



On Civil Disobedience & Life Without Principle

Henry David Thoreau

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While *Walden* can be applied to almost anyone's life, *On Civil Disobedience* is like a venerated architectural landmark: it is preserved and admired, and sometimes visited, but for most of us there are not many occasions when it can actually be used. Still, although seldom mentioned without references to Gandhi or King, *On Civil Disobedience* has more history than many suspect. In the 1940's it was read by the Danish resistance, in the 1950's it was cherished by those who opposed McCarthyism, in the 1960's it was influential in the struggle against South African apartheid, and in the 1970's it was discovered by a new generation of anti-war activists. The lesson learned from all this experience is that Thoreau's ideas really do work, just as he imagined they would.

"*Life Without Principle* is the finest of Thoreau's negatives. Here is the woodchuck Thoreau, gritting his teeth until they are powdered."

~ Henry Canby, Thoreau

Life Without Principle originated as *What Shall it Profit*, a lecture delivered at Railroad Hall in Providence, Rhode Island, December 6, 1854. This version was edited by Thoreau for publication before he died, and published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1863 with its modern title.



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