhi's experiences both in South Africa and in India convinced him that such cycles could only be ended by unilateral acts of kindness and understanding from one of the parties in a conflict. He said, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind".

To the insidious argument that "the end justifies the means", Gandhi answered firmly: "They say that 'means are after all means'. I would say that 'means are after all everything'. As the means, so the end. Indeed, the Creator has given us limited power over means, none over end... The means may be likened to a seed, and the end to a tree; and there is the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree. Means and end are convertible terms in my philosophy of life."

Gandhi's advocacy of non-violence is closely connected to his attitude towards ends and means. He believed that violent methods for achieving a desired social result would inevitably result in an escalation of violence. The end achieved would always be contaminated by the methods used. He was influenced by Leo Tolstoy with whom he exchanged many letters, and he in turn influenced Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela.

## **The power of truth**

Gandhi was trained as a lawyer, and when he began to practice in South Africa, in his first case, he was able to solve a conflict by proposing a compromise that satisfied both parties. Of this result he said, “My joy was boundless. I had learnt the true practice of law. I had learnt to find out the better side of human nature and to enter men’s hearts. I realized that the true function of a lawyer was to unite parties riven asunder.” When Gandhi became involved with the struggle for civil rights of the Indian minority in South Africa, his background as a lawyer once more helped him. This time his jury was public opinion in England. When Gandhi lead the struggle for reform, he insisted that the means of protest used by his followers should be non-violent, even though violence was frequently used against them. In this way they won their case in the court of public opinion. Gandhi called this method of protest “satyagraha”, a Sanskrit word meaning “the power of truth”. In today’s struggles for justice and peace, the moral force of truth and nonviolence can win victories in the court of world public opinion.

## **Harmony between religious groups**

Gandhi believed that at their core, all religions are based on the concepts of truth, love, compassion, nonviolence and the Golden Rule. When asked whether he was a Hindu, Gandhi answered, “Yes I am. I am also a Christian, a Muslim, a Buddhist and a Jew.” When praying at his ashram, Gandhi made a point of including prayers from many religions. One of the most serious problems that he had to face in his efforts to free India from British rule was disunity and distrust, even hate, between the Hindu and Muslim communities. Each community felt that with the British gone, they might face violence and repression from the other. Gandhi made every effort to bridge the differences and to create unity and harmony. His struggles with this problem are highly relevant to us today, when the world is split by religious and ethnic differences.

## **Solving the problem of unemployment**

In discussing the problem of unemployment in India’s villages, Gandhi wrote: “Machinery has its place; it has come to stay. But it must not be allowed to displace necessary human labour. An improved plow is a good thing. But if, by some chance, one man could plow up, by some invention of his, the whole land of India, and control all the agricultural produce, and if the millions had no other occupation, they would starve, and being idle, they would become dunces, as many have already become. There is hourly danger of many being

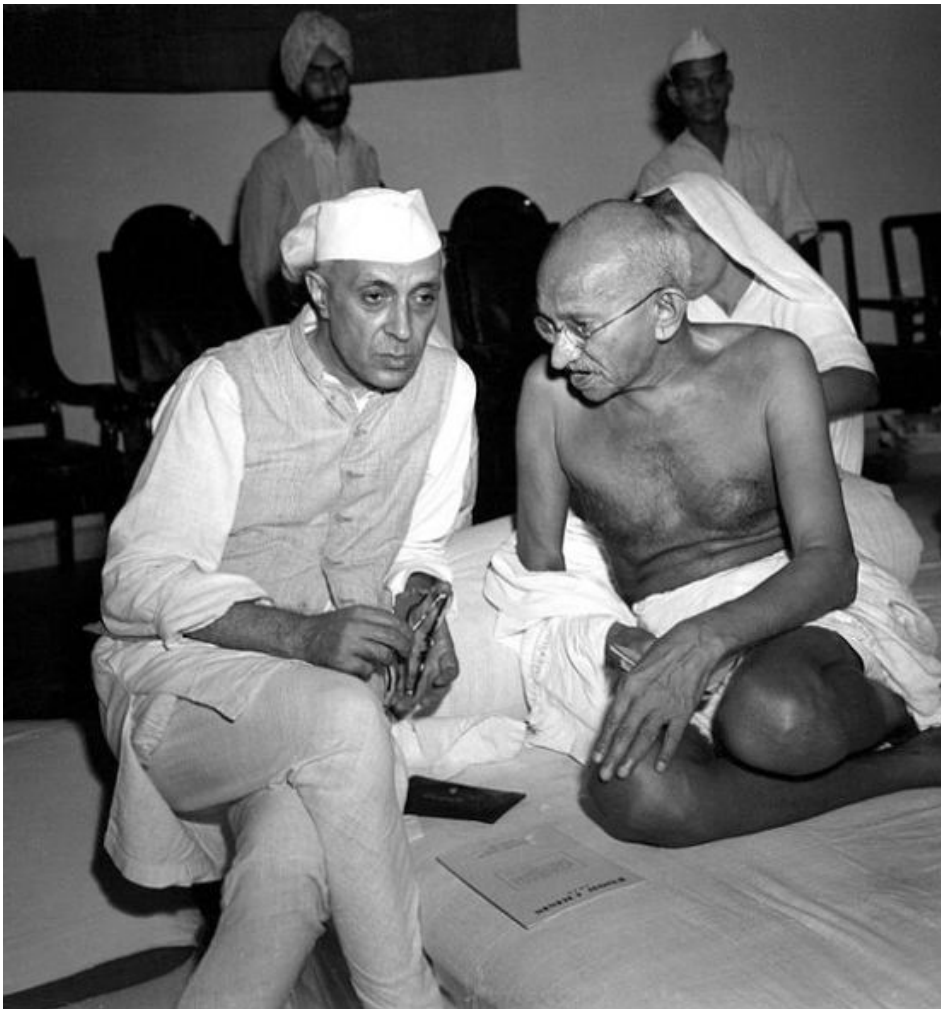


Figure 14.1: *Gandhi and Nehru at a meeting of the Congress Party. After India gained its independence, it was Nehru's vision of an urbanized and industrialized India that prevailed. Gandhi's much more sustainable vision of "India of villages" was lost. (Wikimedia Commons)*

reduced to that unenviable state.” Gandhi frequently worked to substitute social goals for the brutal laws of economic competition. He urged that in order to solve the problem of unemployment in rural India, villagers should stop buying imported cloth from England, and should instead spin and weave their own cloth. His spinning wheel was incorporated into the flag of the Congress Party, and ultimately it became part of the flag of an independent India.

### **Solidarity with the poor**

Today’s world is characterized by intolerable economic inequalities, both between nations and within nations. 18 million of our fellow humans die each year from poverty-related causes. 1.1 billion people live on less than 1 dollar a day, 2.7 billion live on less than 2 dollars. Gandhi’s concern for the poor can serve as an example to us today, as we work to achieve a more equal world. He said, “There is enough for every man’s need, but not for every man’s greed.”

### **Voluntary reduction of consumption**

After Gandhi’s death, someone took a photograph of all his worldly possessions. It was a tiny heap, consisting of his glasses, a pair of sandals, a home-spun cloth (his only garment) and a watch. That was all. By reducing his own needs and possessions to an absolute minimum, Gandhi had tried to demonstrate that the commonly assumed connection between wealth and merit is false. This is relevant today, in a world where we face a crisis of diminishing resources. Not only fossil fuels, but also metals and arable land per capita will become scarce in the future. This will force a change in lifestyle, particularly in the industrialized countries, away from consumerism and towards simplicity. Gandhi’s example can teach us that we must cease to use wealth and “conspicuous consumption” as a measure of merit.

### **Gandhian economics**

In his autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi says: “Three moderns have left a deep impression on my life and captivated me: Raychandbhai (the Indian philosopher and poet) by his living contact; Tolstoy by his book ‘The Kingdom of God is Within You’; and Ruskin by his book ‘Unto This Last’.” Ruskin’s book, ‘Unto This Last’, which Gandhi read in 1904, is a criticism of modern industrial society. Ruskin believed that friendships and warm interpersonal

relationships are a form of wealth that economists have failed to consider. He felt that warm human contacts are most easily achieved in small agricultural communities, and that therefore the modern tendency towards centralization and industrialization may be a step backward in terms of human happiness. While still in South Africa, Gandhi founded two religious Utopian communities based on the ideas of Tolstoy and Ruskin, Phoenix Farm (1904) and Tolstoy Farm (1910).

Because of his growing fame as the leader of the Indian civil rights movement in South Africa, Gandhi was persuaded to return to India in 1914 and to take up the cause of Indian home rule. In order to reacquaint himself with conditions in India, he travelled tirelessly, now always going third class as a matter of principle.

During the next few years, Gandhi worked to reshape the Congress Party into an organization which represented not only India's Anglicized upper middle class but also the millions of uneducated villagers who were suffering under an almost intolerable burden of poverty and disease. In order to identify himself with the poorest of India's people, Gandhi began to wear only a white loincloth made of rough homespun cotton. He traveled to the remotest villages, recruiting new members for the Congress Party, preaching non-violence and "firmness in the truth", and becoming known for his voluntary poverty and humility. The villagers who flocked to see him began to call him "Mahatma" (Great Soul).

Disturbed by the spectacle of unemployment and poverty in the villages, Gandhi urged the people of India to stop buying imported goods, especially cloth, and to make their own. He advocated the reintroduction of the spinning wheel into village life, and he often spent some hours spinning himself. The spinning wheel became a symbol of the Indian independence movement, and was later incorporated into the Indian flag.

The movement for boycotting British goods was called the "Swadeshi movement". The word Swadeshi derives from two Sanskrit roots: Swa, meaning self, and Desh, meaning country. Gandhi described Swadeshi as "a call to the consumer to be aware of the violence he is causing by supporting those industries that result in poverty, harm to the workers and to humans or other creatures."

Gandhi tried to reconstruct the crafts and self-reliance of village life that he felt had been destroyed by the colonial system. "I would say that if the village perishes, India will perish too", he wrote, "India will be no more India. Her own mission in the world will get lost. The revival of the village is only possible when it is no more exploited. Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as problems of competition and marketing come in. Therefore we have to concentrate on

the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use. Provided this character of the village industry is maintained, there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines that they can make and can afford to use. Only they should not be used as a means of exploitation by others.”

“You cannot build nonviolence on a factory civilization, but it can be built on self-contained villages... Rural economy as I have conceived it, eschews exploitation altogether, and exploitation is the essence of violence... We have to make a choice between India of the villages that are as ancient as herself and India of the cities which are a creation of foreign domination...”

“Machinery has its place; it has come to stay. But it must not be allowed to displace necessary human labour. An improved plow is a good thing. But if by some chances, one man could plow up, by some mechanical invention of his, the whole of the land of India, and control all the agricultural produce, and if the millions had no other occupation, they would starve, and being idle, they would become dunces, as many have already become. There is hourly danger of many being reduced to that unenviable state.”

In these passages we see Gandhi not merely as a pioneer of nonviolence; we see him also as an economist. Faced with misery and unemployment produced by machines, Gandhi tells us that social goals must take precedence over blind market mechanisms. If machines are causing unemployment, we can, if we wish, and use labor-intensive methods instead. With Gandhi, the free market is not sacred; we can do as we wish, and maximize human happiness, rather than maximizing production and profits.

Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu extremist on January 30, 1948. After his death, someone collected and photographed all his worldly goods. These consisted of a pair of glasses, a pair of sandals, a pocket watch and a white homespun loincloth. Here, as in the Swadeshi movement, we see Gandhi as a pioneer of economics. He deliberately reduced his possessions to an absolute minimum in order to demonstrate that there is no connection between personal merit and material goods. Like Veblen, Mahatma Gandhi told us that we must stop using material goods as a means of social competition. We must start to judge people not by what they have, but by what they are.

**Mahatma Gandhi, Great Soul Gandhi, we need your voice today!**



# Chapter 15

## Martin Luther King

*This business of burning human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into veins of peoples normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice and love,*

The son of a southern Baptist minister, Martin Luther King, Jr received his Ph.D. in theology from Boston University in 1955. During his studies, he had admired Thoreau's essay "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience," and he had also been greatly moved by the life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi.

### **King applies the teachings of Thoreau and Gandhi to the Civil Rights movement**

Martin Luther King Jr. had been pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery Alabama for only a year when he was chosen to lead a boycott protesting segregation in the Montgomery buses. Suddenly thrust into this situation of intense conflict, he remembered both the Christian principle of loving one's enemies and Gandhi's methods of non-violent protest. In his first speech as President of the Montgomery Improvement Association (a speech which the rapid pace of events had forced him to prepare in only twenty minutes, five of which he spent in prayer), he said:

"Our method will be that of persuasion, not coercion. We will only say to people, 'Let your conscience be your guide'. Our actions must be guided by the deepest principles of our Christian faith. Love must be our regulating ideal. Once again we must hear the words of Jesus echoing across the centuries: 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you.' If we fail to do this, our protest will end up as a meaningless drama on the stage of history, and its memory will be shrouded by the ugly garments

of shame. In spite of the mistreatment that we have confronted, we must not become bitter and end up by hating our white brothers. As Booker T. Washington said, ‘Let no man pull you down so low as to make you hate him.’”

“If you will protest courageously, and yet with dignity and Christian love, when the history books are written in future generations, the historians will have to pause and say, ‘There lived a great people, a black people, who injected new meaning and dignity into the veins of civilization.’ This is our challenge and our overwhelming responsibility.”

### **Victory in the court of public opinion**

This speech, which Dr. King made in December 1955, set the tone of the black civil rights movement. Although the protesters against racism were often faced with brutality and violence; although many of them, including Dr. King were unjustly jailed; although the homes of the leaders were bombed; although they constantly received telephone calls threatening their lives; although many civil rights workers were severely beaten, and several of them killed, they never resorted to violence in their protests against racial discrimination. Because of this adherence to Christian ethics, public opinion shifted to the side of the civil rights movement, and the United States Supreme Court ruled bus segregation to be unconstitutional.

### **Welcomed to India by Nehru**

In 1959, while recovering from an almost-fatal stabbing, Martin Luther King Jr. visited India at the invitation of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Dr. King and his wife Coretta were warmly welcomed by Nehru, who changed his schedule in order to meet them. They had an opportunity to visit a religious community or “ashram” that Gandhi had founded, and they discussed non-violence with many of Gandhi’s disciples.

### **King is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize**

In 1964, the change in public opinion produced by the non-violent black civil rights movement resulted in the passage of the civil rights act. In the same year, Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. He accepted it, not as an individual, but on behalf of all civil rights workers; and he immediately gave all the prize money to the movement.

## **Opposition to the Viet Nam War**

In 1967, a year before his assassination, Dr. King forcefully condemned the Viet Nam war in an address at a massive peace rally in New York City. He felt that opposition to war followed naturally from his advocacy of non-violence. Speaking against the Viet Nam War, Dr. King said: “We have corrupted their women and children and killed their men. They move sadly and apathetically as we herd them off the land of their fathers into concentration camps where minimal social needs are rarely met. They know they must move on or be destroyed by our bombs ... primarily women and children and the aged watch as we poison their water, as we kill a million acres of their crops. They must weep as the bulldozers roar through their areas preparing to destroy the precious trees. They wander into the hospitals. So far we may have killed a million of them, [in Vietnam by 1967] mostly children. They wander into the towns and see thousands of the children, homeless, without clothes, running in packs on the streets like animals. They see the children degraded by our soldiers as they beg for food. They see the children selling their sisters to our soldiers, soliciting for their mothers.”

## **Opposition to nuclear weapons**

In his book, “Strength to Love”, Dr. King wrote, “Wisdom born of experience should tell us that war is obsolete. There may have been a time when war served a negative good by preventing the spread of an evil force, but the power of modern weapons eliminates even the possibility that war may serve as a negative good. If we assume that life is worth living, and that man has a right to survival, then we must find an alternative to war ... I am convinced that the Church cannot be silent while mankind faces the threat of nuclear annihilation. If the church is true to her mission, she must call for an end to the nuclear arms race.”

## **Assassination**

On April 4, 1968, Dr. King was shot and killed. A number of people, including members of his own family, believe that he was killed because of his opposition to the Viet Nam War. This conclusion is supported by the result of a 1999 trial initiated by members of the King family. Summing up the arguments to the jury, the family’s lawyer said “We are dealing in conspiracy with agents of the City of Memphis and the governments of the State of Tennessee and the United States of America. We ask that you find that a conspiracy existed.” After two and a half hour’s deliberation, the jury found that Lloyd Jowers and “others, including governmental agencies, were parties to this conspiracy”. The verdict



Figure 15.1: *Martin Luther King Jr. speaking in Washington. Source: American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia, [acluva.org](http://acluva.org)*

of the jury remains judicially valid today, and it has never been overturned in a court of law, although massive efforts have been made to discredit it.

## Redemptive love

Concerning the Christian principle of loving one's enemies, Dr. King wrote: "Why should we love our enemies? Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate. Only love can do that ... Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend. We never get rid of an enemy by meeting hate with hate; we get rid of an enemy by getting rid of enmity... It is this attitude that made it possible for Lincoln to speak a kind word about the South during the Civil War, when feeling was most bitter. Asked by a shocked bystander how he could do this, Lincoln said, 'Madam, do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?' This is the power of redemptive love."

To a large extent, the black civil rights movement of the '50's and '60's succeeded in ending legalized racial discrimination in America. If the methods used had been violent, the movement could easily have degenerated into a nightmare of interracial hatred; but by remembering the Christian message, "Love your enemy; do good to them that despitefully use you", Martin Luther King Jr. raised the ethical level of the civil rights movement; and the final result was harmony and understanding between the black and white communities. Later the nonviolent methods of Gandhi and King were successfully applied to the South African struggle against Apartheid by Nelson Mandela and his followers.

## Here are a few more things that Martin Luther King said

*I have decided to stick to love...Hate is too great a burden to bear*

*Faith is taking the first step even when you can't see the whole staircase.*

*Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.*

*In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.*

*If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.*

*Only in the darkness can you see the stars.*

*There comes a time when a person must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must take it because conscience tells him it is right.*

*Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.*

*Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is a constant attitude.*

*We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.*

*There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies.*

*We must live together as brothers or perish together as fools.*

*Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education*

*If we are not careful, our colleges will produce a group of close-minded, unscientific, illogical propagandists, consumed with immoral acts. Be careful, brethren! Be careful, teachers.*

*True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice.*

*Science investigates; religion interprets. Science gives man knowledge, which is power; religion gives man wisdom, which is control. Science deals mainly with facts; religion deals mainly with values. The two are not rivals.*

*The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.*

*We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor, it must be demanded by the oppressed.*

*Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.*

*Out of the mountain of despair, a stone of hope.*

*We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of Now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy.*

*The time is always right to do what is right.*

*The contemporary tendency in our society is to base our distribution on scarcity, which has vanished, and to compress our abundance into the overfed mouths of the middle and upper classes until they gag with superfluity. If democracy is to have breadth of meaning, it is necessary to adjust this inequity. It is not only moral, but it is also intelligent. We are wasting and degrading human life by clinging to archaic thinking.*

*Be a bush if you can't be a tree. If you can't be a highway, just be a trail. If you can't be a sun, be a star. For it isn't by size that you win or fail. Be the best of whatever you are.*

*For when people get caught up with that which is right and they are willing to sacrifice for it, there is no stopping point short of victory.*

*All we say to America is, 'Be true to what you said on paper.' If I lived in China or even Russia, or any totalitarian country, maybe I could understand the denial of certain basic First Amendment privileges, because they hadn't committed themselves to that over there. But somewhere I read of the freedom of assembly. Somewhere I read of the freedom of speech. Somewhere I read of the freedom of the press. Somewhere I read that the greatness of America is the right to protest for right.*

*We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now because I've been to the mountaintop . . . I've looked over and I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the promised land.*

**Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., great orator, champion of justice and equality, fearless opponent of war, we need your voice today!**





# Chapter 16

## Wilfred Owen

Wilfred Owen and his mentor, Siegfried Sassoon were two poets who eloquently described the horrors of World War I. They met in a military hospital, after both had been wounded in the war. Owen had been writing poetry since the age of 11, but not about war. When he became friends with Sassoon during their hospital stay, Owen was inspired by Sassoon's example and realized that the horrors of trenches and gas warfare deserved to be described realistically in poetry. Against the strong advice of Sassoon, Owen insisted on returning to active duty in France, where he wrote the eloquent and bitter war poems for which he is remembered.

Owen was killed in action exactly one week before the end of the war. His mother received the telegram informing her of his death on Armistice Day, as the church bells were ringing out in celebration.

### *Dulce et decorum Est*

*Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,  
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,  
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,  
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.  
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,  
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame, all blind;  
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.*

*Gas! GAS! Quick, boys! - An ecstasy of fumbling  
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,  
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling  
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.*

*Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,  
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.*

*In all my dreams before my helpless sight  
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.*

*If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace  
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,  
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin,  
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs  
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud  
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,  
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est  
Pro patria mori.*

### ***The parable of the old man and the young***

*So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,  
And took the fire with him, and a knife.  
And as they sojourned both of them together,  
Isaac the first-born spake and said, My Father,  
Behold the preparations, fire and iron,  
But where the lamb for this burnt-offering?  
Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,  
and builded parapets and trenches there,  
And stretchèd forth the knife to slay his son.  
When lo! an angel called him out of heaven,  
Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,  
Neither do anything to him. Behold,  
A ram, caught in a thicket by its horns;  
Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.*

*But the old man would not so, but slew his son,  
And half the seed of Europe, one by one.*



Figure 16.1: *Wilfred Owen (1893-1918) (Wikipedia).*

***Disabled***

*He sat in a wheeled chair, waiting for dark,  
 And shivered in his ghastly suit of grey,  
 Legless, sewn short at elbow. Through the park  
 Voices of boys rang saddening like a hymn,  
 Voices of play and pleasure after day,  
 Till gathering sleep had mothered them from him.*

*About this time Town used to swing so gay  
 When glow-lamps budded in the light blue trees,  
 And girls glanced lovelier as the air grew dim,  
 In the old times, before he threw away his knees.  
 Now he will never feel again how slim  
 Girls' waists are, or how warm their subtle hands.  
 All of them touch him like some queer disease.*

*There was an artist silly for his face,  
 For it was younger than his youth, last year.  
 Now, he is old; his back will never brace;  
 He's lost his colour very far from here,  
 Poured it down shell-holes till the veins ran dry,  
 And half his lifetime lapsed in the hot race  
 And leap of purple spurted from his thigh.*

*One time he liked a blood-smear down his leg,  
 After the matches, carried shoulder-high.  
 It was after football, when he'd drunk a peg,  
 He thought he'd better join. - He wonders why.  
 Someone had said he'd look a god in kilts,  
 That's why; and maybe, too, to please his Meg,  
 Aye, that was it, to please the giddy jilts  
 He asked to join. He didn't have to beg;  
 Smiling they wrote his lie: aged nineteen years.*

*Germans he scarcely thought of; all their guilt,  
 And Austria's, did not move him. And no fears  
 Of Fear came yet. He thought of jewelled hilts  
 For daggers in plaid socks; of smart salutes;  
 And care of arms; and leave; and pay arrears;  
 Esprit de corps; and hints for young recruits.*

*And soon, he was drafted out with drums and cheers.*

*Some cheered him home, but not as crowds cheer Goal.  
Only a solemn man who brought him fruits  
Thanked him; and then enquired about his soul.*

*Now, he will spend a few sick years in institutes,  
And do what things the rules consider wise,  
And take whatever pity they may dole.  
Tonight he noticed how the women's eyes  
Passed from him to the strong men that were whole.  
How cold and late it is! Why don't they come  
And put him into bed? Why don't they come?*

**Wilfred Owen, eloquent opponent of war, tragic victim of war, we  
need your voice today!**



# Chapter 17

## Albert Einstein

*“The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything except our ways of thinking, and thus we drift towards unparalleled catastrophes.”*

*“I don’t know what will be used in the next world war, but the 4th will be fought with stones.”*

Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

Besides being one of the greatest physicists of all time, Albert Einstein was a lifelong pacifist, and his thoughts on peace can speak eloquently to us today. We need his wisdom today, when the search for peace has become vital to our survival as a species.

### Family background

Albert Einstein was born in Ulm, Germany, in 1879. He was the son of middle-class, irreligious Jewish parents, who sent him to a Catholic school. Einstein was slow in learning to speak, and at first his parents feared that he might be retarded; but by the time he was eight, his grandfather could say in a letter: “Dear Albert has been back in school for a week. I just love that boy, because you cannot imagine how good and intelligent he has become.”

Remembering his boyhood, Einstein himself later wrote: “When I was 12, a little book dealing with Euclidean plane geometry came into my hands at the beginning of the school year. Here were assertions, as for example the intersection of the altitudes of a triangle in one point, which, though by no means self-evident, could nevertheless be proved with such certainty that any doubt appeared to be out of the question. The lucidity and certainty made an indescribable impression on me.”

When Albert Einstein was in his teens, the factory owned by his father and uncle began to encounter hard times. The two Einstein families moved to Italy, leaving Albert alone and miserable in Munich, where he was supposed to finish his course at the gymnasium. Einstein's classmates had given him the nickname "Beidermeier", which means something like "Honest John"; and his tactlessness in criticizing authority soon got him into trouble. In Einstein's words, what happened next was the following: "When I was in the seventh grade at the Lutpold Gymnasium, I was summoned by my home-room teacher, who expressed the wish that I leave the school. To my remark that I had done nothing wrong, he replied only, 'Your mere presence spoils the respect of the class for me'."

Einstein left gymnasium without graduating, and followed his parents to Italy, where he spent a joyous and carefree year. He also decided to change his citizenship. "The over-emphasized military mentality of the German State was alien to me, even as a boy", Einstein wrote later. "When my father moved to Italy, he took steps, at my request, to have me released from German citizenship, because I wanted to be a Swiss citizen."

## **Special and general relativity theory**

The financial circumstances of the Einstein family were now precarious, and it was clear that Albert would have to think seriously about a practical career. In 1896, he entered the famous Zürich Polytechnic Institute with the intention of becoming a teacher of mathematics and physics. However, his undisciplined and nonconformist attitudes again got him into trouble. His mathematics professor, Hermann Minkowski (1864-1909), considered Einstein to be a "lazy dog"; and his physics professor, Heinrich Weber, who originally had gone out of his way to help Einstein, said to him in anger and exasperation: "You're a clever fellow, but you have one fault: You won't let anyone tell you a thing! You won't let anyone tell you a thing!"

Einstein missed most of his classes, and read only the subjects which interested him. He was interested most of all in Maxwell's theory of electromagnetism, a subject which was too "modern" for Weber. There were two major examinations at the Zürich Polytechnic Institute, and Einstein would certainly have failed them had it not been for the help of his loyal friend, the mathematician Marcel Grossman.

Grossman was an excellent and conscientious student, who attended every class and took meticulous notes. With the help of these notes, Einstein managed to pass his examinations; but because he had alienated Weber and the other professors who could have helped him, he found himself completely un-



able to get a job. In a letter to Professor F. Ostwald on behalf of his son, Einstein's father wrote: "My son is profoundly unhappy because of his present joblessness; and every day the idea becomes more firmly implanted in his mind that he is a failure, and will not be able to find the way back again."

From this painful situation, Einstein was rescued (again!) by his friend Marcel Grossman, whose influential father obtained for Einstein a position at the Swiss Patent Office: Technical Expert (Third Class). Anchored at last in a safe, though humble, position, Einstein married one of his classmates. He learned to do his work at the Patent Office very efficiently; and he used the remainder of his time on his own calculations, hiding them guiltily in a drawer when footsteps approached.

In 1905, this Technical Expert (Third Class) astonished the world of science with five papers, written within a few weeks of each other, and published in the *Annalen der Physik*. Of these five papers, three were classics: One of these was the paper in which Einstein applied Planck's quantum hypothesis to the photoelectric effect. The second paper discussed "Brownian motion", the zig-zag motion of small particles suspended in a liquid and hit randomly by the molecules of the liquid. This paper supplied a direct proof of the validity of atomic ideas and of Boltzmann's kinetic theory. The third paper was destined to establish Einstein's reputation as one of the greatest physicists of all time. It was entitled *On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies*, and in this paper, Albert Einstein formulated his special theory of relativity. Essentially, this theory maintained that all of the fundamental laws of nature exhibit a symmetry with respect to rotations in a 4-dimensional space-time continuum.

Gradually, the importance of Einstein's work began to be realized, and he was much sought after. He was first made Assistant Professor at the University of Zürich, then full Professor in Prague, then Professor at the Zürich Polytechnic Institute; and finally, in 1913, Planck and Nernst persuaded Einstein to become Director of Scientific Research at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin. He was at this post when the First World War broke out

While many other German intellectuals produced manifestos justifying Germany's invasion of Belgium, Einstein dared to write and sign an anti-war manifesto. Einstein's manifesto appealed for cooperation and understanding among the scholars of Europe for the sake of the future; and it proposed the eventual establishment of a League of Europeans. During the war, Einstein remained in Berlin, doing whatever he could for the cause of peace, burying himself unhappily in his work, and trying to forget the agony of Europe, whose civilization was dying in a rain of shells, machine-gun bullets, and poison gas.

The work into which Einstein threw himself during this period was an extension of his theory of relativity. He already had modified Newton's equations of

motion so that they exhibited the space-time symmetry required by his Principle of Special Relativity. However, Newton's law of gravitation, remained a problem.

Obviously it had to be modified, since it disagreed with his Special Theory of Relativity; but how should it be changed? What principles could Einstein use in his search for a more correct law of gravitation? Certainly whatever new law he found would have to give results very close to Newton's law, since Newton's theory could predict the motions of the planets with almost perfect accuracy. This was the deep problem with which he struggled.

In 1907, Einstein had found one of the principles which was to guide him, the Principle of Equivalence of inertial and gravitational mass. After turning Newton's theory over and over in his mind, Einstein realized that Newton had used mass in two distinct ways: His laws of motion stated that the force acting on a body is equal to the mass of the body multiplied by its acceleration; but according to Newton, the gravitational force on a body is also proportional to its mass. In Newton's theory, gravitational mass, by a coincidence, is equal to inertial mass; and this holds for all bodies. Einstein decided to construct a theory in which gravitational and inertial mass necessarily have to be the same.

He then imagined an experimenter inside a box, unable to see anything outside it. If the box is on the surface of the earth, the person inside it will feel the pull of the earth's gravitational field. If the experimenter drops an object, it will fall to the floor with an acceleration of 32 feet per second per second. Now suppose that the box is taken out into empty space, far away from strong gravitational fields, and accelerated by exactly 32 feet per second per second. Will the enclosed experimenter be able to tell the difference between these two situations? Certainly no difference can be detected by dropping an object, since in the accelerated box, the object will fall to the floor in exactly the same way as before.

With this "thought experiment" in mind, Einstein formulated a general Principle of Equivalence: He asserted that no experiment whatever can tell an observer enclosed in a small box whether the box is being accelerated, or whether it is in a gravitational field. According to this principle, gravitation and acceleration are locally equivalent, or, to say the same thing in different words, gravitational mass and inertial mass are equivalent.

Einstein soon realized that his Principle of Equivalence implied that a ray of light must be bent by a gravitational field. This conclusion followed because, to an observer in an accelerated frame, a light beam which would appear straight to a stationary observer, must necessarily appear very slightly curved. If the Principle of Equivalence held, then the same slight bending of the light ray would be observed by an experimenter in a stationary frame in a gravitational

field.

Another consequence of the Principle of Equivalence was that a light wave propagating upwards in a gravitational field should be very slightly shifted to the red. This followed because in an accelerated frame, the wave crests would be slightly farther apart than they normally would be, and the same must then be true for a stationary frame in a gravitational field. It seemed to Einstein that it ought to be possible to test experimentally both the gravitational bending of a light ray and the gravitational red shift.

This seemed promising; but how was Einstein to proceed from the Principle of Equivalence to a formulation of the law of gravitation? Perhaps the theory ought to be modeled after Maxwell's electromagnetic theory, which was a field theory, rather than an "action at a distance" theory. Part of the trouble with Newton's law of gravitation was that it allowed a signal to be propagated instantaneously, contrary to the Principle of Special Relativity. A field theory of gravitation might cure this defect, but how was Einstein to find such a theory? There seemed to be no way.

From these troubles Albert Einstein was rescued (a third time!) by his staunch friend Marcel Grossman. By this time, Grossman had become a professor of mathematics in Zürich, after having written a doctoral dissertation on tensor analysis and non-Euclidean geometry, the very things that Einstein needed. The year was then 1912, and Einstein had just returned to Zürich as Professor of Physics at the Polytechnic Institute. For two years, Einstein and Grossman worked together; and by the time Einstein left for Berlin in 1914, the way was clear. With Grossman's help, Einstein saw that the gravitational field could be expressed as a curvature of the 4-dimensional space-time continuum.

In 1919, a British expedition, headed by Sir Arthur Eddington, sailed to a small island off the coast of West Africa. Their purpose was to test Einstein's prediction of the bending of light in a gravitational field by observing stars close to the sun during a total eclipse. The observed bending agreed exactly with Einstein's predictions; and as a result he became world-famous. The general public was fascinated by relativity, in spite of the abstruseness of the theory (or perhaps because of it). Einstein, the absent-minded professor, with long, uncombed hair, became a symbol of science. The world was tired of war, and wanted something else to think about.

Einstein met President Harding, Winston Churchill and Charlie Chaplin; and he was invited to lunch by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Although adulated elsewhere, he was soon attacked in Germany. Many Germans, looking for an excuse for the defeat of their nation, blamed it on the pacifists and Jews; and Einstein was both these things.

## **Einstein's letter to Freud: Why war?**

Because of his fame, Einstein was asked to make several speeches at the Reichstag. and in all these speeches he condemned violence and nationalism, urging that these be replaced by and international cooperation and law under an effective international authority. He also wrote many letters and articles pleading for peace and for the renunciation of militarism and violence.

Einstein believed that the production of armaments is damaging, not only economically, but also spiritually. In 1930 he signed a manifesto for world disarmament sponsored by the Womens International League for Peace and Freedom. In December of the same year, he made his famous statement in New York that if two percent of those called for military service were to refuse to fight, governments would become powerless, since they could not imprison that many people. He also argued strongly against compulsory military service and urged that conscientious objectors should be protected by the international community. He argued that peace, freedom of individuals, and security of societies could only be achieved through disarmament, the alternative being "slavery of the individual and annihilation of civilization".

In letters, and articles, Einstein wrote that the welfare of humanity as a whole must take precedence over the goals of individual nations, and that we cannot wait until leaders give up their preparations for war. Civil society, and especially public figures, must take the lead. He asked how decent and self-respecting people can wage war, knowing how many innocent people will be killed.

In 1931, the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation invited Albert Einstein to enter correspondence with a prominent person of his own choosing on a subject of importance to society. The Institute planned to publish a collection of such dialogues. Einstein accepted at once, and decided to write to Sigmund Freud to ask his opinion about how humanity could free itself from the curse of war. A translation from German of part of the long letter that he wrote to Freud is as follows:

"Dear Professor Freud, The proposal of the League of Nations and its International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation at Paris that I should invite a person to be chosen by myself to a frank exchange of views on any problem that I might select affords me a very welcome opportunity of conferring with you upon a question which, as things are now, seems the most important and insistent of all problems civilization has to face. This is the problem: Is there any way of delivering mankind from the menace of war? It is common knowledge that, with the advance of modern science, this issue has come to mean a matter of life or death to civilization as we know it; nevertheless, for all the zeal displayed, every attempt at its solution has ended in a lamentable

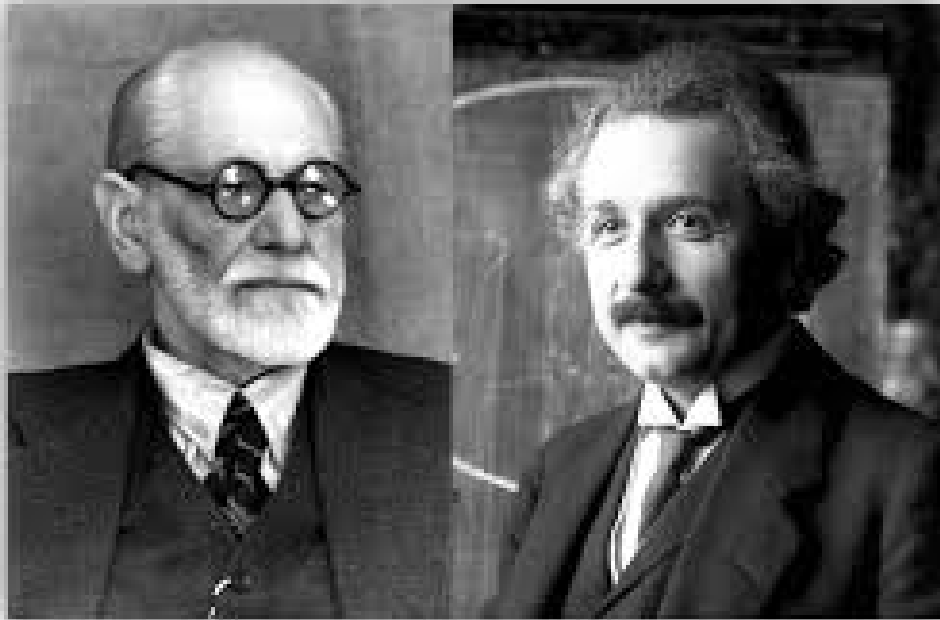


Figure 17.1: *Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein (public domain). Their exchange of letters entitled “Why War?” deserves to be read by everyone concerned with the human future.*

breakdown.”

“I believe, moreover, that those whose duty it is to tackle the problem professionally and practically are growing only too aware of their impotence to deal with it, and have now a very lively desire to learn the views of men who, absorbed in the pursuit of science, can see world-problems in the perspective distance lends. As for me, the normal objective of my thoughts affords no insight into the dark places of human will and feeling. Thus in the enquiry now proposed, I can do little more than seek to clarify the question at issue and, clearing the ground of the more obvious solutions, enable you to bring the light of your far-reaching knowledge of man’s instinctive life upon the problem..”

“As one immune from nationalist bias, I personally see a simple way of dealing with the superficial (i.e. administrative) aspect of the problem: the setting up, by international consent, of a legislative and judicial body to settle every conflict arising between nations... But here, at the outset, I come up against a difficulty; a tribunal is a human institution which, in proportion as the power at its disposal is... prone to suffer these to be deflected by extrajudicial pressure...”

Freud replied with a long and thoughtful letter in which he said that a tendency towards conflict is an intrinsic part of human emotional nature, but that emotions can be overridden by rationality, and that rational behavior is the only hope for humankind.

## **The fateful letter to Roosevelt**

Albert Einstein’s famous relativistic formula, relating energy to mass, soon yielded an understanding of the enormous amounts of energy released in radioactive decay. Marie and Pierre Curie had noticed that radium maintains itself at a temperature higher than its surroundings. Their measurements and calculations showed that a gram of radium produces roughly 100 gram-calories of heat per hour. This did not seem like much energy until Rutherford found that radium has a half-life of about 1,000 years. In other words, after a thousand years, a gram of radium will still be producing heat, its radioactivity only reduced to one-half its original value. During a thousand years, a gram of radium produces about a million kilocalories, an enormous amount of energy in relation to the tiny size of its source! Where did this huge amount of energy come from? Conservation of energy was one of the most basic principles of physics. Would it have to be abandoned?

The source of the almost-unbelievable amounts of energy released in radioactive decay could be understood through Einstein’s formula equating the energy of a system to its mass multiplied by the square of the velocity of light, and through accurate measurements of atomic weights. Einstein’s formula asserted

that mass and energy are equivalent. It was realized that in radioactive decay, neither mass nor energy is conserved, but only a quantity more general than both, of which mass and energy are particular forms. Scientists in several parts of the world realized that Einstein's discovery of the relationship between mass and energy, together with the discovery of fission of the heavy element uranium meant that it might be possible to construct a uranium-fission bomb of immense power.

Meanwhile night was falling on Europe. In 1929, an economic depression had begun in the United States and had spread to Europe. Without the influx of American capital, the postwar reconstruction of the German economy collapsed. The German middle class, which had been dealt a severe blow by the great inflation of 1923, now received a second heavy blow. The desperate economic chaos drove German voters into the hands of political extremists.

On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor and leader of a coalition cabinet by President Hindenburg. Although Hitler was appointed legally to this post, he quickly consolidated his power by unconstitutional means: On May 2, Hitler's police seized the headquarters of all trade unions, and arrested labor leaders. The Communist and Socialist parties were also banned, their assets seized and their leaders arrested. Other political parties were also smashed. Acts were passed eliminating Jews from public service; and innocent Jewish citizens were boycotted, beaten and arrested. On March 11, 1938, Nazi troops entered Austria.

On March 16, 1939, the Italian physicist Enrico Fermi (who by then was a refugee in America) went to Washington to inform the Office of Naval Operations that it might be possible to construct an atomic bomb; and on the same day, German troops poured into Czechoslovakia.

A few days later, a meeting of six German atomic physicists was held in Berlin to discuss the applications of uranium fission. Otto Hahn, the discoverer of fission, was not present, since it was known that he was opposed to the Nazi regime. He was even said to have exclaimed: "I only hope that you physicists will never construct a uranium bomb! If Hitler ever gets a weapon like that, I'll commit suicide."

The meeting of German atomic physicists was supposed to be secret; but one of the participants reported what had been said to Dr. S. Flügge, who wrote an article about uranium fission and about the possibility of a chain reaction. Flügge's article appeared in the July issue of *Naturwissenschaften*, and a popular version in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*. These articles greatly increased the alarm of American atomic scientists, who reasoned that if the Nazis permitted so much to be printed, they must be far advanced on the road to building an atomic bomb.

In the summer of 1939, while Hitler was preparing to invade Poland, alarming

news reached the physicists in the United States: A second meeting of German atomic scientists had been held in Berlin, this time under the auspices of the Research Division of the German Army Weapons Department. Furthermore, Germany had stopped the sale of uranium from mines in Czechoslovakia.

The world's most abundant supply of uranium, however, was not in Czechoslovakia, but in Belgian Congo. Leo Szilard, a refugee Hungarian physicist who had worked with Fermi to measure the number of neutrons produced in uranium fission, was deeply worried that the Nazis were about to construct atomic bombs; and it occurred to him that uranium from Belgian Congo should not be allowed to fall into their hands.

Szilard knew that his former teacher, Albert Einstein, was a personal friend of Elizabeth, the Belgian Queen Mother. Einstein had met Queen Elizabeth and King Albert of Belgium at the Solvay Conferences, and mutual love of music had cemented a friendship between them. When Hitler came to power in 1933, Einstein had moved to the Institute of Advanced Studies at Princeton; and Szilard decided to visit him there. Szilard reasoned that because of Einstein's great prestige, and because of his long-standing friendship with the Belgian Royal Family, he would be the proper person to warn the Belgians not to let their uranium fall into the hands of the Nazis. Einstein agreed to write to the Belgian king and queen.

On August 2, 1939, Szilard again visited Einstein, accompanied by Edward Teller and Eugene Wigner, who (like Szilard) were refugee Hungarian physicists. By this time, Szilard's plans had grown more ambitious; and he carried with him the draft of another letter, this time to the American President, Franklin D. Roosevelt. Einstein made a few corrections, and then signed the fateful letter, which reads (in part) as follows:

"Some recent work of E. Fermi and L. Szilard, which has been communicated to me in manuscript, leads me to expect that the element uranium may be turned into an important source of energy in the immediate future. Certain aspects of the situation seem to call for watchfulness and, if necessary, quick action on the part of the Administration. I believe, therefore, that it is my duty to bring to your attention the following.."

"It is conceivable that extremely powerful bombs of a new type may be constructed. A single bomb of this type, carried by boat and exploded a port, might very well destroy the whole port, together with some of the surrounding territory.."

The letter also called Roosevelt's attention to the fact that Germany had already stopped the export of uranium from the Czech mines under German control. After making a few corrections, Einstein signed it. On October 11, 1939, three weeks after the defeat of Poland, Roosevelt's economic adviser, Alexander Sachs, personally delivered the letter to the President. After discussing



it with Sachs, the President commented, "This calls for action." Later, when atomic bombs were dropped on civilian populations in an already virtually-defeated Japan, Einstein bitterly regretted having signed Szilard's letter to Roosevelt. He said repeatedly that signing the letter was the greatest mistake of his life, and his remorse was extreme.

Throughout the remainder of his life, in addition to his scientific work, Einstein worked tirelessly for peace, international understanding and nuclear disarmament. His last public act, only a few days before his death in 1955, was to sign the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, warning humankind of the catastrophic consequences that would follow from a war with nuclear weapons.

### **A few more things that Einstein said about peace:**

*"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking that we used when we created them."*

*"It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity."*

*"Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding."*

*"The world is a dangerous place to live; not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it."*

*"Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting to get different results."*

*"Nothing will end war unless the people themselves refuse to go to war."*

*"Past thinking and methods did not prevent world wars. Future thinking must prevent war."*

*"You cannot simultaneously prevent and prepare for war."*

*"Never do anything against conscience, even if the state demands it."*

*"Taken as a whole, I would believe that Gandhi's views were the most enlightened of all political men of our time."*

*"Without ethical culture, there is no salvation for humanity."*

*“War seems to me to be a mean, contemptible thing: I would rather be hacked in pieces than take part in such an abominable business. And yet so high, in spite of everything, is my opinion of the human race that I believe this bogey would have disappeared long ago, had the sound sense of the nations not been systematically corrupted by commercial and political interests acting through the schools and the Press.”*

**Albert Einstein, great physicist and lifelong pacifist, we need your voice today!**

## Chapter 18

### Edna St. Vincent Millay

#### *Millay's Epitaph For The Race Of Man*

The beautiful red-haired American poet, Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950), is known for her lyric poetry, but she also wrote some of the finest sonnets in the English language, combining classic form with modern imagery. Many of these sonnets are based on the emotions that she experienced in her love affairs. However, my own favorite is a serious sequence of eighteen sonnets, *Epitaph for the Race of Man*, published in 1934, just as the catastrophe of World War II was about to engulf our planet.

The basic premise of Millay's *Epitaph* is that we know from the evolutionary history of life on earth, that no species survives forever. She speculates on what will be the final cause of the extinction of the human race, and concludes that Man will die by his own hand, since none the innumerable disasters that nature has thrown at us over the millennia has persuaded humankind "to lay aside the lever and the spade, and be as dust among the dusts that blow". Here are a few of the sonnets from the sequence:

*Oh Earth, unhappy planet, born to die,  
Might I your scribe and your confessor be,  
What wonders must you not relate to me  
Of Man, who, when his destiny was high  
Strode like the sun into the middle sky  
And shone an hour, and who so bright as he,  
And like the sun went down into the sea,  
Leaving no spark to be remembered by.  
But no; you have not learned in all these years  
To tell the leopard and the newt apart;  
Man, with his singular laughter, his droll tears,*



Figure 18.1: *The American poet, Edna St. Vincent Millay, (public domain).*

*His engines and his conscience and his art,  
Made but a simple sound upon your ears:  
The patient beating of an animal heart.*

*Alas for Man, so stealthily betrayed,  
Bearing the bad cell in him from the start,  
Pumping and feeding on his healthy heart  
That wild disorder never to be stayed  
When once established, destined to invade  
With angry hordes the true and proper part,  
'Til Reason joggles in the headsman's cart,  
And Mania spits from every balustrade.  
Would he had searched his closet for his bane,  
Where lurked the trusted ancient of his soul,  
Obsequious Greed, and seen that visage plain;  
Would he had whittled treason from his side  
In his stout youth and bled his body whole,  
Then had he died a king, or never died."*

*Here lies, and none to mourn him but the sea,  
That falls incessant on the empty shore,  
Most various Man, cut down to spring no more;  
Before his prime, even in his infancy  
Cut down, and all the clamour that was he,  
Silenced; and all the riveted pride he wore,  
A rusted iron column whose tall core  
The rains have tunneled like an aspen  
Man, doughty Man, what power has brought you low,  
That heaven itself in arms could not persuade  
To lay aside the lever and the spade  
And be as dust among the dusts that blow?  
Whence, whence the broadside? Whose the heavy blade?...  
Strive not to speak, poor scattered mouth; I know.*

It seems to me that although Millay's words were extremely appropriate as a warning to humankind in 1934, they are even more heavy with meaning today. Please read the whole sonnet sequence yourself. You can do so by clicking on the link below. Millay speaks eloquently to us over the years:.

**Edna St. Vincent Millay, eloquent poet with a deep concern for the future of humanity, we need your voice today!**



# Chapter 19

## Bertha von Suttner

### Early life and marriage

Baroness Bertha von Suttner (1843-1914) was born in Prague as Countess Kinsky. She was the posthumous daughter of a Field Marshall, and during the first part of her life, she accepted the military traditions of her family. Later she vigorously opposed militarism, and she became a leader of the peace movement. It was her arguments that persuaded Alfred Nobel to establish the Nobel Peace Prize, and in 1905 she became the first woman to receive the prize.

After serving as Alfred Nobel's secretary (and close friend) in Paris (1876), Bertha married Baron Arthur von Suttner. However, the von Suttner family was strongly opposed to the marriage, and the young couple left for the Caucasus where for nine years they earned a living by giving lessons in languages and music. During this period, Bertha von Suttner became a highly successful writer.

In 1885 the von Suttner family relented, and welcomed the couple back to Austria. Here Bertha von Suttner wrote most of her books, including her many novels. Their life was oriented almost solely toward the literary until, through a friend, they learned about the International Arbitration and Peace Association<sup>1</sup> in London and about similar groups on the Continent, organizations that had as an actual working objective what they had now both accepted as an ideal: arbitration and peace in place of armed force.

Bertha von Suttner immediately added material on this to her second serious book, *Das Maschinenzeitalter* (*The Machine Age*) which, when published early in 1889, was much discussed and reviewed. This book, criticizing many aspects of the times, was among the first to foretell the results of exaggerated nationalism and armaments. Her novel *Lay Down Your Arms*, published in the same year, had a huge impact.



Figure 19.1: *Bertha von Suttner* (Wikipedia).



## The 1905 Nobel Peace Prize

Here are some excerpts from Bertha von Suttner's acceptance speech:

One of the eternal truths is that happiness is created and developed in peace, and one of the eternal rights is the individual's right to live. The strongest of all instincts, that of self-preservation, is an assertion of this right, affirmed and sanctified by the ancient commandment "Thou shalt not kill."

It is unnecessary for me to point out how little this right and this commandment are respected in the present state of civilization. Up to the present time, the military organization of our society has been founded upon a denial of the possibility of peace, a contempt for the value of human life, and an acceptance of the urge to kill...

It is erroneous to believe that the future will of necessity continue the trends of the past and the present. The past and present move away from us in the stream of time like the passing landscape of the riverbanks, as the vessel carrying mankind is borne inexorably by the current toward new shores...

"If you keep me in touch with developments, and if I hear that the Peace Movement is moving along the road of practical activity, then I will help it on with money."

These words were spoken by that eminent Scandinavian to whom I owe this opportunity of appearing before you today, Ladies and Gentlemen. Alfred Nobel said them when my husband and I visited with him in 1892 in Bern, where a peace congress was in progress...

..although the supporters of the existing structure of society, which accepts war, come to a peace conference prepared to modify the nature of war, they are basically trying to keep the present system intact. The advocates of pacifism, inside and outside the Conference, will, however, defend their objectives and press forward... to "bring nearer the time when the sword shall not be the arbiter among nations".

## A few more things the Bertha von Suttner said about peace

*Strange how blind people are! They are horrified by the torture chambers of the Middle Ages, but their arsenals fill them with pride!*

*After the verb 'to Love', 'to Help' is the most beautiful verb in the world.*

**Bertha von Suttner, famous antiwar author, friend and mentor of Alfred Nobel without whom the Peace Prize would not exist, early leader of the peace movement, we need your voice today!**



# Chapter 20

## George Orwell

### **A lower-upper middle class family and education**

Eric Arthur Blair (1903-1950), better known by his pen name George Orwell, was the great-grandson of Charles Blair, a wealthy country gentleman, and Lady Mary Fane, daughter of the Earl of Westmorland. Over the generations that separated Eric Blair from his great-grandparents, some of the gentility remained but most of the wealth disappeared, and he described his family as being “lower-upper middle class”.

Eric Blair was born in British India where his father was working, but when he was one year old his mother took the family to England. Eric attended a Catholic boarding school called St. Cyprians, where his work in history and his writing won him scholarships to both Wellington and Eton. He attended both schools, because at first there was no place available at Eton.

### ***Burmese Days***

While at Eton, Eric Blair paid more attention to extra-curricular activities than to his studies, and his family, who could not afford to send him to university without a scholarship, decided that he would never win one. Instead of attending a university, Eric Blair joined the Imperial Police. He chose Burma, where his maternal grandmother was still living.

After serving several years in Burma in positions of increasing responsibility, Orwell became seriously ill in 1927, and he was allowed to return to England. By this time, he had become disillusioned with colonialism. He now saw it as a system whereby the soldiers held the poor Indian and Burmese citizen down, while the merchant went through his pockets. Orwell described his experiences as a colonial police officer in his book, *Burmese Days*



Figure 20.1: *George Orwell (Wikipedia).*

### ***Down and Out in Paris and London (1933)***

After Orwell returned from Burma, he became interested in the lives of very poor people in Europe. On a visit to Paris, he experienced the theft of all his money. He could have written to his guardian in England to ask for help, but instead he decided to find out for himself what it was like to be completely destitute. Returning to London, he later continued his personal experiment with extreme poverty.

After living at the extreme lower edge of society for several years, Orwell described his experiences in *Down and Out in Paris and London*. Orwell's descriptions are so vivid and his sense of humor so sharp that the book is both riveting and enjoyable to read. Other excellent books by Orwell describing not quite so extreme poverty include *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936), and *The road to Wigan Pier* (1937).

### ***Homage to Catalonia (1938)***

This book describes Orwell's experiences during the Spanish Civil War. He served as a soldier in the unsuccessful struggle to prevent Franco's fascist army from overthrowing the elected government.

### ***Animal Farm (1945)***

This brilliant satiric and allegorical novella reflects Orwell's disillusionment with Russia's post-revolutionary government under Stalin. Orwell saw Stalinism as a brutal dictatorship. In his essay *Why I Write* (1946) Orwell says that *Animal Farm* is the first book in which he tried "to fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole".

At the start of *Animal Farm* an old boar called Major (Marx and/or Lenin?) teaches the animals to sing *Beasts of England* (the *Internationale?*). Orwell describes the tune as being halfway between *La Cucaracha* and *My Darling Clementine*. Here are the words of the song:

*Beasts of England, Beasts of Ireland,  
Beasts of every land and clime,  
Hearken to my joyful tidings  
Of the Golden future time.*

*Soon or late the day is coming,  
Tyrant Man shall be o'erthrown,  
And the fruitful fields of England*

*Shall be trod by beasts alone.*

*Rings shall vanish from our noses,  
And the harness from our back,  
Bit and spur shall rust forever,  
Cruel whips no more shall crack.*

*Riches more than mind can picture,  
Wheat and barley, oats and hay,  
Clover, beans, and mangel-wurzels  
Shall be ours upon that day.*

*Bright will shine the fields of England,  
Purer shall its waters be,  
Sweeter yet shall blow its breezes  
On the day that sets us free.*

*For that day we all must labour,  
Though we die before it break;  
Cows and horses, geese and turkeys,  
All must toil for freedom's sake.*

*Beasts of England, Beasts of Ireland,  
Beasts of every land and clime,  
Hearken well, and spread my tidings  
Of the Golden future time*

After a successful revolution by the animals, Farmer Jones is expelled, and the Seven Principles of Animalism are established, the most important of which is

*All animals are equal.*

The pigs, being (as they say themselves) the most intelligent of the animals, gradually take over the running of the farm. Meetings of all the animals are replaced by meetings of the pigs. The faithful hardworking old horse, Boxer, is sold to the gluemaking knacker in order to buy whisky for the pigs. The first principle of Animalism is replaced by:

*All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.*

Finally, the pigs start to carry whips and to walk on two legs; and they become indistinguishable from humans.

Orwell's *Animal Farm*, published at the start of the Cold War, was a great commercial success.

### ***Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949)**

George Orwell's famous dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-four* (often published as *1984*) has changed the English language and added new words, for example "Orwellian", "doublethink", "thoughtcrime", "Big Brother", "newspeak", "nonperson" and "memory hole". Like *Animal Farm*, it expresses Orwell's deep dislike of Stalin's brutal dictatorship. However, the novel also so aptly describes recent conditions in the United States that today it has hit the top of New York's best-seller lists.

The novel follows the life of Winston Smith, who lives in Airstrip One (formerly known as Great Britain). Airstrip One is part of the superstate Oceania, which is perpetually at war with two other superstates. Pictures of the ruler of Oceania, Big Brother, are everywhere and a cult of personality surrounds him, although he may not even exist.

Surveillance is also everywhere, performed by ubiquitous "telescreens", which both transmit and record. Under huge photographs of the leader of Oceania, there is usually the caption: "Big Brother is watching you". The Thought Police encourage children to report anyone who might be guilty of "thoughtcrimes", including their own parents.

The citizens of Oceania are divided into three classes. The highest and most privileged class is the Inner Party. Next come members of the Outer Party, and finally come the lowest class, the Proletariat, who make up the bulk of the population.

Winston Smith belongs to the Outer Party, and he works in the Ministry of Truth (Minitruth), where his job is to rewrite history so that it will conform to the constantly-changing doctrines of the Inner Party. He changes written records, alters photographs, and converts people who are out of favour to "nonpersons" by destroying every record of their existence. Winston is good at his job, but he gradually comes to detest the whole system. This, of course is a "thoughtcrime".

Another worker in the Ministry of Truth is Julia, who runs Minitruth's novel-writing machines. She hands Winston a note telling him that she is in love with him. Winston finds out that Julia shares his detestation of the system, and an affair blossoms between them. They meet in a rented room in a proletarian district where they believe they will be free from surveillance.

Later Winston is approached by O'Brien, a member of the Inner Party who is believed by Winston to be a member of the Brotherhood, a secret society that opposes the Party. Winston and Julia tell O'Brien of their detestation of the whole system. But O'Brien is not a member of the Brotherhood. He is actually a member of the Thought Police. Winston and Julia are arrested and tortured to such an extent that they finally betray each other.

Winston is tortured again and again. Simultaneously he is brainwashed to such an extent that he becomes a believer in the system, and can be sent back into society. The new, brainwashed Winston believes wholeheartedly in the doctrines of the Party, and he has finally learned to love Big Brother.

During the writing of *Nineteen Eighty-four*, Orwell was very ill with tuberculosis, and he died soon afterwards from the disease.

Here are some quotations from *Nineteen Eighty-four*:

*Now I will tell you the answer to my question. It is this. The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power, pure power. What pure power means you will understand presently. We are different from the oligarchies of the past in that we know what we are doing. All the others, even those who resembled ourselves, were cowards and hypocrites. The German Nazis and the Russian Communists came very close to us in their methods, but they never had the courage to recognize their own motives. They pretended, perhaps they even believed, that they had seized power unwillingly and for a limited time, and that just around the corner there lay a paradise where human beings would be free and equal. We are not like that. We know that no one ever seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it. Power is not a means; it is an end. One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes the revolution in order to establish the dictatorship. The object of persecution is persecution. The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power. Now you begin to understand me. (from 1984)*

*War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength.*

### ***Politics and the English Language, and other essays***

George Orwell was a perceptive and prolific essayist. Here is a link to some of his essays that have been made available by Project Gutenberg:

<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks03/0300011h.html>



## **A few things that George Orwell said**

*Actions are held to be good or bad, not on their own merits, but according to who does them. There is almost no kind of outrage -torture, imprisonment without trial, assassination, the bombing of civilians - which does not change its moral color when it is committed by 'our' side. The nationalist not only does not disapprove of atrocities committed by his own side, he has a remarkable capacity for not even hearing about them.*

*The essence of oligarchical rule is not father-to-son inheritance, but the persistence of a certain world-view and a certain way of life ... A ruling group is a ruling group so long as it can nominate its successors... Who wields power is not important, provided that the hierarchical structure remains always the same*

*In a time of deceit telling the truth is a revolutionary act.*

*The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which.*

*The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history.*

*If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face - forever.*

*Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.*

*But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought.*

*If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.*

*Doublethink means the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them.*

*Until they became conscious they will never rebel, and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious.*

*The essence of being human is that one does not seek perfection.*

*Being in a minority, even in a minority of one, did not make you mad. There was truth and there was untruth, and if you clung to the truth even against the whole world, you were not mad.*

*If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.*

*The great enemy of clear language is insincerity.*

*To see what is in front of one's nose requires a constant struggle.*

*Advertising is the rattling of a stick inside a swill bucket.*

*War is a way of shattering to pieces, or pouring into the stratosphere, or sinking in the depths of the sea, materials which might otherwise be used to make the masses too comfortable, and hence, in the long run, too intelligent.*

**George Orwell, brilliant and honest writer, lifelong opponent of tyranny, we need your voice today!**

# Chapter 21

## Helen Keller

Helen Keller was born in 1880, in Tuscumbia, Alabama. Her father had served as a captain in the Confederate Army during the American Civil War, and her mother, Kate Adams, was the daughter of a Confederate general. She was also related to Robert E. Lee, so by birth she was certainly a Southerner. Today Helen Keller Day is celebrated each year in Alabama following a 1980 proclamation by President Jimmy Carter.

Helen was a normal child until the age of 19 months, when she contracted an illness which may have been scarlet fever or meningitis. It left her both deaf and blind. When Helen was 6 years old, her parents followed the advice of Alexander Graham Bell and contacted the Perkins Institute for the Blind. The Perkins Institute recommended their recent graduate Annie Sullivan, who became Helen's teacher.

Annie Sullivan, who was 20 years old at that time and also blind, began to work with Helen, spelling out words on the palm of Helen's hand. This method was unsuccessful at first, but one day, when Annie Sullivan was spelling out "water" on one of Helen's hands while water was running over the other, Helen suddenly realized that the letters were a symbol for water. For the next many days, the child almost wore her teacher out by demanding the spelling of hundreds of other things within her experience. Annie Sullivan later became Helen's lifelong friend and companion.

Starting in 1888, Helen Keller began her formal education, at first at the Perkins Institute, then at a succession of other schools. Finally, at the age of 24, with financial help from a wealthy friend of Mark Twain. Helen graduated from Radcliffe College. She was the first blind and deaf person to obtain a BA degree. On the way to this triumph, Helen had taught herself to speak normally, and she could understand what other people were saying by placing her hand on their lips.

Helen Keller quickly developed into a popular lecturer and author. She spoke



Figure 21.1: *A portrait of Helen Keller (public domain).*

and wrote to advocate many social reforms, including woman's suffrage, labour rights, socialism and antimilitarism.

The story of Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan, as told in Helen's *Autobiography*, became known to a very wide public through the drama *The Miracle Worker*, which was first produced as a radio broadcast, then as a television drama, then as a Broadway play and finally as a succession of films.

Here is a newspaper account of one of Helen Keller's lectures:

"The wonderful girl who has so brilliantly triumphed over the triple afflictions of blindness, dumbness and deafness, gave a talk with her own lips on 'Happiness,' and it will be remembered always as a piece of inspired teaching by those who heard it.

"According to those who attended, Helen Keller spoke of the joy that life gave her. She was thankful for the faculties and abilities that she did possess and stated that the most productive pleasures she had were curiosity and imagination. Keller also spoke of the joy of service and the happiness that came from doing things for others ... Keller imparted that 'helping your fellow men were one's only excuse for being in this world and in the doing of things to help one's fellows lay the secret of lasting happiness.' She also told of the joys of loving work and accomplishment and the happiness of achievement. Although the entire lecture lasted only a little over an hour, the lecture had a profound impact on the audience."

### **A few things that Helen Keller said**

*Strike against war, for without you no battles can be fought! Strike against manufacturing shrapnel and gas bombs and all other tools of murder! Strike against preparedness that means death and misery to millions of human beings! Be not dumb, obedient slaves in an army of destruction! Be heroes in an army of construction*

*Strike against war, for without you no battles can be fought! Strike against manufacturing shrapnel and gas bombs and all other tools of murder! Strike against preparedness that means death and misery to millions of human beings! Be not dumb, obedient slaves in an army of destruction! Be heroes in an army of construction*

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*Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence. - Helen Keller Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.*

*The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart.*

*Believe. No pessimist ever discovered the secrets of the stars or sailed to an uncharted land or opened a new heaven to the human spirit*

*Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much!*

*It is for us to pray not for tasks equal to our powers, but for powers equal to our tasks, to go forward with a great desire forever beating at the door of our hearts as we travel toward our distant goal*

*When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us.*

*It is for us to pray not for tasks equal to our powers, but for powers equal to our tasks, to go forward with a great desire forever beating at the door of our hearts as we travel toward our distant goal.*

*To keep our faces toward change, and behave like free spirits in the presence of fate, is strength undefeatable.*

*Self-pity is our worst enemy and if we yield to it, we can never do anything wise in the world.*

*Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing*

*I do not want the peace that passeth understanding. I want the understanding which bringeth peace.*

**Helen Keller, who although deaf and blind, could see injustice clearly, who could hear the voices of victims of war, and who spoke eloquently for social reform, we need your voice today!**

## Chapter 22

# We need their voices, and yours!

**Saint Francis said:**

*Blessed is he who loves and does not therefore desire to be loved;  
Blessed is he who fears and does not therefore desire to be feared;  
Blessed is he who serves and does not therefore desire to be served;  
Blessed is he who behaves well toward others and does not desire that others  
behave well toward him.*

**William Blake said:**

*Every Night & every Morn  
Some to Misery are Born  
Every Morn and every Night  
Some are Born to sweet delight  
Some are Born to sweet delight  
Some are Born to Endless Night.*

**Thomas Paine said:**

*There is something exceedingly ridiculous in the composition of monarchy; it first excludes a man from the means of information, yet empowers him to act in cases where the highest judgement is required. The state of a king shuts him off from the world; yet the business of a king requires him to know it thoroughly; whereof the different parts, by opposing and destroying each other, prove the whole character to be absurd and useless.*

**Mary Wollstonecraft said:**

*I entreat (men) to assist to emancipate their companion, to make her a help meet for them! Would men but generously snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more rea-*



Figure 22.1: *Together we can do it!*

*sonable mothers: in a word, better citizens.*

**William Godwin said:**

*To whom does any article, suppose a loaf of bread, justly belong? I have an hundred loaves in my possession, and in the next street there is a poor man expiring with hunger, to whom one of these loaves would be a means of preserving his life. If I withhold this loaf from him, am I not unjust? If I impart it, am I not complying with what justice demands?*

**The Marquis de Condorcet said:**

*Any person who has contributed to the progress of mankind to the best of his ability becomes immune to personal disaster and suffering. He knows that human progress is inevitable and can take comfort and courage from his inner picture of the epic march of mankind, through history, towards a better future.*

**Thomas Robert Malthus said:**

*That population cannot increase without the means of subsistence is a proposition so evident that it needs no illustration. That population does invariably increase, where there are means of subsistence, the history of every people who have ever existed will abundantly prove. And that the superior power cannot*



*be checked without producing misery and vice, the ample portion of these two bitter ingredients in the cup of human life, and the continuance of the physical causes that seem to have produced them, bear too convincing a testimony. (He later modified this opinion and made it less pessimistic by allowing for the effect of preventive checks such as late marriage. Malthus considered birth control to be a form of vice, but today it is accepted as the most humane method of avoiding the grim Malthusian forces, famine, disease and war.)*

**Percy Bysshe Shelly said:**

*Rise, like lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number!  
Shake your chains to earth like dew  
Which in sleep had fallen on you:  
Ye are many, they are few!*

**Thomas Jefferson said:**

*I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion.*

**Robert Owen said:**

*What ideas individuals may attach to the term 'Millennium' I know not; but I know that society may be formed so as to exist without crime, without poverty, with health greatly improved, with little, if any, misery. and with intelligence and happiness increased a hundredfold; and no obstacle whatsoever intervenes at this moment except ignorance to prevent such a state of society from becoming universal*

**John Stuart Mill said:**

*The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.*

**Henry David Thoreau said:**

*Simplify your life. Don't waste the years struggling for things that are unimportant. Don't burden yourself with possessions. Keep your needs and wants simple and enjoy what you have. Don't destroy your peace of mind by looking back, worrying about the past. Live in the present. Simplify!*

**Count Leo Tolstoy said:**

*The sharpest of all contradictions can be seen between the government's pro-*

*fessed faith in the Christian law of the brotherhood of all humankind, and the military laws of the state, which force each young man to prepare himself for enmity and murder.*

**Mahatma Gandhi said:**

*They say that 'means are after all means'. I would say that 'means are after all everything'. As the means, so the end. Indeed, the Creator has given us limited power over means, none over end... The means may be likened to a seed, and the end to a tree; and there is the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree. Means and end are convertible terms in my philosophy of life.*

**Martin Luther King said:**

*Wisdom born of experience should tell us that war is obsolete. There may have been a time when war served a negative good by preventing the spread of an evil force, but the power of modern weapons eliminates even the possibility that war may serve as a negative good. If we assume that life is worth living, and that man has a right to survival, then we must find an alternative to war ... I am convinced that the Church cannot be silent while mankind faces the threat of nuclear annihilation. If the church is true to her mission, she must call for an end to the nuclear arms race.*

**Wilfred Owen said:**

*If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace  
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,  
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin,  
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs  
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud  
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,  
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est  
Pro patria mori.*

**Albert Einstein said:**

*The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything except our ways of thinking, and thus we drift towards unparalleled catastrophes.*

**Edna St. Vincent Millay said:**

*Man, doughty Man, what power has brought you low,  
That heaven itself in arms could not persuade  
To lay aside the lever and the spade  
And be as dust among the dusts that blow?  
Whence, whence the broadside? Whose the heavy blade?...  
Strive not to speak, poor scattered mouth; I know.*

**Bertha von Suttner said:**

*Strange how blind people are! They are horrified by the torture chambers of  
the Middle Ages, but their arsenals fill them with pride!*

**George Orwell said:**

*In a time of deceit telling the truth is a revolutionary act*

**Helen Keller said:**

*Alone we can do so little! Together we can do so much!*

Simplify your life. Don't waste the years struggling for things that are unimportant. Don't burden yourself with possessions. Keep your needs and wants simple and enjoy what you have. Don't destroy your peace of mind by looking back, worrying about the past. Live in the present. Simplify!

**We need their voices today, and yours!**

Simplify your life. Don't waste the years struggling for things that are unimportant. Don't burden yourself with possessions. Keep your needs and wants simple and enjoy what you have. Don't destroy your peace of mind by looking back, worrying about the past. Live in the present. Simplify!

Today, human civilization and the biosphere are facing a crisis. Here are the tasks which history has given to our generation:

- We must achieve a steady-state economic system. Limitless growth on a finite planet is a logical absurdity.
- We must restore democracy iSimplify your life. Don't waste the years struggling for things that are unimportant. Don't burden yourself with possessions. Keep your needs and wants simple and enjoy what you have. Don't destroy your peace of mind by looking back, worrying about the past. Live in the present. Simplify!

n countries where it has decayed, and create it in countries where it never existed.

- We must decrease economic inequality.
- We must leave fossil fuels in the ground.
- We must stabilize and ultimately reduce global population to a level that can be supported by sustainable agriculture.
- We must abolish the institution of war before modern weapons destroy us.
- And finally, we must develop a mature ethical system to match our new technology.

These are difficult tasks, but together we can overcome the difficulties. As Helen Keller said, *Alone we can do so little! Together we can do so much!*

**At a time of crisis, with the future at stake, please don't be silent.  
We urgently need your voice today!**

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