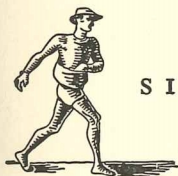


This I Believe:

THE LIVING PHILOSOPHIES
OF ONE HUNDRED THOUGHTFUL
MEN AND WOMEN IN ALL WALKS
OF LIFE — AS WRITTEN FOR
AND WITH A FOREWORD BY
EDWARD R. MURROW

Edited by EDWARD P. MORGAN



S I M O N A N D S C H U S T E R

N E W Y O R K • 1 9 5 2

Learning to Get Out of the Way

BY ALDOUS HUXLEY

IN EVERY ONE of the higher religions there is a strain of infinite optimism on the one hand and, on the other, of a profound pessimism. In the depths of our being, they all teach, there is an inner Light—but an inner Light which our egotism keeps, for most of the time, in a state of more or less complete eclipse. If, however, it so desires, the ego can get out of the way, so to speak, can dis-eclipse the Light and become identified with its divine source. Hence the unlimited optimism of the traditional religions. Their pessimism springs from the observed fact that, though all are called, few are chosen—for the sufficient reason that few choose to be chosen.

To me, this older conception of man's nature and destiny seems more realistic, more nearly in accord with the given facts, than any form of modern utopianism.

In the Lord's Prayer we are taught to ask for the blessing which consists in not being led into temptation. The reason is only too obvious. When temptations are very great or unduly prolonged, most persons succumb to them. To devise a perfect social order is probably beyond our powers; but I believe that it is perfectly possible for us to reduce the number of dangerous temptations to a level far below that which is tolerated at the present time.

A society so arranged that there shall be a minimum of dangerous temptations—this is the end towards which, as a citizen, I have to strive. In my efforts to that end, I can make use of a great variety of means. Do good ends justify the use of intrinsically bad means? On the level of theory, the point can be argued indefinitely. In practice, meanwhile, I find that the means employed invariably determine the nature of the end achieved. Indeed, as Mahatma Gandhi was never tired of insisting, the means are the end in its preliminary stages. Men have put forth enormous efforts to make their world a better place to live in; but except in regard to gadgets, plumbing and

THIS I BELIEVE

hygiene, their success has been pathetically small. "Hell," as the proverb has it, "is paved with good intentions." And so long as we go on trying to realize our ideals by bad or merely inappropriate means, our good intentions will come to the same bad ends. In this consists the tragedy and the irony of history.

Can I, as an individual, do anything to make future history a little less tragic and less ironic than history past and present? I believe I can. As a citizen, I can use all my intelligence and all my good will to develop political means that shall be of the same kind and quality as the ideal ends which I am trying to achieve. And as a person, as a psycho-physical organism, I can learn how to get out of the way, so that the divine source of my life and consciousness can come out of eclipse and shine through me.



ALDOUS HUXLEY, grandson of the great scientist, was born in Surrey, England, but now lives in Los Angeles. He describes himself as fifty-eight years old, 6 feet 4 inches tall, and narrow in proportion—in brief, an extreme ectomorph with all the traits that go with this physique.

A prolific writer, he is the author of a brilliant group of novels including *Crome Yellow*, *Point Counterpoint*, and *Brave New World*. He refers to himself as an essayist who writes

novels, and as an amateur philosopher whose books represent a series of attempts to discover artistic methods for expressing the general idea in the particular instance.

In Madrid's Prado, says Mr. Huxley, there is a drawing by Goya of an ancient man hobbling along on two sticks. Under it is the legend: *Aun aprendo*—"I'm still learning." If ours were still the age of heraldry, these words and the accompanying image would be his crest and motto, he says.