

Abstract

André Gide, an engaged writer

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The French author André Gide (1869 – 1951) was one of the most important writers of the end of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century and an important figure of the public intellectual life. This thesis analyses to what extent André Gide was a politically and socially engaged author and the reach of his work beyond the world of literature.

The method used in this work is a literary critical analysis focused on the author's personality as the key factor for the interpretation of his work.

The initial and second part of the thesis summaries the concept of engaged literature developed by Jean-Paul Sartre in his study „Qu'est-ce que la littérature?“ and mentions examples of other engaged writers. In this framework, the thesis also deals with the general question of „What is literature?“.

The third part of the thesis describes the life of André Gide and presents Gide's works which fall under the definition of engaged literature. These include works celebrating human freedom and ethics which attempt to foster the reader's strength and courage, but also Gide's autobiographic works, in which the author himself serves as an honest and liberated role model. This section also covers Gide's participation in the „Dreyfus affair“ and in the French literary and social life.

The fourth part of the thesis analyses Gide's travel diaries *Voyage au Congo* and *Le Retour du Tchad* written during Gide's travels to the French Equatorial Africa between 1925 – 1926, in which Gide made a compelling testimony about the deficiencies of French colonial administration, concession companies and oppression of the local people.

The fifth part describes Gide's involvement with communism and his standing in various political and social issues of the time, including Gide's relation to the Soviet Union.

The sixth part of the thesis covers Gide's travel to the Soviet Union in 1936 and its literary reflection published as *Retour de l'U.R.S.S.*, in which Gide painted a surprisingly open and critical picture of the situation in the USSR.

The final parts of the thesis attempt to analyse Gide's work from the perspective of a literary axis with two antipodes – an engaged work on the one hand and a literary work focused on artistic value and author's autonomy on the other hand. The thesis asks where Gide's works are placed on this axis. Its final thoughts are dedicated to an attempt to answer the general question of „What is literature?“ on the example of Gide's work.