

The great debaters and henry david thoreau philosophy essay



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To begin with, let's get clear that modern society is the product of deep human's thought. We all act and live within defined and established liberal-democratic rules, norms and beliefs with the core value of individual, which we are accustomed to perceive as something natural. However, who or what have improved values proclaimed by French Revolution at first? It is reasonably supposed that great thinkers worth to be called the primary source. Today, there is the attempt to draw analogues between James Farmer, Jr. and David Thoreau, whose impacts to philosophical thought development hardly can be overvalued. It is stated that these two personalities are similar with views of success in America. This similarity is grounded on equal value of Civil Disobedience. Obviously, plenty of interconnections can be mentioned. However, there is the view on the most strong parts.

What is American success for David Thoreau and James Farmer, Jr.? After some analysis providing, it is argued that both these great thinkers followed one general belief. Here is the brief circuit. The greatest value of humankind is the mind, which is only useful to define what is wrong and right. However, it is always oppressed and restricted by law, traditions and states in common. According to James Farmer, Jr. and David Thoreau, mind's release is the only proper solution to get American success, and Civil Disobedience is the revolutionary tool to achieve desired aim. In fact, both James Farmer, Jr. and David Thoreau determine Civil Disobedience as the kind law and right opposing. Eventually, mind's awaking is already can be called Civil Disobedience according to them. At second, the core value of individual is placed in the center of their philosophy. Let's point out some supporting

particularities from “ The great Debaters” directed by Danzel Washington and “ Civil Disobedience” written by Henry David Thoreau.

Oppressed mind. This was the main unfortunate reality people had to accept at times of great thinkers – the times of racial discrimination and socio-economic oppression. To support this claim, let’s remind some part from “ The great Debators”, when Mr. Tolson spoke to Mr. Law about slaves owner Lynch., who liked to say: “ Keep the slave physically strong, but psychologically weak. Leave him body, but take his mind”(The Great Debators). This quote in film doesn’t seem to be random. Considerably, it was put to line out oppressed mind of Color people, as the main background for racial discrimination. Considerably, this fact recognition is the first step to get entire American success, according to James Farmer Jr.. Similar view can be found out in “ Civil Disobedience” by Henry David Thoreau: “ The mass of men serve the state thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies. In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgment or of the moral sense; but they put themselves on a level with wood and earth and stones. Such command no more respect than men of straw or a lump of dirt. Yet such as these even are commonly esteemed good citizens. They are as likely to serve the devil, without intending it, as God” (Thoreau).

According to this quote, the start point of Thoreau’s is absolutely similar to Farmer. However, one reasonable question appears – why people perceive wrong as right? The answer is in harmful foundations of society and people’s silent obedience.

Unreasonable value of law. Total faith in Law and its corresponding, is determined by Farmer and Thoreau as key premise to depressed mind and <https://assignbuster.com/the-great-debaters-and-henry-david-thoreau-philosophy-essay/>

common oppression consequently. The law has not right to be perceived as the only source of truth, justice and proper-being. Both thinkers were tolerant to this idea and appropriate manifestations are easy to be found out. Let's remind the scene of final debates with Harvard from "The Great Debators". Participant from Harvard team claimed that: "We have no right to decide what laws are good or bad. Nothing that can defile the rule of law is moral"("The Great Debators"). This quote is strong with the entire picture of the valid belief in law that caused oppressed minds and racial discrimination consequently, according to James Farmer Jr.. Do you remember how he opposed this statement? If no, here is it: "Unjust law is not the law"("The Great Debators"). Our mind defines what is good or bad and this is the greatest value to resist injustice laws' influence. Quite similar approach is showed out in Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience": "Unjust laws exist... If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of government, let it go, let it go; perchance it will wear smooth - certainly the machine will wear out. If the injustice has a spring, or a pulley, or a rope, or a crank, exclusively for itself, then perhaps you may consider whether the remedy will not be worse than the evil; 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. Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine"(Thoreau). Being influenced by different aims, James Farmer Jr. and David Thoreau are similar with the common persuasion. They did not resist the nature of law as needful regulation. They were against the "foolish laws", which had no right to be proclaimed and perceived as life guideline.

Civil Disobedience is the synonym to Revolution. In fact, it is rather a curious situation around the direct meaning of Civil Disobedience. The point is that this idea is stated as the key one in book and movie, but no one source gives us a clear quote about its meaning. Considerably, an audience is welcome to generate its own one. In this regard, Civil Disobedience can be defined as the brave challenge of mind to dreadful injustice. James Farmer Jr. and David Thoreau are straight with their call to the oppressed of this challenge, and this is their Revolution. Remind the main scene from "The Great Debators", when James Farmer Jr. took the last victorious word: "I have the right, the duty to resist...with violence or civil disobedience. You should pray, I choose the last" ("The Great Debators"). David Thoreau is not so strong with his claim, but not less convincing: "All machines have their friction; and possibly this does enough good to counterbalance the evil. At any rate, it is a great evil to make a stir about it. But when the friction comes to have its machine, and oppression and robbery are organized, I say, let us not have such a machine any longer. In other words, when a sixth of the population of a nation which has undertaken to be the refuge of liberty are slaves, and a whole country is unjustly overrun and conquered by a foreign army, and subjected to military law, I think that it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize" (Thoreau). In this order, both thinkers are interconnected with the same belief in public awakening. Whatever dreadful factor is (racial discrimination or socio-economic injustice) the oppressed are right and even have to struggle what will lead to common well-being.

Are Farmer's and Thoreau's views on American success similar? Definitely, yes. However, there is a more relevant question. Were these views recognized

and adopted? At the first glance, we are still ruled by the law and obey same norms of behavior, but one significant change was implemented. The nature of laws was transformed and this fact is supported by protected liberal values with individual in the center. The mind, instead of majority's will, became the primary source of every law and this is the greatest victory of common human's thought, and outstanding thinkers' particularly.

Sources

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