

I shall end by quoting two things said about this subject more than a century ago. The American orator Robert Ingersoll gave this as his creed: "Happiness is the only good; the time to be happy is now; the place to be happy is here; the way to be happy is to make others so". And the English scientist William Kingdon Clifford, giving a lecture on life and death, ended as follows: "Do I seem to say 'Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die'? Far from it; on the contrary, I say, 'Let us take hands and help, for this day we are alive together'!"

From a talk on the BBC World Service, 23rd May 1996, reprinted in *The Freethinker*

QUESTIONS by Heinrich Heine

By the sea, by the empty, night-time sea
Stands a youthful man,
His breast full of longing, his head full of doubt,
And with gloomy lips he asks the waves:

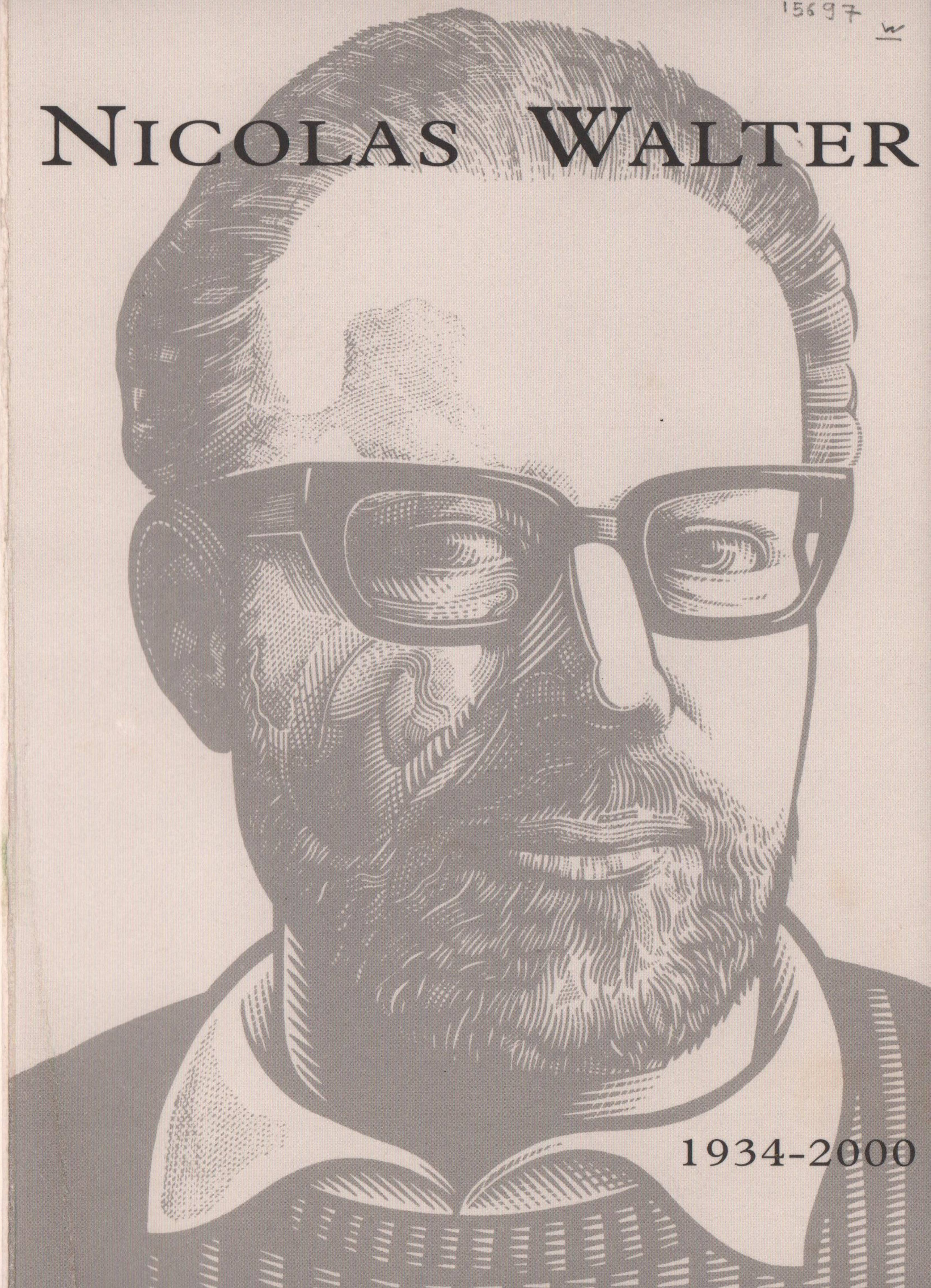
"Oh, solve for me the riddle of life,
The painful ancient riddle,
Over which so many heads have brooded,
Heads in magicians' caps,
Heads in turbans, and black birettas,
Periwigged heads, and a thousand other
Poor, perspiring human heads –
Tell me, what is the meaning of Man?
Where does he come from? Where is he going?
Who lives up there on the golden stars?"

There murmur the waves their eternal murmur,
There blows the wind, there fly the clouds,
There twinkle the stars, indifferent and cold,
And a fool waits for an answer.

From the *Buch der Lieder* (Book of Songs), 1827, translated by Nicolas Walter

This pamphlet was produced for the memorial event at the Conway Hall, London, on 4th June 2000. The texts were chosen by Christine and Natasha Walter. The portrait and design were by Clifford Harper, the typesetting by Jayne Clementson and the printing by Steve Sorba at Aldgate Press.

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NICOLAS WALTER



1934-2000

NICOLAS WALTER was born on 22nd November 1934, and died on 7th March 2000. He was an anarchist, a humanist and a tireless voice of reason. His publications include *Non-Violent Resistance: Men Against War* (1963), *About Anarchism* (1969), *Blasphemy Ancient and Modern* (1990) and *Humanism: What's in the Word* (1997). He was a founding member of the Committee of 100, and one of the Spies for Peace who broke into a secret government headquarters in 1963 and published details of the government's preparations for governing the country in the event of nuclear war. A prolific journalist and writer of letters to the press, his contributions appeared in publications ranging from *Freedom and Solidarity* to the *Guardian* and the *London Review of Books*. From 1975 until his retirement in 1999 he worked for the Rationalist Press Association, first as editor of the *New Humanist* and later as managing director. He married twice and leaves two daughters and three grandchildren, as well as stepchildren and stepgrandchildren.

WE REFUSE TO BE THE MEN OF WAR

"Freedom – is it a crime?" demanded Herbert Read at the time of the Anarchist Trial. If, like him, you define freedom as "the will to be responsible for one's self", then *of course freedom is a crime*, because it replaces the law of man with the law of God, conscience, principle, decency, inner light, truth, responsibility, humanity, or what you will. The freedom to take direct action, to do it yourself, is both a political and a criminal offence. Even the most pitiful protest against war is resistance to the Warfare State. Any man's death diminishes me, and any man's rebellion strengthens me. We shall go on making our point until it is taken. We are a few, but a happy few. We are in debt, but not in despair. We make mistakes, but people who don't make mistakes don't make anything. We are not grown up, but we never stop growing. We are one-eyed, but we are living in the Country

of the Blind. We are neurotics who defy our political parents; but they are psychotics building works of fantasy which will collapse around themselves – and us. We are amateur incendiaries, but they are professional pyromaniacs. We are living in a world where faith is always misplaced and hope is always betrayed, and somehow we contrive to keep faith and hope alive, we try to keep charity alive too, though it is difficult. Instead of playing Greeks and Trojans or Montagues and Capulets, we play Troilus and Cressida or Romeo and Juliet ... We refuse to be the men of war, we are the men against war. *Non serviamus* – we shall not be slaves.

From *Non-Violent Resistance*, 1963

THE TIME TO BE HAPPY IS NOW

One of the most common questions asked of people who don't have any religion is: 'How do we face death?' The answer of most Humanists who have thought seriously about the subject is this: we think death really is the end of life; there really is nothing afterwards; the only kind of existence we shall have after we die is to be followed by our children and remembered by other people, for a time; and all we can do about it is make the best of our time before we die.

I've been very ill with cancer, I've been crippled by the treatment for it, I shall die fairly soon. But this makes my life more precious, not less. Every day is a new gift, to be relished. Every time I look at my wife is a new look, to be cherished. Every time I meet a friend is a new occasion, to be celebrated. Every time I see my children, and now my grandchildren, I observe new life and love carried on down the generations. Every time I'm helped, I appreciate the human fellowship. Even travelling in a wheelchair can be fun, because there's more chance to slow down and look around as I go. Not to be able to enjoy live plays and concerts is a blow, but I can read books and listen to music at home, remember how much I've enjoyed and realise how much I've missed. For the first time I have the chance to stop and think.