



Civil Disobedience and Other Essays

Henry David Thoreau , Philip Smith (Editor) , Stanley Appelbaum (Editor)

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Civil Disobedience and Other Essays is a collection of some of Henry David Thoreau's most important essays. Contained in this volume are the following essays: Civil Disobedience, Natural History of Massachusetts, A Walk to Wachusett, The Landlord, A Winter Walk, The Succession of Forest Trees, Walking, Autumnal Tints, Wild Apples, Night and Moonlight, Aulus Persius Flaccus, Herald of Freedom, Life Without Principle, Paradise (to be) Regained, A Plea for John Brown, The Last Days of John Brown, After the Death of John Brown, The Service, Slavery in Massachusetts, and Wendell Phillips Before Concord Lyceum.

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From Reader Review *Civil Disobedience and Other Essays* for online ebook

Richard Derus says

My censored review of this classic call to arms can now be seen at my personal blog.

It is a shame that this kind of thought-policing is okay with so many people. "I don't want to think about it" is a fast way not to have permission to think. At all.

But I suppose that's okay with a lot of people.

Traveller says

This:

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Alex Farrand says

I will try to keep this short as possible, because I am still pondering over his writing. Before I forget, something must be said.

My lovely husband, who doesn't enjoy reading, only recommended two books to me, which are *1984*, and this one. I read *1984*, but I shrugged this one off. I didn't think it looked very appealing. After the recommendation, Henry David Thoreau kept popping up. While reading *I am Martin Luther King Jr*, a children's book, to my daughter his work was mentioned to have influenced Mr. King. Forever, I thought why wasn't he ever mentioned to me before, but still I shrugged it off. Another book I read to my daughter mentioned him again, but I cannot recall the name. Lately, my husband has been quoting him. Eventually, I thought it was a sign for me to read his work.

Honestly, I am glad I did. I might not agree with everything he said, but his arguments are strong. I found him to be this simple, strong, free thinker, who really thinks outside the box. It was really enlightening to me. I felt like this little patch of fog cleared from my mind, which still leaves me pondering what is right and wrong. At times a smile would come across my face, because he does, I thought, have interesting perspectives that are still relatable to this day, or things I somewhat agree with. I can see how his work influenced so many people to fight what is wrong with society, and to never back down from what you believe in. Maybe, I just won't pay my taxes. I am just kidding. Or simplest of things, like walking, could be the greatest influence in your life. How much can you enjoy from a walk in the woods? Can you let your soul wander, to freely think without succumbing to society? There are more questions to ask yourself, if you decided to read his work.

I gave it four stars, because sometimes my thoughts would wander from the page, and some song would

become hyper focused. A lot of Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong were playing in my head. Therefore, I would have to re-read sentences, because I wasn't really retaining the information.

At the end, I can see why my husband admires Henry David Thoreau, and I think I have a greater understanding what he thinks about society, and life. I do not understand why he joined the military if he thought similarly to Mr. Thoreau, but I can't get all the answers. I do feel a little bit closer to my dearest, because we have two different political views. We had to ban political talks. I hope everyone gets a chance to read his essays once. I did learn something from his work, and I hope you would too.

Jon says

Anti-system and other delusional ideas that will never happen.....just shut up and get a job you 30 year old teenager...

Civil disobedience was a quick read and to the point (much like my sex life). Henry David Thoreau states when the majority rules, in the case of democracy, rarely is the majority just. Democracy relies on physical strength in numbers, rather than what is just. He pretty much brings to question the next step beyond democracy as a political system. Which he envisions is the enlightened and conscience masses(yea, that will happen sometime soon). He also shows the problems in U.S. democracy and where they fail. Can we as people strive to something more than democracy? Can we question the sacred birthright of democracy in educational institutions or as autonomous individuals? Can I get out of bed in the morning??? Can I stop updating my facebook status every twenty minutes? Who cares...

Quite a good read, wish it was longer. After reading this, I will never vote again, (like it matter that I did before and like anyone cares). I have considered this for awhile and this book seals the deal. Putting the burden of responsibility on a stranger other than myself to decide things for me is ludicrous. After reviewing those I have voted for, along with my hopes in them, they have failed me miserably. They have done far more war, destruction, and opposite of all my actual hopes; why should I compromise myself for the majority?? Fuck that.... They have enslaved more than free. They have killed more than they love. This is true throughout world history. I have given a fair chance to those in power. Dont vote and dont pay taxes....If you want something done, do it yourself....

(I think what I just wrote was the most hypocritical and pretentious thing I have ever wrote; ignore it all! Who the fuck do I think I am!! I need a drink and a dose of reality....)

I thought the book might be more powerful, but I am glad to have read it. Not as boring or drawn out as Walden. However, just as delusional as Walden (seriously, people thinking for themselves!?!?! funny....) The only way out this shit hole is suicide and everyone knows it...

I hope my review makes me look "intelligent" and "dark" for potential love interests....

Anyways, heres some good quotes and points of the reading, like anyone gives a shit. Why do I write these, seriously, does anyone read my shitty reviews? Do I actual think I am creating something original with my self congratulating critiques?? I am a college dropout, god, Im so self important and pompous...

Ugh, I should consider taking anti depressants.... fuck it, I need another drink...

Because I know you wont read this book, because you're a lazy pseudo-intellect who wrote a paper in college

that you thought was "great" on something no one cares about and have wasted your money (or parents money) and life up to this point; I have made it simple and convenient for you. Read the quotes to get the idea of the book.

You're welcome!

Quotes:

"But a government in which the majority rule in all cases cannot be based on justice, even as far as men understand it. Can there not be a government in which majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience?"

"The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right. It is truly enough said, that a corporation has no conscience; but a corporation of conscientious men is a corporation with a conscience."

"The mass of men serve the state thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies."

"Even voting for the right is doing nothing for it. It is only expressing to men feebly your desire that it should prevail."

"There is but little virtue in the action of masses of men."

"But if it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then I say, break the law."

"I came into this world, not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad. A man has not everything to do, but something and because he cannot do everything, it is not necessary that he should do something wrong."

"Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison."

"A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority."

"Absolutely speaking, the more money, the less virtue."

"The best thing a man can do for his culture when he is rich is to endeavor to carry out those schemes which he entertained when he was poor."

"I am not responsible for the successful working of the machinery of society, I am not the son of the engineer."

"The lawyer's truth is not the truth, but consistency or a consistent expediency. Truth is always in harmony with herself, and is not concerned chiefly to reveal the justice that may consist with wrong doing."

"There are orators, politicians, and eloquent men, by the thousands; but the speaker has not yet opened his mouth to speak who is capable of setting, the much-vexed questions of the day."

Bettie? says

Gutenberg

Opening: [1849, original title: **Resistance to Civil Government**]

I heartily accept the motto, "That government is best which governs least"; and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe—"That government is best which governs not at all"; and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have. Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient. The objections which have been brought against a standing army, and they are many and weighty, and deserve to prevail, may also at last be brought against a standing government. The standing army is only an arm of the standing government. The government itself, which is only the mode which the people have chosen to execute their will, is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it. Witness the present Mexican war, the work of comparatively a few individuals using the standing government as their tool; for in the outset, the people would not have consented to this measure.

Jim says

He has some wonderful essays, although it must be remembered that he had few personal responsibilities & no family to support. He was too self-centered for a wife & children. I believe he is sincere, if impractical. I think he draws the lines rather tight for the real world some times, but maybe it is that attitude that allowed things to go so wrong since his day...

I've seen him labeled an Anarchist, but I believe he was a Libertarian. He wanted a better government that needed to govern less.

Liam says

Not too sure what I just read but it did have the occasional interesting point I guess...

Rachel says

Written for days past, written for today. Thoreau's discontent with the government is a present issue around the world... And it should be here. So many of our legislators, as in Thoreau's time, are not skilled at legislation and are so disconnected from the people and our needs. I think the title of the mini-book leads some to believe that Thoreau is completely anti-government - not true. He says time and again that a government that is worthy of his respect is one that he will live under. He also points out some of the good of the government of his time. A very quick read, it should leave you to question your involvement in/support of our current system. It did for me.

Darío says

I please myself with imagining a State at least which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbor; which even would not think it inconsistent with its own repose if a few were to live aloof from it, not meddling with it, nor embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbors and fellow-men. A State which bore this kind of fruit, and suffered it to drop off as fast as it ripened, would prepare the way for a still more perfect and glorious State, which also I have imagined, but not yet anywhere seen.

Luis Reséndiz says

no que haya una sola cosa que yo pueda opinar sobre *desobediencia civil* que pueda mover a alguien a leerlo, así que mejor una cita:

"la meta de un buen gobierno es darle más valor a la vida; la de un mal gobierno, restarle valor."

Julia says

I am a huge fan of Henry David Thoreau. I found *Walden* inspirational, and *Civil Disobedience* is a similar, thoughtful work. However, though the ideals are as clearly presented as any essay one could read today, the concepts inherent in this work are not even remotely possible. It struck me as almost amusing that Thoreau would have gladly gone to jail for his principles, but jail, and indeed all of institutions of the United States of America, would be unrecognizable in its present state to our founding fathers and those who first conceived of the notion of liberty. Thoreau, a highly educated man who could read texts in their original Greek and Latin, claimed to need nothing of physical comforts or delights. He espoused a desire to sit and think in jail, staring out at the stars, rather than capitulate to unfair laws and inequitable situations. Those who ran the jails in Massachusetts during his one day of confinement, released him happily, knowing he was simply a man who must espouse his principles, a man who posed no threat to his fellow man. It would be a far different story were it to happen today.

Jeremy says

Civil Disobedience: 5 stars

Slavery in Massachusetts: 5 stars

A Plea for Captain John Brown: 4 stars

Walking: 3 stars

Life without Principle: 4 stars

Wilton says

Thoreau is food for the soul. Listened to this on my way to work and found myself pondering quote after quote. I already knew I shared Thoreau's view of "the State" and all that, but his grounding beliefs and his explanation of them was also instructive. Despite its length, or maybe because of it, this is the type of book one should consume periodically. Even if it's not all the essays, but only selected ones, it seems like "re-dosing" would be helpful, as one travels down the road of life.

Rebecca says

Brilliant! While I don't agree with every thought of Thoreau's (*an original Libertarian?*), how grand it is to read from someone who has a real thought! Every sentence could stand as an individual idea, a great quote. Each lecture is beautifully constructed and well argued.

He does seem, at times, slightly smug, but in the topics I found most convincing, I would rather call his smugness "righteous indignation." Most telling, though, is the fact that his arguments are germane today.

As I read, I continually thought of a band of immigration bills debated and passed through the Utah Legislature this year which clearly went against the laws of our nation, but the intent of which was to solve a problem that the federal government has failed to do.

"Unjust laws exist; shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once? Men generally, under such a government as this, think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. They think that, if they should resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil. But it is the fault of the government itself that the remedy is worse than the evil. It makes it worse. Why is it not more apt to anticipate and provide for reform? Why does it not cherish its wise minority? Why does it cry and resist before it is hurt? Why does it not encourage its citizens to be on the alert to point out its faults, and do better than it would have them? Why does it always crucify Christ, and excommunicate Copernicus and Luther, and pronounce Washington and Franklin rebels?" (from *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*)

Having seen first-hand the abuses and exploitation used by The Fourth Branch of Government, I especially appreciated his censure of the press. With my religious background, I thoroughly enjoyed this particular statement:

"Among measures to be adopted, I would suggest to make as earnest and vigorous an assault on the Press as has already been made, and with effect, on the Church. The Church has much improved within a few years; but the Press is almost, without exception, corrupt. I believe that, in this country, the press exerts a greater and a more pernicious influence than the Church did in its worst period. We are not a religious people, but we are a nation of politicians. We do not care for the Bible, but we do care for the newspaper. At any meeting of politicians,--like that at Concord the other evening, for instance,--how impertinent it would be to quote from the Bible! How pertinent to quote from a newspaper or from the Constitution! The newspaper is a Bible which we read every morning and every afternoon, standing and sitting, riding and walking. It is a Bible which every man carries in his pocket, which lies on every table and counter, and which the mail, and thousands of missionaries, are continually dispensing. It is, in short, the only book which America has printed, and which America reads. So wide is its influence. The editor is a preacher whom you voluntarily

support. Your tax is commonly one cent daily, and it costs nothing for pew hire. But how many of these preachers preach the truth? I repeat the testimony of many an intelligent foreigner as well as my own convictions, when I say, that probably no country was ever ruled by so mean a class of tyrants as, with a few noble exceptions, are the editors of the periodical press in this country. And as they live and rule only by their servility, and appealing to the worst, and not the better nature of man, the people who read them are in the condition of the dog that returns to his vomit (from Slavery in Massachusetts)."

Thoreau, in all his critiques of government, speaks not merely to government, for in fact, I'm sure he would argue that government cannot listen for it does not exist. Thoreau is actually calling to *us*, to the individual, to be on guard and cleanse the inner vessel.

"The law will never make men free; it is men who have got to make the law free (from Slavery in Massachusetts)."

Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience, then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward (from On the Duty of Civil Disobedience).

I found a correlation with a beloved sermon from Elder D. Todd Christofferson called Moral Discipline. Note the message around 4:08: "Self-discipline has eroded, and societies are left to try to maintain order and civility by compulsion. The lack of internal control by individuals breeds external control by governments."

Additionally, on a completely different vein, I found great peace and inspiration from his lecture *Walking*, especially with this introductory excerpt:

"I have met with but one or two persons in the course of my life who understood the art of Walking, that is, of taking walks, who had a genius, so to speak, for sauntering; which word is beautifully derived "from idle people who roved about the country, in the middle ages, and asked charity, under pretence of going à la Sainte Terre"—to the holy land, till the children exclaimed, "There goes a Sainte-Terrer", a saunterer—a holy-lander. They who never go to the holy land in their walks, as they pretend, are indeed mere idlers and vagabonds, but they who do go there are saunterers in the good sense, such as I mean. Some, however, would derive the word from sans terre, without land or a home, which, therefore, in the good sense, will mean, having no particular home, but equally at home everywhere. For this is the secret of successful sauntering. He who sits still in a house all the time may be the greatest vagrant of all, but the Saunterer, in the good sense, is no more vagrant than the meandering river, which is all the while sedulously seeking the shortest course to the sea." (from Walking).

Manny says

Last time I reviewed this book, my review was rapidly deleted and I received a mail explaining that "if I continued to post content like this, my account might come under review for removal". Okay, let's see what

happens this time round. Like millions of people round the world, I am appalled at what Trump, Bannon and the rest of their team have done in the eleven days since Trump became President of the United States. This is clearly no more than the beginning. I want to oppose them. But what can I do? I'm not even a US resident.

Let me think aloud for a minute or two. I started off by deciding that I wouldn't unnecessarily pay any money to the US: no trips to the US, as few purchases as possible of US products. Presumably this has some tiny effect, but it's not very dramatic. Of course, if enough people did it then you'd see things happen; I notice that Mexicans are already starting to boycott McDonalds and Starbucks. It would still be nice to accelerate the process.

It's now well-established that the internet is a powerful tool for organizing collective action. Already, there are hundreds of petitions, marches and demonstrations being set up that way. I'm wondering what options are available if people want to coordinate economic action against Trump's regime. For example, I don't think the following apps would be impossible challenges to build:

1. A shopping app which optimised its search so as to give as little money as possible to the US. Part of the problem with organising a boycott is that it's hard to know which things are actually American. The app takes care of that; it has a crowdsourced database of information which lets it quickly decide that Brand X will send 34% of the money you pay to the US, but Brand Y only 12%. Of course, American patriots will be able to use it in reverse, sending as many dollars as possible to US companies. It'd be interesting to see which pattern of behavior was more common.

2. A phone app which refused to take calls from any US-made phones. If the app is switched on, an attempt to call you from an iPhone just gets a polite message saying that the owner only accepts calls from non-US phones. Once again, needless to say, patriots could use it in reverse.

There's already a primitive app to boycott Trump businesses. I think we'll soon see this taken further. Please let me know if you come across anything interesting.

Thinking more about what I can do here, the subject of international conferences occurs. As an academic, I typically submit half a dozen papers a year to various conferences in my field. The venues for these conferences are in nearly all cases chosen by an international committee after a bidding process. Many conferences are held in the US. A quick look around Google suggests that the US conference market is worth on the order of \$100B per year.

Given the Trump administration's irrational and capricious policy of banning people from entry into the US, solely on the grounds of their nationality and literally at a minute's notice, it seems to me that it would be not be fair to potential attendees to hold an international conference in the US when other alternatives exist. I will be making this point to the various professional bodies with which I am affiliated.
