

I W C N e w s l e t t e r



'He whose faith is most assured, has the best reason for relying on persuasion, and the strongest motive to thrust from him all temptations to use angry force. The substitution of force for persuasion, among its other disadvantages, has this further drawback ... that it lessens the conscience of a society and breeds hypocrisy ... a man who is so silly as to think himself incapable of going wrong, is very likely to be too silly to perceive that coercion may be one way of going wrong.'

Lord Morley

The birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi on October 2nd invites us to give fresh thought to his teachings about truth and nonviolence. The following excerpt from *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* by Raghavan Iyer, the co-founder of the Institute of World Culture, offers perspective on the deeper challenges of contemporary politics:

Satya and Ahimsa

No political thinker, with the possible exception of Plato, has insisted as Gandhi did on truth as an absolute value, the sovereign in the kingdom of ends, the common concern of human society. No one, certainly, compares with him in his continual stress on the primacy of nonviolence as a political and social instrument, on the purity of means required for the pursuit of any worthy end. His originality, however, lay chiefly in his commendation of both *satya* and *ahimsa* and in his insight into the

interdependence of truth and nonviolence, integrity and sensitivity, fidelity to oneself and respect for the rights of one's fellow men. Whereas most thinkers have concentrated on a single value to the exclusion of all others, and even thought that the pursuit of justice or equality or liberty or fraternity would automatically bring the others in its train, Gandhi pinned his political faith entirely on these two moral absolutes of truth and nonviolence and stressed their close connection with each other. He stretched the meanings of both *satva* and *ahimsa* far beyond the everyday connotations of "truth" and "nonviolence," but he also sharpened their use by distinguishing between their absolute and relative, positive and negative, genuine and spurious, forms.

He regarded both *satya* and *ahimsa* as inherent in nature and in man, underlying the constant working of a cosmic law and constituting the only common basis of human (*cont'd on p. 3*)

UPCOMING EVENTS

All events will take place at Concord House,
1407 Chapala Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101
IWC Website: www.worldculture.org

Vision and Change

New Study Group in October
Tuesdays, October 7, 14, 21 and 28th
8:00 - 9:30 pm

Can campaign promises of new vision and change be translated into meaningful accomplishments? What kind of vision and change might promote the universal welfare of humanity? What are voices from abroad suggesting as a way of promoting social, cultural and economic change?

Join in the discussion of these and other questions during the month of October, so that you can evaluate the presidential election debates from the perspective of an emerging world culture. Essays from David Bornstein's book, *How To Change the World*, will be among the readings discussed. Contact the Chair, Carolyn Dorrance, at 967-1055 for more information.



Annual IWC Meeting and Brainstorming of the 2009 Program

Saturday, October 11, 2008
7:00 - 9:00 pm

Following the annual Membership Meeting, we will brainstorm the Institute's 2009 Program. A letter and questionnaire is forthcoming (and is available on the IWC's website) inviting you to share ideas for next year's program. The theme of the year will be related to Aim 5, "To deepen awareness of the universality of man's spiritual striving and its rich variety of expression in the religions, philosophies and literatures of humanity."



Challenging Poverty in Latin America with Liberation Theology

Seminar: Saturday, October 25, 2008
2:00 – 5:00 pm

Presenter: Kevin Fagan

Dr. Kevin Fagan, Professor of Spanish at Cal Poly, a scholar in Latin American Studies, and longtime resident of Chile, will explore the historical roots and contemporary applications of Liberation Theology. He will explain the philosophical foundations of "orthopraxis" and describe examples of political movements that illustrate the dynamic effort to link Christian values with challenges to injustice and poverty by empowering the poor, the priest and the politician. For information: 805/528-3008 or 966-3941

Save the Date: November 1st, 4:00 - 6:00 pm
Book Forum: Mountains Beyond Mountains

Dr. Gerald Pike, Professor at Santa Barbara City College, will lead a discussion on the work of Dr. Paul Farmer, a visionary physician from Harvard who works to fight infectious diseases, particularly TB. Dr. Farmer offers a new paradigm for addressing social change, illustrating how fighting disease means fighting social inequalities. This book forum will be based on Tracy Kidder's book, *Mountains Beyond Mountains*. For more information, call 963-6007.

Memberships: Individual Membership \$35
Individual Student Membership \$15
Individual Supporting Membership \$70
Individual Sustaining Membership \$350
Contact memberships@worldculture.org

aspiration and action in the midst of society. No society can survive without a measure of *satya* and *ahimsa*, but these were both minimal and maximal concepts for Gandhi . . . Gandhi used the argument from survival, but he also asserted his faith in the moral evolution of human society in accordance with Natural Law, signified for him by the comprehensive concepts of *satya* and *ahimsa*. The closest approach in the West to Gandhi's view was perhaps that of Vico, for whom the essence of Natural Law was contained in truth and nonviolence—*veritas dicti, veriloquim, veritas facti* and *gestio rei sine dolo*.

It has often been said that attachment to absolute values is a flight from reality, that absolutists soon pass from refusal to condemnation, systematize their evasions in a myth of total purity, and thus disguise their desertion by idealization. Gandhi, however, was always concerned that the pursuit of purity should lead to a new political morality that men could feasibly adopt, and not to an apolitical perfectionism or an impasse of helpless good intentions.

His chief concern was not for a certain abstract honesty of concept or an ideal historical perfection, but for a consistent probity of attitude toward politics and action in the midst of society. He saw a vital connection between force and fraud, violence and deception in everyday life. This connection was sensed by Hobbes and seen more clearly by Sorel. Gandhi drew conclusions opposite to the theirs from his similar observations, in part because of his metaphysical presuppositions regarding *Sat* or Absolute Truth and *Dharma* or the Moral Law, and in part because of his psychological and ethical belief that fear is the common root of force and fraud and that the dignity of man as a truth-seeker enables him to be fearless enough to be nonviolent.

Raghavan Iyer

In October

Anniversaries

- 2nd Mohandas K. Gandhi, Indian spiritual leader 1869
- 3rd St. Francis of Assisi, Italian Catholic saint d. 1226
- 5th Denis Diderot, French philosopher, writer 1713
- 6th Richard Dedekind, German mathematician 1831
- 6th Le Corbusier, Swiss architect 1887
- 7th Neils Bohr, Danish physicist 1885
- 11th Eleanor Roosevelt, U.S. First Lady 1884
- 14th William Penn, British Quaker, community leader 1644
- 15th Virgil, Roman poet 70 BCE
- 15th Fredrich Nietzsche 1844
- 16th Noah Webster, American lexicographer 1758
- 18th Winton Marsalis, American jazz trumpeter 1961
- 18th Henri Bergson, French philosopher 1859
- 19th Marsilio Ficino, Italian humanist philosopher 1433
- 20th Sir Christopher Wren, English architect, urban planner 1632
- 21st Samuel Taylor Coleridge, English poet, critic, philosopher 1772
- 24th Anton van Leeuwenhoek, Dutch scientist 1632
- 25th Johann Strauss, Austrian musician, composer 1825
- 26th Alfred the Great, English king d. 899
- 28th Desiderius Erasmus, Dutch theologian 1466
- 30th Fyodor Dostoevsky, Russian novelist 1821

Observances

- 1st Yosemite National Park formed (U.S.) 1890
- 2nd Ramadan ends (Muslim religious holiday)
- 2nd Five-day Work Week officially sanctioned by American Federation of Labor 1933
- 2nd Table of Atomic Weights, by Dalton 1803
- 4th Sputnik I enters orbit 1957
- 5th First radio broadcast of the World Series 1921
- 9th Yom Kippur, Jewish Day of Atonement
- 9th Formation of Women in Black, a Serbian peace coalition 1991
- 13th Columbus Day
- 16th World Food Day (U.N.)
- 18th Quantized atom propounded by Niels Bohr 1913
- 22nd Successful test of the electric light bulb by Edison 1879
- 24th United Nations Day proclaimed 1948
- 31st Reformation Day (Christian religious holiday, honoring of Martin Luther)
- 31st Samhain (Celtic New Year end of harvest celebration)