

The Pacifist, The Warrior, and Courage

"When one doesn't have the courage needed to be a pacifist, one's a warrior. The pacifist is always alone.

"The warrior is sure of being in agreement with most people. If it's a majority he wants, he can set his mind at ease, he's in it ... If, like everyone, he needs greatness, it's in the mess that a greatness 'in his own size' is found for him. Everything is prepared for him in advance. If a man trembles at the idea of one day surpassing Man, let him tremble no longer but become a warrior; or simpler still, just surrender and let himself go - he'll be set among the warriors as a matter of course ... The whole game of war is played out on the warrior's weakness ... The simple soldier: neither good nor bad, recruited into it because he's not against it. He'll suffer the warrior's lot there without causing trouble, until the day when, like Faulkner's hero, he discovers that anyone can stumble blindly into heroism by mistake, as easily as he can fall down a manhole left open in the middle of the sidewalk. It's absurd to claim that an army made up of millions of men is the personification of courage: that's the conclusion of a facile mind."

Jean Giono (1895-1970). Preface to the Carnets de moleskine cited by Jean Paul Sartre in The War Diaries; Pantheon, 1984; Notebook 5, p.139