Credo: What I Believe

Neil Gaiman

PERSONAL ESSAY

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The following text is adapted and paraphrased from Neil Gaiman's personal essay. It is an alternate version of the original text, which appears in your student edition.

NOTES

1 I believe that it is difficult to kill an idea. Ideas are invisible and contagious, and they move fast.

2 I believe that you can set your own ideas against ideas you dislike. That you should be free to argue, explain, clarify, debate, offend, insult, rage, sing, exaggerate, and deny.

3 I do not believe that burning, murdering, exploding people, smashing their heads with rocks (to let the bad ideas out), drowning them, or even defeating them will work to contain ideas you do not like. Ideas spring up where you do not expect them, like weeds. And they are as difficult to control.

4 I believe that trying to stop ideas spreads ideas.

5 I believe that people and books and newspapers are containers for ideas. But burning the people will be as unsuccessful as firebombing the newspaper files. It is already too late. It is always too late. The ideas are out. They are hiding behind people's eyes, waiting in their thoughts. They can be whispered. They can be written on walls in the dead of night. They can be drawn.

6 I believe that ideas do not have to be right to exist.

7 I believe you have every right to be perfectly certain that images of god or prophet or man are holy and should be kept unspoiled. And I have the right to be certain of the holiness of speech, of the holiness of the right to make fun of, to comment, to argue and to speak.

8 I believe I have the right to think and say the wrong things. I believe your solution for that should be to argue with me or to ignore me. And I should have the same solution for the wrong things that you think.

9 I believe that you have the absolute right to think things that I find insulting, stupid, ridiculous, or dangerous. You have the right to speak, write, or distribute these things. I do not have the right to kill you, injure you, hurt you, or take away your liberty or property because I find your ideas threatening or insulting or downright disgusting. You probably think my ideas are pretty awful, too.

10 I believe that in the battle between guns and ideas, ideas will, eventually, win.

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11 Because the ideas are invisible, and they linger, and, sometimes, they are even true.

12 *Eppur si muove*:[1] and yet it moves.

1 Eppur si muove (ehp puhr see MWOH vay) Italian phrase meaning "and yet it moves," attributed to the Italian mathematician, physicist, and philosopher Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) in 1633, after he was forced to take back his claim that the Earth moves around the sun.

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