

# The COLUMN

## THE BEST ALTRUIST IS THE GOOD EGOIST

**M**ahatma Gandhi said that if you want to change the world, first you must change yourself. Even for Gandhi, famous for his self-abnegation, the first thing you must seek is internal peace and the personal conviction on how to act. Through the words of the Hindu sage, we perceive the moral imperative that we should first look after ourselves. Otherwise, we will be a sad case both for ourselves and, what's worse, for those around us as well. Shakespeare expressed this idea in an especially poetic way in his famous tragedy *Hamlet*, where Polonius, Lord Chamberlain to the king, advises his son, Laertes, prior to the young man's journey abroad:

This above all:  
to thine own self be true,  
and it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man

Your first responsibility as a human being is to look out for your own good and to persevere in this endeavor even if it takes you a lifetime. To go after your dreams is perfectly coherent with being a good person and with helping others. In fact, looking after your own good prepares you better than any other action to contribute to the common good. What would our world be like today if every human being were a balanced person satisfied with his or her own condition in life? It's easy to be pleasant and friendly when we feel happy and fulfilled. Obviously it's difficult to realize ourselves to the full or to attain complete happiness, but the further we manage to traverse in the right direction, the more we will contribute to the common good. Therefore, cultivate with love and care all that pertains to your own person: your education, your competencies, your endurance, your ability to get along with others, your discretion, your determination, your imagination, your psychological balance, your loyalty to those who deserve it, your patience, your persistence, your self-reliance, your resourcefulness, your empathy, your sincerity, your impartiality and, finally, your capacity for cool and serene observation.

Richard Vaughan

## MAIN feature

### The ever changing english language...



How many words are there in the English language? It's impossible to say, really, because language is something that is alive. It is constantly changing, words become obsolete and new words are being created continually. This is evident when you pick up an old book or when you listen to today's teenagers talk to their friends. While the passage of time is one reason for the disappearance of words, the creation of words can happen for many reasons. Have you ever noticed all the words that have come from trademarked brand names? Or the words we use which have originated from a person's name? Nowadays communication through mobiles and internet has created a new abbreviated language in which you either get with the times or get lost in the letters. There are some brands whose popularity and nature come to epitomize the very products and services they represent. These trademarked brand names often find their way into our language first colloquially and then sometimes even formally. I'm sure most of us can think of the most obvious examples such as Kleenex, Aspirin, Tampax, and Band-Aid, but did you know that even the drug heroin was once a brand name? Just like Aspirin, Heroin was produced by the German pharmaceutical company Bayer. It was originally sold as a non-addictive morphine derivative useful as a cough remedy. Of course with time its addictive properties were discovered and Bayer terminated its production; nevertheless, the name lived on.

Although there are brand names which come to represent a product, there are also those which represent the service they provide. One such example is that of Google one of the most popular search engines around today. How many of us google information on a daily basis? When we don't know the answer to something, we say, "I'll google it". We tell others to google things, we use it in the past tense as well; "I know the answer because I googled it". Google has become synonymous with searching for information on the internet. However, this is not the only brand name which has become a verb. We also say to Xerox when we mean to photocopy, to Hoover when we mean to vacuum, or to tweet when we post an instant message on Twitter.

Just as there are brand names that have become part of our lexicon, there are people's names that have become synonymous with specific characteristics. Consider the following examples: Freudian, Kafkaesque, Christ-like, Dantesque, Machiavellian, etc. While some of these come from true historical figures there are others that derive from fictional characters and many of them don't have their origins in the English language. One such example is Don Juan which comes from Spanish legend and is now synonymous with any man who is a seducer of women. Another example deriving from Spanish is Quixotic which is used to refer to something impractical, rash, impulsive, and extravagantly romantic taken from the qualities of Cervantes's unforgettable protagonist Don Quijote.

Even though the above examples have existed for many years, new words and expressions are always being created and with the increasing techno-

logical advances it is not surprising to see an emergence of a language tailored to real-time communication. The immediacy and conciseness required to participate in chat rooms, online discussion boards, instant messages, as well as social networks such as Facebook and Twitter has caused users to create an abbreviated form of language to express themselves as quickly as possible and therefore with as few letters as possible. Take a look at the following: lol (laugh out loud), btw (by the way), ppl (people), gr8 (great), similarly “u” has come to represent “you” and “c” has come to represent “see” which has made it possible to write “see you later” with only 5 letters, “c u l8r.”

Although some people may disagree on the impact of this abbreviated form of communication, there is no doubt that it is here to stay much like some brand names which have ceased to be the most popular brand but whose name continues to represent the product. As is the case with Kleenex, there are loads of tissue brands; however, you’ll almost always hear people say, do you have a Kleenex? And while only 15 years ago no one could have imagined using google as a verb, it is now hard to imagine it ever disappearing from everyday language. Just as for the younger generation sending a text message without abbreviated words is a thing of the past. Even though the thought of language as something that is alive and always changing may seem daunting to those of us

**Teenagers:** *Adolescente*  
*Teenagers nowadays can't imagine a world without internet.*

**To get with the times:** *Ponerse al día.*  
*My mother still doesn't have a mobile phone; it's time for her to get with the times.*

**Brand:** *Marca.*  
*What's brand of milk do you buy?*

**Vacuum:** *Pasar la aspiradora.*  
*If you have carpet in your house, you must vacuum regularly.*

**Rash:** *Impulsivo.*  
*She knew she would regret that rash decision she had made.*

**To tailor to:** *Ajustar a la medida.*  
*They tailored the course to my needs.*

**Conciseness:** *Concisión.*  
*The conciseness of his argument made it even more powerful.*

**To be here to stay:** *Estar destinado a perdurar.*  
*Mobile telephones are here to stay.*

**To be a thing of the past:** *Ser algo del pasado.*  
*Some people feel that sending faxes is a thing of the past.*

**Daunting:** *Abrumador.*  
*The task of organizing all the files is daunting.*

who are trying to learn a new language, we must bear in mind that the beauty of language is found in the fact that it is continually changing. That we can use it to create and express ourselves in 100's of different ways. After all, a great book is simply a collection of words which when read forms an image and a world inside of us. The power of language is undeniable and the English language is all the more richer for the people and products that have become words and for the fact that new technologies have forced us to be creative in the use of our own language. )



## QUIZ TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE



**In Dante's Divine Comedy, how many circles are there in hell?**

7

9

5

You can check the answers on [www.vaughanhumanidades.com](http://www.vaughanhumanidades.com)

### THE NEW YEAR WILL MARK THE FOLLOWING ANNIVERSARIES:

- It will be 150 years from the moment Jefferson Davis was inaugurated as President of the Confederate States of America on February 18<sup>th</sup> in 1861.
- 150 years ago this new year, Victor Emmanuel II became the first King of united Italy
- This year will also mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary from the time Women in Switzerland were given the right to vote on 7 Feb 1971.
- It will also be 40 years since NASDAQ, the world's first electronic stock exchange, began trading.