

NONVIOLENCE AS A WAY OF LIFE  
*History, Theory and Practice*

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A WAY OF LIFE

*History, Theory and Practice*

*Edited by*  
PREDRAG CICOVACKI  
KENDY HESS

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## **Part III: PRACTICE**





## My Experiments with Nonviolence

RAM C. MAJHI

*This essay is the story of the author's effort to practice Gandhi's ideas on nonviolence at a personal level, and the consequences of that practice for some of his personal relationships. It also includes some reflections on nonviolence.*

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During the second part of the last decade of the twentieth century I tried to be nonviolent towards other human beings in thought, speech and action under the influence of Gandhi's ideas. I wanted to give his ideas a try. By "nonviolent" I meant not causing pain or suffering to others. Soon I realized that it is not easy. It was easier not to act than not to speak something that causes pain to others. It was easier to refrain from saying something that hurt others than to refrain from thinking ill of others. The first human subject of my experiment was my wife.

We had returned from the United States after the completion of my Ph.D., and I had returned to my old job as an assistant professor of philosophy in an undergraduate

college. The payment of salary was irregular. We had two children and my mother also lived with us. I was trying to get a job in a university without success. I was frustrated by the hypocrisy of the recruitment practices of the Indian universities I applied to. During this period I came in contact with Gandhi's writings. Somewhere he had said that the educated youth of India had a tendency to seek more and more privileges from society in return for the benefits he has received from it. That was the turning point in my outlook and attitude towards society. I thought of becoming a social activist. Naturally, my wife objected. She was already stressed. She thought that the life of the wife of a student in the U.S. was better than the life of a professor's wife in India. There was a lot of freedom for women there, food was cheaper, there was order in public life, etc. There are a great number of problems for women in India. She did not want more trouble in her life, especially from me. So, there were two opinions in my home regarding how we should live. I was suggesting that I would be a social activist working for social change within the scope and limitation of holding a semi government job. For that I had to change my existing lifestyle to a type of living that was as simple as possible without asking my family to do so.

She would have none of that. Her argument was that my choice would inevitably affect their lives adversely and she had a right to object when something was not good for her or her family. I reasoned with her that the sacrifice has to be made for the greater cause. She had her counter ready at hand. The goal set by me was my goal, not theirs. I had no right to impose that goal on them. It was obvious that there was a conflict of interests. It was not a conflict of interests alone! We differed in our ways in approaching the issue. She pleaded, cried, took the help of friends and relatives in order that I change my view. It was obvious that she was suffering. That seemed to me a natural consequence of a situation when one party is seriously considering a radical change in lifestyle that affects the aggrieved party. Was it morally acceptable? It seemed to me that it was.

What was challenging for me was to respond to her in a nonviolent way. Sometimes I felt anger though I tried not to express it while speaking to her. When I asked myself why I was angry with her I got the answer that she was not letting me have my way. One day, out of sheer frustration and anger, I made a pile of all the things I had brought from the U.S. such as the garments, books and the computer, and attempted to set fire to it. Our neighbors rushed to the place and dissuaded me and they brought the things I had thrown out back home. I had started wearing *khaddar* and wished to be a vegetarian. I did not shave because I could not find a razor made locally. The toothbrush and the tongue cleaner I used were made outside of my province, so I stopped using those. I used *dantoon*, a small six-inch stick made out of branches of *Sal* (*Shorea robusta*) or *Karanj* (*Pongamia pinnata*) trees. I discovered that most of the items I used were made outside of my province. So, in order to be close to the principle of *swadeshi*, the idea was to use as fewer items as possible and practicable. It should be clear by now that my idea of a local product was one made in one's province. If I could walk, I did not take my bicycle. If I could manage with my bicycle, I avoided using my scooter. The idea was that one should make best use of the resources available.

I searched and found in the town we were living an organization in line with Gandhi's principles and participated in their activities. Later, I associated myself with the national organization *Sarva Seva Sangh*, at a provincial level. My wife objected to all of this. I thought that I should be allowed to live the way I wanted as long as I was carrying out my responsibilities toward my family. But living together in a family or in a larger society creates the difficult problem of deciding what is personal and what is public, and it is a serious issue since what you do also affects others. What she expected of me is that I should only do those things that would promote the good of the family. I made the distinction of personal freedom and public responsibility when I failed to convince her that we should change ourselves for the good of society

beyond the good of the family. Between the good of the self and the good of the family, she was for the latter. Between the good of the family and good of society, I was for the latter. So we were adopting the same principle, namely, that one should act toward the welfare of the larger group. Let us name it “the welfare principle.” When there was the question of choosing between the good of the smaller group and good of the larger group, especially when the existence of the smaller group is threatened, the good of the smaller group is to be preferred. Let us name it “the existence principle.”

We were basically using these two principles while arguing with each other according to our convenience. When the issue was choosing between the good of the family and the good of society she was willing to honor the existential principle while I opted for the welfare principle. When the issue was between choosing one’s freedom and the good of the family, she honored the welfare principle and justified her action on that basis while I preferred the existence principle to defend my interest. We tacitly agreed on the legitimacy of these two principles in our conversation without articulating them. We could not agree upon the proper context for the use of these two principles. Thus the conflict continued. Life brings situations like this where it is genuinely difficult to decide which has the priority: the good of the self or the good of the other. When conflict appears to not end through rational ways we tend to use all kinds of forces to end it in our favor.

Be it the conflict between two individuals, two groups or two nations, it is basically the conflict between the *self* and the *other*. A firmly grounded, dynamic Gandhian self reaches out for the other, dissolves its rigidity and transforms itself and the other toward a growth beneficial to both. *Swaraj* is the ideal that guides the self. Truth and nonviolence are its methods. A man of *swaraj* patiently listens to the other’s beliefs, desires, goals, aspirations, complaints and objections. He also patiently observes the negative feelings the other might have toward his own beliefs, desires, goals, aspirations, complaints and objections but does not react to those negative feelings

and refuses to be swept away by the other's negative attitude toward him. He perseveres to build confidence in the other. His behavior should give signals that he is rational, sympathetic to the other's views and willing to listen. His speech and action must assure the other that he is open to suggestions and interested in a fair deal. The other with all his weakness may construe his humility as a sign of weakness and may wish to exploit the situation for his own advantage. The truth seeker and nonviolence lover handles all these negative attitudes of the other carefully and charts a course of action in consultation with the other for the benefit of both. This Gandhian attitude presupposes a perspective about life and world and holds the key to the resolution of the conflict. *Swadeshi* is another powerful concept that can be used for conflict resolution and pave the way for peaceful co-existence.

If one searched for the roots of conflicts, one would find that people fight for sources of living, for shelter, for safety and security, for dignity and for preservation of their identity. They fight for themselves and also fight for their group. What *swadeshi* teaches one is to be proud of the good part of one's own culture, look for livelihood in his own surroundings and take pride in speaking his own language. He must defend nonviolently everything that is *swadeshi*. The tension that arises due to the possibility of extinction of one's own culture and identity will thin out provided both parties respect and recognize the significance of *swaraj* and *swadeshi*. The crucial point is how to make one realize the essentiality of the cardinal virtues – *satya*, *ahimsa*, *swaraj* and *swadeshi* – in everyone's life. The second point worth noting is how to make one practice those virtues. These are practical issues and need not be theoretical constraints on the concepts and the Gandhian perspective.

Gandhi's concept of *swaraj*, to reiterate, also holds the key for resolution of conflicts. His ideas of an ideal village and its self-rule provide us with a blueprint of the mechanism for resolution of conflicts and thus leading to peaceful co-existence in a nonviolent way. The individual will take the

initiative for resolution that will affect the opinion of the village. The village's opinion will affect the larger group and so on.

Violence does not resolve the conflict between the self and the other. It subdues, represses, or eliminates one or the other depending on which one is more powerful. The nonviolent individual, on the other hand, never attempts to eliminate the other, but tries to transform the other by the only force at his disposal, the moral force, being guided by the love for truth and ready to suffer in the process. The individual keeps his mind open and perseveres in transforming the relation between the self and the other to one based on fairness and equality.

It is really hard to find such an idealized *satyagrahi* in ordinary mortals. The world of course cannot wait until the *satyagrahi* is made out of the ordinary mortal. This ordinary individual has to take up the double tasks of improving himself and the world he lives in; persistently striving toward nonviolent nature both within and without. This responsibility is inevitable in the Gandhian philosophy of life. The individual plays the central role in the process of transformation. Irrespective of the largeness of the group, the complexity of the systems and the institutions that have been created, it is the individual that ultimately counts. No economic, political, social, or religious system can thrive without the direct or indirect participation of the individual. Man is the master of his own destiny. *Swaraj* (self-rule) is the most significant aspect of his identity. The group has authority over him only because the individual has surrendered voluntarily to the group. So is the relation between the smaller groups with the larger group.

Unless an individual has the conviction that all humans are equal and steadily works toward an attitude of not harming others in thought, speech and action, he has little chance of becoming nonviolent in nature. All alleged truths – religious, political, or economic – are mere approximations. Any conflict in these areas if not solved by reason has to be taken as mere opinions. The individual or the group must be ready to suffer

to change the unworthy attitude of the opponent. This is again easier to say than to act upon. Survival instinct makes one fear the other and animosity is natural consequence of this. Depending on the nature and strength of the threat, the individual compromises on the principles to avoid the danger. But living like an animal is not the destiny of humans. Had it been so, man would not have made such elaborate arrangements of social institutions for regulating human behavior. Ironically, the institutions that have emerged out of human creativity have become the source of the structural violence leading often to direct violence. I think Gandhi has shown us that a nonviolent society is possible and violence is not the right way to resolve conflict.

I knew that violence was not the right way to resolve the conflict with my wife. I also realized that simply knowing this was not enough, for I could sense that I was holding some amount of animosity toward my wife. She also harbored all kind of negative feelings, including helplessness. She even threatened to take her life if I continued to pursue my way. This continued for some time. One day she called one of our friends who is a psychologist and spoke about her situation.

The friend immediately visited us. We both had respect for her and her opinion. She thought that I was reacting to the adverse situation I was put into by external forces; that I was going through a lot of stress; that a true Gandhian would not be depressed and distressed, and that my attempt at the practicing the ideas of Gandhi was a kind of defense mechanism. She also counseled my wife. Reluctantly, I stopped practicing Gandhi's ideas. When I look back to those days now I can see that there was some element of truth in her assessment of the situation. My decision to retreat from practicing Gandhianism was a prudent one. A few years later I got a job in a university. I no longer try to be a social activist. My wife and I do not differ with regard to how we should live. She is busy with home-making. But, the attraction of Gandhi's ideas is not lost completely. Most of my writings are about his ideas or presuppose his basic ideas.

## *Ahimsa* in Personal Life

ARUN GANDHI

*This essay analyzes various aspects of violence and nonviolence, as encountered in personal life. More specifically, it deals with human relationships, insofar as they have to be built on respect, understanding, acceptance, and appreciation. These are the ways to transform our culture of violence into a peaceful world.*

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Hypothetically speaking, if one found oneself in a snake pit one would not spend time searching for a stick to ward off the deadly snakes. One would desperately try to find a way out of the pit. We find ourselves deep in a culture of violence and all we are looking for is a way of resolving conflicts peacefully. This is somewhat like being in the midst of an inferno and wondering where you should drill for water.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi perceived *ahimsa* as a way out of the misery of violence and not simply as a tool to resolve conflicts. Not many of us could leave a message for humanity that contained five simple words – *My Life Is My Message* –



which had such a profound meaning: that anyone with conviction and commitment can achieve what he did, and that he made an attempt to be a better human being which he expected everyone else to follow. It means we need to dedicate our lives to reducing conflicts rather than just learning how to resolve them peacefully. In other words: “*We must become the change we wish to see in the world.*”

What I am going to share with you in this article is my understanding of his philosophy of nonviolence, or *ahimsa*, derived from the simple lessons he taught me when I was living with him between the ages of 12 and 14 and what I was able to deduce, as an adult, from his writings. All of this was enhanced by living with parents, Manilal and Sushila, who not only believed in nonviolence but also practiced it at home with their children.

My understanding is that while Gandhiji held *ahimsa* as an ideal to strive for, he was also practical enough to accept that we human beings are fraught with limitations. His message was that each of us must strive diligently to reduce the level of violence in our lives to the barest minimum. Change, he said, cannot be brought about by law; it has to come with love, respect and understanding from the grassroots to the highest level.

While we tend to perceive violence mostly in its physical form – wars, fighting, killing, and rape, to name a few – Gandhi was concerned with violence in all its different forms broadly categorized as “physical” and “passive” (or non-physical) forms. Thus, my theory is that nonviolence is not simply a strategy for conflict resolution nor is nonviolence the opposite of violence.

The first, and most profound, lesson I learned from my grandfather was when he sent me out late one evening to look for a little one-inch butt of a pencil that I had discarded while returning from school. This incident happened in Pune, Maharashtra, while Bapu was undergoing the nature cure treatment at Dr. Dinshaw Mehta’s clinic. After almost two

hours I found the pencil and showed him how small it really was, and he sat me down and taught me something that widened, immeasurably, the scope of my understanding of violence.

First, he said, we use a lot of the world's natural resources even to make something as simple as a pencil, and when we throw them away or waste them we are committing violence against nature. Second, he said, since we have the means to buy whatever we need we over-consume the resources and products that are manufactured, resulting in almost half of the world's population living in poverty, and this is violence against humanity. This was my first revelation that violence was much more than fighting and killing.

As a way of introspection and for me to understand violence thoroughly, grandfather advised me to draw a genealogical tree of violence using the same principles as a family tree. The tree of violence had two branches, one "physical" and the other "passive." Physical violence, as we well know, is the kind of violence where physical force is used – killing, beating, punching, murders, rape and so on – while passive violence is all the violence we commit without the use of physical force: discrimination, oppression, over-consumption, destruction, teasing and the hundreds of things that we do, consciously and unconsciously, every day to one another and to humanity in general. Greed, selfishness, wastefulness – the three cardinal sins of a materialistic lifestyle – have become so much a part of human nature that we consider them to be signs of wealth and success. Materialism and morality, Gandhi said, have an inverse relationship. When one increases the other tends to decrease. Thus an excessively materialistic society breeds greed and leads to an economic imbalance resulting in vast numbers of humanity having to live in poverty. And poverty, Gandhi said, is the worst form of violence.

Making this tree of violence revealed the shocking extent of passive violence I was committing every day. The passive

violence branch of the tree grew enormously. Then, one day, he explained the consequences of passive violence that, in fact, serves as the fuel that ignites the fire of physical violence. The victims of passive violence are moved to anger because of their plight and since we are not taught how to use anger intelligently and constructively, we abuse anger, causing physical violence. In this one little episode of a discarded pencil there were two profound lessons. First, that we must understand violence in all its multifarious forms within ourselves and become the change we wish to see in the world, and second, that we, individually and collectively, need to learn how to use anger intelligently and constructively.

*Anger, as a positive force.* This was the second most profound lesson I learned. Anger, grandfather once told me, is like electricity, just as powerful and useful, if used intelligently, but just as deadly and destructive if abused. So, just as electricity is channeled intelligently to enhance human life, we must channel anger just as respectfully and intelligently so that we can use the power of anger for the good of humanity rather than causing death and destruction.

Anger is not something we need to be ashamed of, grandfather said. What we must be ashamed of is the way we abuse anger. Experts have discovered that more than 80 per cent of the violence that we experience in our daily lives individually and collectively is generated by anger. We abuse anger and the next thing we know, we have done something regrettable.

Anger is a very powerful emotion and yet we ignore it completely. We don't speak about it, we don't teach how to understand and deal with it intelligently and, worst of all, we abuse it. There are two aspects to anger that we need to learn and teach our children from kindergarten to high school and beyond. First, that it is a useful and motivating power, and second, that we need to have a strong mind to stop us from acting rashly in a moment of crisis.

I was taught to write an anger journal whenever something or somebody made me angry. However, the journal was not to be a means of getting anger out of my system and on to paper as most experts advise today. Getting it out of your system by itself will not help.

I had to write the journal with the ultimate intent of finding an equitable solution to the issue that caused the anger. So, I had to ponder over why I was moved to anger; what issues were involved; how this issue could be approached so that an equitable solution becomes possible. Once you begin to write your thoughts in such minute detail you immediately begin to ponder the nuances that could lead to a peaceful solution.

Something that is essential for this process is again something that we fail to teach young children – the need to be in control of our minds. We are never in control of our minds. This is evident from the fact that at any given moment our minds are filled with a dozen different thoughts vying for our attention. We are unable to keep these thoughts out of our minds. We pay a great deal of attention to our physical health and do exercises and diet but we pay no attention to building a strong mind. It is assumed that education is all that the mind needs and once we fill it with knowledge everything else will take care of itself. But, we have often seen that the most scholarly person has succumbed to anger and destroyed his or her life.

I was given a simple mind-control exercise to do every day. I had to sit in a quiet room for a few minutes holding something that gave me pleasure to look at. It could be a flower or a photograph. I had to concentrate on that object for a full minute and then shut my eyes and see how long I could hold the image in my mind's eye. In the beginning I found the image vanished the moment I closed my eyes. But, gradually, as I persisted in doing this exercise I found that I could hold the image longer and longer in my mind. To that extent my mind was under my control. This meant that I could

concentrate better and, most importantly, not lose my mind in a moment of crisis and do something rash that I would regret later on.

*Relationships.* This again is something we seldom consider when discussing violence or nonviolence. Yet, poor relationships cause a lot of friction that ultimately leads to violence. In the materialistic society that we have built the world over we use a material yardstick to measure success. We teach our children that they must be successful in life and “reach their goal by any means possible.” This subliminal message is the first seed of selfishness planted in a young mind.

When we see ourselves as individuals competing in society for the biggest share of the pie we trample on many toes and this leads to conflict and violence. At all levels our relationships are based on self-interest. When that interest wanes the relationship breaks, causing conflict and ultimately leading to violence.

I learned that in a nonviolent society relationships should ideally be built on the four principles of respect, understanding, acceptance and appreciation. Let me explain each of these in more detail.

*Respect.* We need to respect ourselves, respect each other and respect all of God’s creation, not just all of humanity. It is important to know that we are not independent individuals but that we are inter-connected and inter-related not only as human beings but also with all of creation. Remember, Nature can thrive without mankind, but mankind can never thrive without Nature.

*Understanding.* We need to understand who we are; what we are; and, why we are here on earth. Our birth is not an accident. Each of us is here for a purpose but we don’t know what that purpose is because we consider ourselves to be apart from creation and not a part of creation. We need to understand that life is not about running around in circles from birth to death chasing after material goods. There is a meaning to life and we need to take time to ponder the

meaning of our life. Each of us is here to fulfill a different role and so each of us has to discover our own meaning with diligence, sincerity and honesty.

*Acceptance.* It is only when we learn to respect and understand the meaning of our life that we will then be able to accept every individual as a fellow human being and not identify people by their color, race, caste, class, religion and the umpteen other classifications we use to identify people. When we can accept everyone, whatever their background or status, as equals then we will have less conflict and be able to reduce violence.

*Appreciation.* The appreciation of our own humanity will come when we are able to achieve the first three goals.

*Culture of violence.* Since mankind graduated from the savagery of a cave man we have continued to build on a culture of violence.

Our justice system, the world over, is based on both physical and passive violence. Justice has come to mean revenge. We must make someone pay for what they did to us. An eye for an eye which, eventually, makes the whole world blind. When a person commits a crime the person is punished although, in more cases than one can imagine, it is society as a whole that has ignored the person's pain and led the person to do something illegal.

We claim to be a civilized society but civilization is not measured by the wealth of the society but by the way it looks after the poorest among their citizens. Which raises the question of our relationships as human beings. At the root of almost all our relationships is the question "what is in it for *me*." Why should I do anything for anybody if I don't gain anything? It is this selfish, negative, attitude that leads to conflicts, and conflicts lead to violence.

Subconsciously, we teach our children to be selfish. As parents we expect them to be successful and we exhort them to be single-minded about their goals. The subliminal message

we are giving them is: think of yourself, you have to get to the top by any means possible. This is the first lesson in selfishness. This attitude then permeates into all aspects of our life and relationships. The result is often relationships based on selfishness, which don't last long, and when they breakup there is a conflict.

All of this adds up to a culture of violence that has overtaken our speech, entertainment, sports, relationships, business, religion, culture and even parenting, and justice and administration.

I have often been told that human nature is violent and that we just have to accept it. I don't believe this. If humans are naturally violent, why do we need military academies and martial arts institutes to teach us how to fight and kill? We should be born with those instincts. Fighting is not human nature, though anger is, and what is tragic is that because we have learned to abuse anger we allow our anger to drive us to violence.

The judicial system everywhere in the world is based on revenge instead of reformation. The emphasis is on punishing the person who has done wrong in the assumption that punishing is a form of teaching. Nothing is learned from punishment. If people behave it is not because they have learned anything better but because they fear punishment and retribution.

At home parents use fear of punishment to discipline their children. Control through fear is not a healthy relationship. In a culture of nonviolence it is not punishment that is important but penance. My two sisters and I grew up in a home where our parents preached and practiced nonviolence. Consequently, when we misbehaved we were not punished but our parents did penance, usually in the form of fasting. They would cook and feed us and talk to us without anger and tell us that they were not going to eat because they were not good parents and had not taught us the right way of behavior.

Because the relationship between the parents and the children was based on mutual and equal love and respect we felt awful when our parents had to do penance for our misbehavior and we made sure we never did it again. They taught us about right behavior by modeling it and they taught us about the value of strong and positive relationships.

Therefore, it must be understood that Gandhi's understanding of *ahimsa* or nonviolence and its practice was more about personal transformation than conflict resolution. Unless we change the prevailing culture of violence to a culture of nonviolence, we will never see peace in the world because we will never see peace within ourselves. We cannot create something in the world that we are unable to create within ourselves. Gandhi's philosophy was quite simply: *We must live what we want others to learn*. If we don't live it, no one will learn it.

When I was growing up with Bapuji he always said:

1. Remember that learning does not begin and end in schools. Once you get your diploma or graduation certificate it does not mean that your education has come to an end. In fact it is just beginning. There is a lot more that we learn from life, from people we meet, from the experiences we undergo. However, there are no teachers, no professors and no textbooks. If you are among those who feel your education has ended when you get out of university then your mind is closed. It becomes like a room with no windows. It soon becomes suffocating and unlivable. Bapuji said: Your mind should be like a room with many open windows. Let the breeze flow in from all of them but refuse to be blown away by any one.

2. Bapu said we must always have the ambition to become better human beings in every sense of the word. Self-improvement requires that we become conscious of our weakness in every aspect of our lives. He exhorted me to make a list of all the things in myself that I was ashamed of or which I considered my weakness and then, every morning when I get up, I must say to myself: Today I am going to be a better



human being than I was yesterday. And each day I had to deal with one of the weaknesses from the list to turn it into strength.

This is how we will become the change we wish to see in the world. And it is only when we change that we will change the culture of violence to a culture of nonviolence. Then there will be greater peace in the world – a peace that is not enforced by the fear of the gun!

## A Pragmatic Approach to *Ahimsa* in the Saman Order

SAMANI CHARITRA PRAJNA

*This essay sketches a brief history of the Jain tradition and outlines what it means to live as a Jain samani (nun). I describe some of the difficulties and temptations that occur in the course of the samani life and, based on my personal experience, offer pragmatic advice about how to deal with them and promote the feeling of oneness with other living beings.*

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*Ahimsa* (nonviolence) is the quintessential principle of Jain philosophy. *Ahimsa* is a Sanskrit word that means consideration of all souls as equal to our soul, compassion toward all forms of life without any discrimination of any categories. The implications are immense; it expresses a message of harmony and co-existence among all living beings for sustainable and peaceful living. All the *Tirthankars* (the omniscient ones) not only preached the significant principle of *ahimsa* but also

practiced *ahimsa* in its full sense throughout their lives. The 24<sup>th</sup> Tirthankar, Bhagwan Mahavir could perceive the micro level of the concept of *ahimsa* and noted that there is interrelation between violence and possession (*parigraha*). The more we possess (in a complex sense of “possession”), the more violence there is. Possession can also be understood as “attachment,” and comes in many forms: attachment to power, position, ideas, wealth, land, beliefs, religion, etc. Unequal distribution of natural resources, unjustified, inhumane and discriminatory laws and ways of life create disparity among rich and poor, and this in turn leads to the eruption of violence in all sectors of life. It is obvious that nonviolence can only exist in society if we respect and honor each other’s cultures, customs, beliefs and traditions without interfering in others’ ways of life. We need to leave behind the attitude of monopoly and dominance. This relates to the principle of *anekant* that speaks about the multifaceted nature of understanding the truth. *Ahimsa*, *aparigraha* and *anekant* give the message of co-existence and bring harmony in our diversified ethnic society.

Jain monks and nuns take a resolution and dedicate themselves to practice *ahimsa* till their last breath. If they violate this precept, even accidentally or unknowingly, they take repentance in the presence of a guru (spiritual master) and ask forgiveness for the sinful action. Being born in a Jain family and accepting the life of the spiritual path of *samani*, I can understand the deeper sense of its meaning and practice. To give a little background, the *saman order* was propounded by a great saint and seer of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, *Acharya Sri Tulsi* and his disciple *Acharya Sri Mahaprajna* in 1980. He had a vision of disseminating the message of nonviolence and peace across the globe by leading a spiritual life. It was a revolutionary step taken by *Acharya Sri* and created a new category of *samans* and *samanis* who renounce the worldly life and accept the precepts of sainthood (with a few exceptions), vowing to live a self-disciplined, simple, spiritual life.

I have practiced the spiritual journey of *samani* for last 24 years, and from my experience of all these years, I can say that to be nonviolent by words, speech and mind at every single moment is not an easy or simple task. It requires you to be aware and conscious of each and every action. It would be difficult for anybody to claim that he or she is completely nonviolent as long as they possess a human body; it is very difficult to avoid harming micro beings by one's modes of actions. This highest level of nonviolence is only possible for those great souls who are free from passions and liberated from worldly bondage, and reaching that level requires long and intensive practice of *ahimsa*. I want to share those practices that we perform every single day as leading a *saman* way of life, as we work to be nonviolent in all walks of life.

During the ceremony of initiation into the *saman order*, the *guru* describes in detail the precepts and vows that we will accept, their significance, and the practices that will guide us to inculcate those vows as part of our daily routine. He makes sure that each of us understands them in their full essence and practices them with complete awareness of conscious mind. Occasionally he calls upon us and asks individually about our spiritual growth. If we come across any difficulty in practicing those vows, we take his advice and enlighten ourselves.

There are many precepts and vows that everyone has to practice. The most significant precepts that we take are *ahimsa* (nonviolence), *satya* (truth), *acharya* (non-stealing), *brahmacharya* (celibacy) and *aparigraha* (non-possession). All of them are interconnected and create a foundation for sainthood. These are voluntary lifelong commitments, and we abide by them without any external influence or interference. While observing them, if somebody violates any vow, he or she must practice *pratikrama*: the *samans* or *samanis* must ask forgiveness and give forgiveness to purify the mind, emotions and soul of any sin that has been committed. It is done twice a day, in the morning before the sun rises and in

the evening after the sun sets. While observing the precept of *ahimsa*, we contemplate the following:

1. If I had a thought of dishonor toward any forms of life that possessed senses, and did not consider them as equal to my soul.
2. If I had opted for violent solutions for any actions.
3. If I had thought of harming or subjugating anybody.
4. If I tried to act in retribution or responded aggressively.
5. If I failed to maintain equanimity in any situation, whether in favor or adverse.
6. If I became intolerant while my seniors tried to discipline me.
7. If I lost my patience and started to cry and blame others for my own mistakes.
8. If I had disrespected any seniors and or not been affectionate to juniors.
9. If I had boasted, ignoring others' values and importance.
10. If I had misbehaved and abused with bad words.
11. If I tried to hide my mistakes and acted with deceitfulness.

These sentences are very general in nature but focus on emotions, mind, speech and body – the tools through which actions are performed. I know from experience that every action brings up reaction, but that reaction can be channeled positively or negatively. If I teach my consciousness to experience those actions in a positive way, my emotions will not flare up but will react in a constructive way by helping others in the way it should. It is human nature to try to compare and compete with others, and that becomes the cause of violent actions. When I was very young, I used to perceive things in my own way, and if certain things did not occur as I wished, I became depressed and reacted in a negative way. Perhaps such states of mind only lasted a short time, but they still damage the inner system of consciousness. Perhaps I was not aware of

the worth of the concept of *ahimsa* at that age. Now that so much time has passed, with the rich experience of so many years of life of *samani*, there has been a radical change in my perception and way of thinking. I have very keenly observed life and understood the cause of miseries and sufferings. It is the human mind that creates the problem and it is the same mind that brings solutions to the problems. Everything depends on how we educate and train our conscious mind and emotions.

This can be understood by an example. As a *samani*, to observe the precept of *ahimsa*, we do not cook food but go to many houses to get the food (called *bhiksha*). It is the practice of all Jain saints to give up attachment toward food, to survive with basic needs and minimize unnecessary demands and expectations, not to be involved in killing of micro beings, and to lead a simple, unconditional, spiritual life. After we receive *bhiksha* from householders, it is shared equally among the *samanis*. If I like a particular food that was given to somebody else, I should think that it is my privilege that it has been given to others and not to me; otherwise I am experiencing attachment. All kinds of food are good, and it is only attachment that makes us see differences, leading us to like or dislike a particular food. If I can't develop such an attitude, it will be difficult for me to live in peace. I have seen that seniors take care of their juniors very lovingly, understanding their feelings and fulfilling their requirements. As another example, as a *samani*, I must not eat or drink water between sunset and sunrise. During the peak season of summer, during the months of May and June in Rajasthan, many times I felt thirsty at night. It is easy to break the vow and afterwards take repentance for it, and that made me wonder, "Am I too weak to follow this vow?" But I realized that my consciousness has immense power to tolerate discomforts, and nothing will happen to it simply because it is uncomfortable. This paradigm shift in my thoughts gave me enough strength to overcome such troubles through the practice of meditation, and I learned not to complain for such

seasons. It made me understand that body and mind always want to be comfortable and react immediately if they are not, but I do not need to follow them. Nothing is impossible; it only requires deep understanding, intense training and consistency in practice to overcome difficult phases of life.

We are social beings and live with people around us. Wherever there is more than one person, there will be differences of opinion, thought process, and working culture. If we understand each other's feelings and expectations, it will be easier to live in peace; otherwise, petty things can create a rift between good relations, and that can result in aggressive and violent exchanges. *Himsa* is born in the mind and then manifests through physical behavior. Unless and until our emotions are civilized and educated, it will not be possible to prevent violence. The irony is that without making any change in themselves, people still expect others to change, but the truth is that we can change ourselves but not others. It is the duty of elders or seniors to educate their juniors – to teach them the code of conduct and make them well acquainted with the monk's way of life – and the seniors may reproach the juniors if they do not abide by the instructions during this training. If the juniors undertake the discipline, keeping in mind the positive intention behind the reproach, then good relations will prevail among them. It is not necessary that things always run smoothly, as it depends upon the state of emotions of both. If the atmosphere becomes unpleasant, it is necessary that both ask and give forgiveness for misbehaving, and thus make the ambience amicable again. Neither can take food without forgiving the other, and it should not be a mere verbal exchange of forgiveness but speech from the core of their hearts – a real commitment to forget the incident and embark on new journey of the practice. I think it is one of the best practices, to live in harmony by finding the little solutions that make marvelous relations possible.

Gandhiji has rightly said that Truth is God and God is Truth. *Bhagwan Mahavir* explained in his teachings that *ahimsa*

and Truth complement each other. By speaking truth, a man develops the courage to act nonviolently. There are a few basic reasons for telling a lie:

1. The person is angry and does not try to understand the reality of the situation.
2. The person is afraid of getting bad fame, because of his/her unworthy actions.
3. The person is greedy to accumulate more wealth, by deceiving someone.
4. The person wants to make fun of someone, for the sake of amusement.
5. The person lacks the courage to face the challenges of the real world.
6. The person is trapped in the duality of human personality, with disparities between what is said and what is done.

There can be exceptions in the practice of *ahimsa*, depending on the circumstances, but there can be no exceptions in following the principle of Truth. Truth must be practiced in its wholeness. Once a person starts trying to hide the factual truth, it becomes his habit to do so and later on, it becomes his nature. The root cause of speaking untruths is his/her vested self-interest in getting benefits, monetary or otherwise. It is clear that without giving up attachment toward possession, a person can't be nonviolent and speak truth.

The common understanding of the precept of non-stealing is not to steal anybody's belongings or property, but there is more to it. Here, the precept of non-stealing emphasizes that the vows which have been accepted should be practiced wholeheartedly; failure to do so is a kind of stealing, and demonstrates a failure to be honest with our own self. The virtues of honesty and humility are the basic ingredients of *ahimsa*. I found that the materialistic outlook generates the feelings that lead to the violation of any vows. The thing that is desired becomes the prime inclination of the actions, and vows are ignored under the influence of that



inclination. Later on the person realizes the misdeed and regrets such mistakes, and an overflow of negative emotions sweeps him or her in the direction of destruction and catastrophe. I mean to say that each and every precept requires certain unconditional states of mind and emotions, for it to be possible not to break the vows in any circumstances.

The precept of *brahmacharya* (celibacy) requires control over senses and mind. Senses are the main resources for incoming and outgoing information of the mundane world. The true nature of each sense is to collect and distribute information. When attachment is associated with any sense, the information gets colored with like and dislike. Gradually it pollutes the inner consciousness and contaminates the actions. Therefore, it is necessary to avoid those causes that can stimulate and arouse negative emotions. It is the law of attraction that negative thoughts attract negative energy from the cosmos and positive thoughts attract positive energy. Energy is a flow that can be channeled either way. To enhance and utilize the vital energy, our daily routine includes the practice of *asana* (yoga), *pranayam* (breathing exercises), *chanting* and *preksha meditation*. I can say from my experience that it really changes the biochemistry of the body, and that in turn changes the secretion of hormones, all of which results in pacification and purification of negative passions and emotions. The spiritual pursuits help us not to be influenced by the external, materialistic world. Temporary temptation can occur in anybody's mind, but I think once we understand the futile nature of this material world, the feelings of infatuation diminish. In order to build up the inner strength for the practice of *ahimsa*, it is necessary to practice *brahmacharya*.

Among the five major precepts, the precept of *aparigraha* (non-possession) plays a vital role in creating a nonviolent society. The major cause of violence is possession – the monopoly and superpower dominance that denies the common man his rights and privileges. Jain monks and nuns

do not keep any bank balance; there is no ownership of any property, no luxurious lifestyle, and they keep the bare minimum of belongings necessary for their survival. It is said in holy scriptures of *Jain Agama* that attachment itself is a possession. Even if I do not possess any material wealth but I am attached to my body and spend much time beautifying it, I will be known as *parigrāhi* (possessor of wealth). The body is a vehicle for spiritual practices and it should be taken care of so that it helps to practice penance, meditation and service to others. The basic needs like clothing, food, medicine, accommodation, etc. are offered by householders. If I am attracted to any material object that I do not need, this attraction will violate the vow of non-stealing and non-possession, at the micro level. The precept of non-possession makes our lives very simple, free from unnecessary demands and expectations. As we do not carry any monetary things with us, the householders take care of our travelling. At times we face difficulties while travelling overseas for conferences or other programs, if flights get delayed or the food is not pure vegetarian, or the common people do not speak English etc. In such circumstances, however, we have found that problems get resolved without any hitches. We adjust to the existing environment, and rely on the power of tolerance to help us overcome these difficulties with ease. I just focus on the idea that, even if I get perturbed, what I am going to achieve? It would be better to accept the challenges and move ahead to achieve the mission.

The practice of each precept requires the practice of the other four, in order to involve ourselves deeply enough with its essence for change to occur. Otherwise it will be a pointless exercise without any focal achievement. I am aware that it is easy to say but difficult to put in action, but I am also very confident that everything is possible. It only requires profound conviction, unshakable determination, consistency in practice, and feeling an abundance of happiness at getting rid of obstacles that come along the way. After all, we want everybody in this world to live in peace and harmony. Nobody wants

pain, suffering, violence and unhappiness. The golden rule is: If I do not like suffering, how will others like it? If I get pain by doing this, others also feel the same. The feeling of oneness with all living beings will make this world a beautiful home for all of us. If we take care of nature, nature will take care of us. We exist because of others' existence. *Bhagwan Mahavir* has said: "To deny the existence of others means denying the existence of oneself." To sum up myself, I can say that if we stay focused on our goal of purifying our consciousness, we can make our planet nonviolent and sustainable forever.

## *Ahimsa* Taken to the Limit

PHILIP CLAYTON

*This paper considers the possibility of taking ahimsa to its limit – to view it as the most extreme call to complete nonviolence of which human beings are capable, and then to live in this fashion. Regardless of where exactly that limit is, in the process of attempting to live in accordance with the most complete nonviolence possible we will see the ethical requirements rising up and elevating our overall humanity. That is already a reason enough to pursue the Jain way of life – the life of nonviolence.*

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The sky-clad monk was resting in the small square in front of the Jain Temple in Varanasi. My host, Dilip Shah, and I walked up and gently touched his feet with respect. Asked where he was going, he mentioned a Jain sacred site some 600 miles away. It was the middle of the winter in North India, and a painful cough racked the body of the monk, whose elderly body was little more than skin and bones. “And what will you do after visiting the site?” Dilip asked. “Walk back again,” came the simple answer of the monk.

Alongside all the fine chapters you find in this volume, written by Jains and scholars of Jainism with the highest credentials, it seems important to include a chapter written by a humble ethicist. As a scholar of comparative religions, I have long been interested in those core values that are shared across most or all of the world's great spiritual traditions. Compassion is one of these, of course, and *ahimsa* is the other.

Other chapters include wise insights on living nonviolently in every imaginable walk of life. Here I wish to attempt something different. In these few pages we will explore what it means to take *ahimsa* to the very limit – to view this principle as the most extreme call to complete nonviolence that humans can imagine, and then to live in this fashion. If we reach the absolute impossibility of the *ahimsic* way of life, then we can think our way back down the mountain until we reach a moral principle that humans can possibly attain. But far better, I suggest, to have watched the ethical requirements rising up toward the clouds of impossibility until they disappear beyond the capacities of mere mortals, than never to have understood how high, how pure, is the call to a completely nonviolent existence.

### **Perfection Higher Than the Law**

Friends and fellow nuns had been sitting by her side for some days now, and the end was near. No one had resisted when the elderly nun made the vow of *sallekhana*, or fasting until death. As the word got out that the end was near, more and more people move silently into the room. A great sense of sacredness descended upon those present; many were deep in meditation and reflection. The only sound that could be heard was the slow breathing of the senior nun. The last struggling breath sounded, and then the silence was complete.

Centuries ago, ethicists invented a word for the highest standard, the impossible standard, of behavior: supererogation. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, supererogation is “the act of performing *more than* is required by duty, obligation, or need.” This strange term comes from

the Latin *supererogatio*, which means to pay more than is asked for. The secret of *ahimsa*, taken in its most radical sense, lies in the neighborhood of this concept.

The fit is not perfect, however. Let's first think about the differences. Christian ethicists coined the term to express the distinction between what the religious law requires and what the perfect emulation of God would require. The inspiration for this distinction comes from Jesus' most famous teaching, the Sermon on the Mount. In this teaching Jesus establishes a higher standard than the Jewish law had required:

You have heard that the ancients were told, "You shall not commit murder" and "Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court." But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court... . You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also... . You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. (Matthew, 5:43-8) Lest anyone might think that Jesus was merely raising the standards a little bit over what the Jewish law had asked for, he concludes with a teaching that leaves no doubt whatsoever: "Therefore be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

The implication is clear: the Jewish Law may set high standards for human behavior, standards that are difficult to achieve; but the demands are both reasonable and achievable. God, by contrast, is perfectly loving, perfectly selfless. Thus to seek to be like God is to seek absolute perfection. Yet, since man is not God, we know in advance that we will fail to meet this standard.

From this contrast between divine perfection and human imperfection, an entire category of ethical acts arose. These were acts that rose above all law or duty, but were still good. Although these acts could never be required, they remained praiseworthy. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy describes this category accurately, although in somewhat technical terms:

Supererogatory, in ethics, indicates an act that is good but not morally required to be done. It refers to an act that is more than necessary, when another course of action, involving less, would still be an acceptable action. It differs from a duty, which is an act that would be wrong not to do, and from acts that are morally neutral. Supererogation may be considered as performing above and beyond a normative course of duty to further benefits and functionality.<sup>1</sup>

It is an interesting thought. These Western philosophers and theologians recognized an entire category of actions that transcended law, transcended obligation, transcended normative language altogether. There is something awe-inspiring about these actions, and we honor those who are selfless to such an extreme extent. But the Western ethical systems can't quite make sense of them in the end.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Ahimsa* without Compromise**

We were preparing our house for dinner with the leaders of the Center for Jain Studies and important guests from the local Jain Temple. Although we are vegetarian, we had never eaten a Jain vegan meal before. It was a new level of *ahimsa* for us. Our senior guest, Dr. Sulekh Jain, asked that we could please eat indoors, and that we could begin the meal before sunset. We didn't understand. He calmly explained, "If we eat outdoors or after dark, we might accidentally eat a small bug that had mistakenly flown into the food."

I suggest that the understanding of *ahimsa* as it was developed in the Jain tradition is the closest parallel to supererogation that one can find in the *Dharma* traditions.<sup>3</sup> Of course, there are important differences. The Jain teachers and the great *Tirthankaras* and holy persons did not use the idea of God to explain the ideal of *ahimsa*, nor did they categorize it as above and beyond all duty. Because the Jain teachers did (and do) present *ahimsa* as an actual obligation, I conclude that they achieved a level of ethical theory that the Western ethical systems, by and large, have failed to achieve.

Unfortunately, Western philosophers have been imprisoned within either/or thinking. They are quick to say

that if you answer a question one way, you cannot also answer it a second way. Jain teachers have not suffered from this limitation. On the one hand, they have taught that each person is obligated to move only as far in the direction of radical nonviolence as he or she can. They acknowledge, for example, that the businessman or housewife is not expected to live up to the same standard of nonviolence as one expects from monks and nuns. (The whole community should however support monks and nuns in their quest to live according to radical *ahimsa*.) On the other hand, the great Jain teachers have also consistently made the requirement of *ahimsa* central to the Jain way of life, and they have taught this as the ideal and model for all living beings. This uncompromising insistence on the importance of nonviolence reorients the entire way that humans conceive their existence in the world. It also has the advantage of making sure that each person recognizes the places where they participate in and support violence. And it holds before each one the ideal of turning away altogether from the “logic of violence” that dominates our society.

I acknowledge that it is more typical in Jain teaching to begin with each individual “where they’re at,” and then gradually to lead them down the path toward more and more nonviolent practices. To begin with the most radical possible perspective on *ahimsa* and then to move backwards from that point will, I admit, make some people (both Jains and non-Jains) uncomfortable. But I suggest that, however disturbing this approach may be, it can be extremely valuable – first as a thought experiment, and later as a principle that guides one’s own practice.

Lord Mahavira once said, “The essence of all knowledge consists in not committing violence. The doctrine of *ahimsa* is nothing but the observance of equality.” So what happens if we actually take the principle of nonviolence as the essence of knowledge, the heart of ethics, and the guide to all action? What if we truly acknowledge and understand that *all action*



*in the world produces karma; all action, all striving, will involve some violence toward other living beings?* And what if we point out to all persons the ways in which their action, their attitudes, and the very social systems in which they are embedded include violence, down to their very core?

For sensitive people, it can be difficult to live and to act in the world in light of this realization. Wherever I turn, I see violence; whatever I do, I participate, directly or indirectly, in violence toward some living beings. True, the soldier, the rapist, the abusive parent, and the violent husband commit violence in a more direct sense. But grasping the pervasiveness of *himsa* brings home to us in a shocking way that the difference between us and them is merely a matter of degree; it is quantitative, not qualitative. *I am not other, not fundamentally different, than the persons of violence whom I so abhor.* As long as I continue to live in this biosphere in which living beings are continually perishing, as long as the air continues to rustle in and out of my lungs, I participate in, and profit from, a system of violence.

These are not pleasant words, and this is not an easy realization. It does however have one advantage that many competing beliefs do not have: it is true. To live in this truth, to always be aware of the violence of the systems in which one (often unconsciously) participates, is to live in the world in a different way. I believe this is the path toward a more nonviolent mode of being in the world. This, I suggest, is the Jain way of life.

### **Examples of Daily Ahimsa**

We are deeply, even daily, involved with systems that are pervaded by violence. But this fact should not lead to hopelessness. It is possible to approach at least *our* part of such systems differently, transforming our own involvement from violent to nonviolent. Changing patterns takes some creativity; it also requires the willingness to break the societal expectations that are placed upon us. But one should never

underestimate how much influence even a single individual can have when she refuses to engage in the cycles of violence that permeate most human interactions. Consider these simple examples.<sup>4</sup>

*At Home.* *Ahimsa* begins at home. We recognize that middle-class families, especially in North America, have far more *karmic* impact than the world can bear. An *ahimsic* lifestyle may not be able to fundamentally change American practices, but at the very least it helps family members (and their friends) to achieve a deeper spiritual awareness of the situation. Plus it can be fun.

If possible, choose to live close enough to work or to the children's school that you can take bicycles instead of cars. Combine 3-4 errands into a single trip. Take food waste outside to a compost pile, so that you can participate in transforming waste products into a thriving vegetable garden (and making the worms happy at the same time!). Make your decisions about diet and lifestyle a matter of open dialogue in family meetings. Help children be proud of their distinctive identity with phrases such as, "In our family, we do it this and this way..."

*At the Store.* A supermarket is a staggering collection of products, brought "invisibly" under one roof at amazing *karmic* cost to poor workers, third-world economies, and the environment. The system of food imports as a whole is not sustainable. Still, every shopper can practice "creative *ahimsa*" by selecting products with the least global impact: recycled paper products, reusable items, food products with the least amount of packaging, and a vegetarian diet. Discussing why you bring cloth bags when you are at the checkout counter is a small way of raising awareness about plastic bags and their environmental consequences. So is speaking with the manager about regular customers who are looking to purchase items that are less violence-based.

*Eating.* The Jain tradition has long focused on the importance of what we eat. In one sense, of course, there is

no way to sustain my body without impact on other living beings; as long as I live, the problem has no complete solution. But reflecting on what we ingest leads to a much clearer awareness of the *karmic* web of life, which is a crucial part of spiritual growth. I once stayed at a Buddhist retreat center where the cafeteria was called “the Chapel” and where every person ate in silence, slowly, in order to focus their awareness on the gift of (vegetarian) food that sustains his or her body.

*Playful Simplicity.* Simple practices reduce the *karmic* impact. One can experiment with them in a spirit of joy and playfulness (Sanskrit *līlā*). I remember a smiling Zen Buddhist monk who said that he practices complete attention to his first footstep into each room, so that he is fully aware of the newness of the encounter he is about to have. There are so many ways to practice *ahimsa* in the home – not out of guilt, but in a playful spirit of exploration. Turning off the light as one leaves each room allows it to settle back into its own peaceful waiting (and saves electricity). Pausing for three deep breaths before eating allows the entire family, and guests if they are present, to meditate in gratitude on the gift of life. Creating spaces for the children to talk or to experiment with cooking allows their own *jīvas* to grow and develop; it also offers playful new perspectives to adults who may have grown complacent and unaware in their fixed beliefs about how things should be done.

*Business.* *Ahimsic* practices contribute to successful businesses. Efficient production means achieving the least waste in materials, labor costs, and the means of producing or assembling the product. Aggravated and frustrated employees – employees who are badly treated – are less effective. A workplace where the needs of all its living members are observed exudes a different spirit than one where the management team uses employees merely as a means to profit. We know that subtle forms of violence, such as compulsion and the use of power, pervade the work world. Still, the practitioner of *ahimsa* can find ways to transform relationships

in positive directions, no matter at what level of the organization he or she works. Many have argued that “green” practices are good business; the same is true of nonviolent practices.



*Religious community.* Nothing replaces participation in a temple, synagogue, mosque, church, yoga group, etc. The practice of private or group meditation and prayer deepens spiritual awareness at the time, but it also creates a sense of who one is, and to what community one belongs, that continues throughout the week. Of course, people can easily turn temple attendance into a form of self-congratulation. Nevertheless, recognizing the pervasive *himsa* of our world helps remind us that a weekly religious practice is only the tip of the iceberg. It represents at least a first step toward a deeper spiritual mode of being in the world that pervades one’s entire life. Ideally, the religious community will model standards that members can then practice throughout the week that follows.



*Sense of self.* The beginning of true transformation is within. Nonviolence is a state of being of the soul. Laws or social conventions that encourage nonviolence are merely external. If the heart and mind are inclined to violent attitudes and actions, external principles that speak of peace will be merely superficial. All nonviolence begins with a personal practice, an inner commitment to live in the world in a radically different way than what one sees modeled in most people’s lives.

Many people have told me that change is impossible; their job or their culture requires them to act as they do. Yet we know wise souls in all walks of life who manage to transform every context they walk into. Years ago I knew a deeply spiritual person, an Indian-American who placed *ahimsic* practice at the center of his life. He had risen to be the Vice President for Research for all of IBM, at the time that it was one of the great global organizations. I asked how he could carry such a responsibility while remaining true to his convictions. He

replied that his personal practice as a meditator made it possible for him to remain calm and centered in every encounter he had, no matter how stressful. Whereas others believed that the job was incompatible with living with integrity and *ahimsa*, he felt no conflict whatsoever.

### Conclusion

The essence of all knowledge consists in not committing violence. The doctrine of *ahimsa* is nothing but the observance of equality... . A living body is not merely an integration of limbs and flesh, but it is the abode of the soul, which potentially had perfect perception, perfect knowledge, perfect power, and perfect bliss.

—Lord Mahavira

The practice of truth and nonviolence will melt religious differences, and we will learn to see beauty in each religion.

—Mahatma Gandhi

“At the center of nonviolence stands the principle of love.” It may well be that liberation or *moksha* is the final goal of the spiritual quest. Thus one might say that the *ultimate* aim of Jainism is not to act, but to sit in still perception without moving or harming, releasing all *karmic* attachments.

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

And yet, *to live is to act*. Jainism’s three jewels are right perception, right knowledge, and right action. In this lifetime and in this world, at any rate, our eyes must be fixed on actions that are wiser, better, wider, more careful, bringing less *karmic* impact and more mutual benefit to other living things. We act in a world of creative, self-defining actors. We are actors among actors – the countless living actors or *jivas* who make up the biosphere of this planet.

It is fair to say that being “activists” is not our *ultimate* goal. But this activism will nonetheless be an important *means* to the ultimate goal for all living beings. Daily *ahimsa* is valuable

both for its effects on other living beings and for the inner spiritual enlightenment that it brings.

It is rare, among the religions of the world, to find one that formulates such a high goal and then has the courage to speak of this goal as an obligation for all living beings. Perhaps, among all the religious ideas that have surfaced over the millennia of human existence, only the Call to Compassion and the Call to *Ahimsa* rise to the pinnacle of ethical thinking and living. Indeed, at the end of the day, perhaps these two great principles of the world's religious traditions are one.

## The Practice of *Ahimsa*

BARRY L. GAN

*The pursuit of a life of nonviolence requires us to recognize that fear, readiness to obey, and impatience are the chief motivators behind violent behaviors. They can only be overcome by recognizing the many dimensions of violence, recognizing the extent to which one engages in violent behavior oneself, and developing a repertoire of nonviolent behaviors to practice daily. The dimensions of violence, and the extent to which we all engage in it, are greater than most of us recognize, yet there are simple practices that can diminish the violent aspects of our lives.*

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### I. Introduction



To live is to be violent. But to live wisely is to aim to be nonviolent.

We are destined to be violent. One cannot walk on the earth without stepping on insects. One cannot digest food without killing bacteria. And unless one survives on nuts and

fruits and leaves, one cannot eat without killing plants, let alone animals. Many of us cannot be in the world with others without at times causing them long-term suffering or injury through one's violent actions.<sup>5</sup>

But we are not destined to be violent all the time. Everyone is a vegetarian between meals, and everyone is a pacifist between wars. Some of us by nature or by nurture are less violent than others. But since we choose what to eat and when to fight, it is possible for almost all of us to be less violent than we are. Much of the time, almost all of us are nonviolent, some of us more than others. In short, to be violent or nonviolent is for the most part a choice. Why choose to be nonviolent?

Albert Schweitzer said, "The most immediate fact of ... consciousness is the assertion 'I am life that wills to live in the midst of life that wills to live'."<sup>6</sup> To recognize this fact is to recognize not so much a right to life for every living thing but rather, as Schweitzer called it, an "*Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben*," a "reverence for life," a recognition that just as we wish to live and to thrive, so, too, does every other living thing.

So what are we to do when others' will to live invades our ability to live or to thrive? Should we allow others' wills to go unchecked? Shall we not develop vaccines that kill invasive bacteria? Shall we not swat the malaria-infected mosquito? Shall we not imprison those who would rob us, or deprive of life those who would kill us? What would one have us do? Nothing? These are the questions that anyone committed to nonviolence must answer if nonviolence is to be credible. If to live is to be violent, why even try to be nonviolent?

## II. Why Nonviolence?

Most of us believe that violence is sometimes necessary to keep the world more peaceful than it otherwise would be. We believe that it is irresponsible to be a pacifist in a world where others are willing to go to war against us, that to commit to being nonviolent all the time is an invitation to others to do violence and get away with it, and that the only thing that



stops such people from doing so is the readiness of soldiers, armed police, and others, to stop them, violently if necessary.

Certainly examples of mad dogs and invasive bacteria lend credence to such a view. One can also point not just to animals and bacteria but to alleged “madmen” like Hitler and say that, like a mad dog, he, too, and others like him, had to be stopped. But such examples miss the truth: Hitler didn’t kill millions of innocent people in concentration camps; normal German citizens did. Why?

A large part of the answer is fear. We harm others because we are afraid. We lie because we will be found out if we tell the truth. We strike out at others because we are afraid others will strike out at us. We are sarcastic with others because we feel inadequate. And we behave selfishly because we fear that no one else is looking out for us or our well-being. Fear is a major source of violence, and this is why Gandhi believed that nonviolence requires courage. Speaking the truth requires courage, and it is often most difficult to speak the truth to those for whom we care the most, for it is their opinion that we value the most. Absorbing the blows of others, whether verbal or physical, requires courage, for such absorption may keep us from thriving as we might otherwise.

Another reason people willingly engage in violence is our readiness to obey. Stanley Milgram’s famous shock experiments found that most people will administer lethal electric shocks to innocent people under conditions when people whom they perceive to be in authority, people whom they perceive to know more than they do, encourage them to do so. Howard Zinn captures the implications of Milgram’s experiments nicely: “[Civil disobedience] is not our problem.... Our problem is civil obedience.” Zinn goes on to say that while we recognize the problem with obedience to authority in Nazi Germany – and, we could add, in the killing fields of Cambodia and Rwanda – we don’t recognize it in ourselves. But unreflective obedience to authority *is* a universal phenomenon.<sup>7</sup>

And finally, perhaps, impatience and insistence on entitlements contributes to violence. We are hesitant to tolerate a momentary hurt or imposition for fear that it will become lasting. We believe that we see the truth more clearly than others, and so we impose our will on others in the mistaken belief that they will otherwise not find the truth. We are unwilling to sit, unwilling to listen without interjecting, unwilling to wait and see. This is particularly evident in day-to-day conversations. Try to wait five seconds after someone has finished speaking to see if she or others have anything more to say. Far more often than not, you will find that you cannot even enter a conversation without interrupting others. If you wait as long as five seconds, you will never be given the opportunity to speak. Contemporary culture seems to require that we step on others in order to be heard, that we regard what others have to say as less valuable than what we have to say. This phenomenon, cultural in nature, is a function of our obsession with rights instead of with obligations.<sup>8</sup> When everyone first insists on entitlements or rights before fulfilling obligations, no one gets their due. But when everyone fulfills obligations before demanding their rights, everyone gets their due.

Nonviolence attempts to address these issues directly. In the first place, when one is engaged in a conflict and exhibits a commitment to nonviolence, one reduces the fear an opponent may feel, and this reduction in fear reduces the likelihood that the opponent will feel a need to address the conflict violently. In the second place, nonviolence, revering life, tends to emphasize the autonomy of all life and downplays authority that resides at the top of a hierarchy. The individual does not exist for the sake of society, for a hierarchical structure that sacrifices some lives for the sake of others; society exists in order that the individuals within may thrive. As such, nonviolence resists the human tendency to obey authority unreflectively, resists the impulses that lead to concentration camps and killing fields. In the third place, nonviolence, while recognizing rights, tends to emphasize the fulfillment of one's

duties prior to the insistence on one's rights. Nonviolence thereby allays suspicions of one's opponents by revealing a readiness to give before receiving.

So, yes, it may not be possible to live without being violent. However, we can see that the practice of nonviolence not only reduces one's own violence toward others but also others' tendencies to be violent toward us. The practice of nonviolence is thus in our own long-term interests and the long-term interests of others, whether or not we have the courage to acknowledge and practice it.

### III. The Practice of Nonviolence

But how do we practice nonviolence? How do we reduce violence? Although it is more a journey of life than a set of instructions, there are some crucial elements. First among these is the development of an awareness of violence. This requires understanding just what violence is, requires an ability to recognize it when one sees it. And it is subtler than one might think. A second element is the willingness to acknowledge one's own violent tendencies or behaviors and to work to remove or reduce them daily. A third element is the development of a repertoire of nonviolent behaviors in an attempt to change one's own violent behaviors, thereby also setting an example for others. Let's examine these elements one at a time.



#### III.1 The Nature of Violence

Violence is all around us. Earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, and other natural catastrophes are part of nature. However, while we can mitigate the effect of such events, we can do nothing about such events themselves. They will happen regardless of our behavior, and so this is not the sort of violence with which we should be primarily concerned because we can't do anything to prevent it. Thus when we speak of violence, the violence with which we should be most concerned is what Robert L. Holmes has called *doing violence*.<sup>9</sup> It is what we and others do, not what happens to us, over

which we have control. Accordingly, it is toward that sort of violence that we should direct our attention.

And what is it that we do that is violent?

To begin with, we harm each other and other living things, sometimes deliberately, sometimes accidentally. We do violence when we aim to make others worse off or when we act in ways that we know are likely to do so. I certainly do violence if I strike someone, but it is no less a violent act if I harm another by acting recklessly, even if my reckless behavior wasn't aimed at harming anyone. So, for example, I might drink excessively and then become abusive. My intention wasn't to become abusive. But I chose to put myself in a situation where I have little or less control over my actions, and if my actions then harm someone, I do violence because I have chosen to put myself in that position.

We resist calling psychologically abusive actions violent because they don't fit the paradigm of violence. But insofar as psychologically abusive actions make others worse off, they harm others. And there is plenty of evidence that psychologically abusive behavior *does* harm others. Thus, when we choose to be psychologically abusive, we do violence whether or not others are, in fact, harmed. Similarly, we resist calling institutional practices violent because they don't fit the paradigm of violence. But insofar as institutional practices like gender bias or scapegoating make others worse off, they harm others. And insofar as they are deliberate policies that harm others, they constitute doing violence.

Apparent exceptions exist: don't football players harm each other? Don't college admissions policies harm some people and benefit others? Sure they do. But insofar as people have agreed to play by specific rules, and insofar as people abide by those rules, they do not constitute a violation of other people. Hence, though people are harmed, they are harmed in accordance with rules to which they have voluntarily agreed. If the truth about the potential harms were kept from them, if they were mentally incapable of understanding the risks,

then, violence is being done to them. But if, informed and capable, they chose to subject themselves to such risks, then violence is not being done to them. The same cannot be said of those who intentionally aim to harm or act negligently in sporting events. Then they do violence by *violating* the rules under which people have agreed to play. Unfortunately in many amateur and professional sports, such behavior has become common, not the exception. Wars and warlike actions face similar but not identical problems. The nature of war these days is such that seven out of eight people killed in wars are civilians, not soldiers. So even if soldiers agree to and understand rules by which they agree to “play,” too many others, others who wanted nothing to do with war, including plants and animals, are harmed, violated, and thereby have had violence done to them.

Finally, when we break trust with others, even if we do not harm them, we impair their ability to thrive, for we undermine the trust they have placed in us and make it more difficult for them ever to place trust in others.

In short, to do violence is to violate another living thing by choosing to behave in ways that fail to recognize that it, too, wishes to thrive, and so we do violence (1) if we aim to deprive other living things of their ability to thrive, whether or not we are successful in our aim, or (2) if we through negligence reduce another’s ability to thrive or (3) if we violate implicit or explicit promises we have made to others, whether or not that violation harms them.



### **III.2 Willingness to Acknowledge One’s Own Violent Tendencies**

Self-examination of one’s own violent tendencies requires that one understand the subtle incarnations that doing violence takes. One of the most common manifestations of violence is the inclination to point one’s finger at the violence of others and then proclaim oneself nonviolent because one is attempting to reduce the violence of others. Too often such

behavior is simply a mask for one's own attempts to control others, to declare oneself superior to them, to justify one's own violent actions, or to regard oneself as having nothing to learn and everything to teach. "Physician, heal thyself" might thus be regarded as the first directive for one who would reduce violence.



### III.3 Repertoire of Nonviolent Behaviors

An old proverb says that, "If the only tool you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail." If the only approach we have to conflict is to "act tough," appear unmovable, and ultimately resort to threats or out-and-out violence, then we are treating every conflict as if it can only be addressed by violence or the threat of violence, treating conflict with only one tool, even when we engage in so-called negotiation. As my daughter so aptly put it, "If it is about winning, it is not nonviolence." And we are so accustomed to thinking of everything in terms of war and sports metaphors that we mistake the metaphors for reality. There are other metaphors: construction, cooking, growing. If we think of the world as a place to cultivate, a place where, to the greatest extent possible, we want life to thrive, then we can identify some habits or tools that promote such a world.

Perhaps the most important habit for those who would practice nonviolence is the habit of listening, which often entails an ability to keep silent. No conflict is solved by addressing only one's own concerns: the conflict is only addressed successfully when the concerns of all parties to the conflict have been addressed. Thus it is crucial not to insist so much on one's own needs; after all, one is usually well aware of one's own needs. It is the needs of others to which one must pay attention.

Once one has developed the habit of listening, one has a greater sensitivity to the needs of others. This sensitivity is itself another tool, for it helps to foster an ability to identify a problem before the problem becomes a crisis. Too often, in the midst of a crisis, people will cry out that only violence will

address the crisis successfully when, in fact, those who favor nonviolent approaches had been pointing to a problem long before the problem reached crisis proportions. My marriage had problems long before I began a series of flings that did lasting damage to my marriage and my wife. I failed to recognize those problems early on, largely out of fear, partly out of an inability to recognize the problems as problems. Had I acted earlier, I might have saved my wife and myself much heartache and long-term distress. At the least I would not have become the person I became. In a different vein, the U.S. government was aware of problems with the dikes surrounding New Orleans prior to Hurricane Katrina. It failed to address those problems early on. The upshot was that Hurricane Katrina caused far more injury, death, and destruction than it would have had the U.S. government addressed the problem before the crisis situation arose.

Another habit worth cultivating is that of seeing the best in people, of seeing their potential to do what is right. Of course such a view of people is bound to be confounded, but so, too, is the opposing view. The difference is that an optimistic view encourages; a pessimistic view discourages. An optimistic view entails hope; a pessimistic view invites fear. And fear, as we have seen, is a harbinger of violence.

#### **IV. A Lifelong Endeavor**

Nonetheless, because to live is to be violent, one never becomes fully nonviolent. The distinction between a violent life and a nonviolent life is not a sharp dichotomy. It is a spectrum on which each of us finds ourselves at different points at different moments of our lives.

An old grandfather said to his grandson, who came to him with anger at a friend who had done him an injustice, "Let me tell you a story."

"I too, at times, have felt a great hate for those that have taken so much, with no sorrow for what they do."

“But hate wears you down, and does not hurt your enemy. It is like taking poison and wishing your enemy would die. I have struggled with these feelings many times.” He continued, “It is as if there are two wolves inside me. One is good and does no harm. He lives in harmony with all around him, and does not take offense when no offense was intended. He will only fight when it is right to do so, and in the right way.”

“But the other wolf, ah! He is full of anger. The littlest thing will set him into a fit of temper. He fights everyone, all the time, for no reason. He cannot think because his anger and hate are so great. It is helpless anger, for his anger will change nothing.”

“Sometimes, it is hard to live with these two wolves inside me, for both of them try to dominate my spirit.”

The boy looked intently into his grandfather’s eyes and asked, “Which one wins, grandfather?”

The grandfather smiled and quietly said, “The one I feed.”<sup>10</sup>

Our job in life is to feed the good wolf. It is a wise path that contributes to sustenance, to growth, to thriving lives.

The chief difference between those who practice nonviolence and others is not that one is violent and the other is not. But those who practice nonviolence have a readiness and willingness to understand the difference between violent and nonviolent behaviors, to understand why and how human beings fall into violent behavior, to address problems with creative and resourceful practices before they become crises that appear to require the use of the hammer of violence, to repair themselves rather than punish others for shortcomings, and to practice nonviolence and avoid violent practices consciously, so that one’s habits become nonviolent rather than violent.

Martin Luther King, Jr., once gave a speech in which he outlined the three dimensions of a person. He spoke of the length, breadth, and depth of our lives. The length of one’s



life is one's concern for one's own welfare, he said. The breadth of life is one's concerns for the welfare of others. And the depth of one's life is one's love of God. Rabbi Hillel, who lived around the time of Jesus, gave a similar account. He asked:

“If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am not for others, what am I? If not now, when?”

## Behind the Apricot Tree

MOLLY HAGLUND

*Each and every day vulnerable individuals flee their homelands in search of a safety that eludes them. For those asylum seekers attempting to reach Australia by boat, many will lose their lives in the treacherous journey. Those who do survive are greeted with still more suffering. With a human story to illustrate this difficult reality, the following paper urges the reader to contemplate at which point the violence that so many refugees experience truly comes to an end.*

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With little space to move amidst the many others desperately crammed aboard, Soraya held her two little boys close. She was traveling upon a precarious wooden fishing boat off the Indonesian coast. With her, she carried the memory of her youngest son's death. Over one thousand nautical miles separated Soraya from her destination. A journey that takes days would come to its end within minutes. Little did she know what was in store for her when she finally arrived in Australia.

Soraya is from Afghanistan and belongs to one of the most persecuted minority groups of her country: the Hazaras. From the little information I was given prior to meeting her, I was not sure how I was going to be able to support this woman.<sup>11</sup> Now in her mid-forties, Soraya has been living in Australia for more than a decade. She had a total of four children; three sons were born in Afghanistan and her daughter was born after Soraya's arrival in Australia. The only thing I was told about this woman was that she had lost one of her sons in Afghanistan in an incident involving the Taliban. On that first visit to her home, she asked me to take off my shoes before stepping inside. She led me through the corridor to a private room at the back of the house. Dozens of pictures hung along the walls. One in particular caught my attention. It was a photo of Soraya standing amidst apricot trees growing outside of her Afghan home, the start of a shy smile spreading across her face. She had gained a lot of weight since then and traces of exhaustion could now be found at the corners of her youthful eyes. We arrive at a quiet room covered in carpet. As she began sharing her story, Soraya reached her arms out in front of her as if to hug someone to her chest, turned to me and asked, "Will you help me catch my son?"

Australia has long been a sought-out destination of refuge for those fleeing their homelands in search of safety. Individuals escaping persecution in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Burma, Sri Lanka, and Sudan travel incredible distances to reach this vast island nation. They are people who have survived some of the contemporary world's worst conflicts and carry with them the heartbreak and hardship born of extraordinary violence. Like Soraya, many refugees from Asia and the Middle East will first find their way to Indonesia before attempting the treacherous journey by boat to Australia. Over a thousand men, women, and children have lost their lives through the Indian Ocean's destruction of overcrowded, unseaworthy fishing boats.

On an outing to a nearby park, I accompanied Soraya to the bathroom – the stalls of which were painted a deep red.

Immediately upon entry, she became nervous and frightened. Seconds later she lost consciousness, fainting on top of me. Nearly twenty years ago, the Taliban had intruded into Soraya's home in Afghanistan. They began a conversation with her that quickly escalated in both its tone and aggressiveness. Her youngest son who had been playing in the backyard came running to his mother's aid. The boy was forcibly taken from her arms. He was left bleeding from a gunshot to the head on the ground before her. He was 7 years old. This deceased boy now appears to her in Australia while she is alone. Following him wherever he wanders, Soraya desperately tries to catch him. Whenever she is within reach of him, the child disappears – eternally out of her reach. After a few minutes lying unconscious on the bathroom floor, she awoke shaking and confused. Days later – with the help of an interpreter – I asked Soraya what had happened that day. She mentioned that on a trip to the beach with her husband and young daughter, a similar incident had occurred upon seeing the sea. Soraya said it reminded her of the traumatic boat journey she and her sons had taken years prior.

The concept of asylum-seeking arose as a result of World War II, when nations capable of doing so were called upon to grant safe haven to the fleeing victims of the war's atrocities. Asylum seekers of the present day are human remnants of similar outward expressions of violence. Visa restrictions and impossible requirements for travel mean that individuals at risk have no choice but to risk still more, resorting to dangerous means of escape. Smugglers are paid and risky boats are boarded. Some may have already known the hazards of life within refugee camps, yet for those who reach Australian shores, more camps await. This time, however, it is referred to as "detention." According to the country's mandatory detention policy, all asylum seekers arriving in Australian territory are held in one of its many detention centers. With no exact or defined period of incarceration, men, women, and children can lose years of their lives awaiting a decision. For torture survivors who have been taken prisoner and held against their will, detention can evoke painful memories and

lead to further traumatization. Many become suicidal and harm themselves. Others develop mental health issues. Dependence upon anti-depressants and sleeping pills is widespread. Total and utter desperation has led some to die by their own hand behind detention center walls. For those seemingly fortunate asylum seekers who are later released into the community during the processing of their claims, other challenges await.

Shortly after leaving the Indonesian shore, the crowded vessel carrying Soraya and her two sons began to fill with water until everyone aboard found themselves in the sea. Soraya frantically scoured the waters hoping the fate of her youngest child would not befall yet another. With the help of others who had been aboard, Soraya and both of her children were saved. Along with the rest of the survivors, they were relieved to make it back to land – albeit that of a country to which many had, just prior, hoped never to return. Another young mother and her infant child were not so lucky. As the boat began to sink, the woman lost hold of her newborn. Never to be recovered, the panicked mother's screams for her baby haunt Soraya's dreams to this very day.

As is common among individuals suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Soraya suffers from severe headaches, memory loss, regular nightmares, and bouts of dissociation as well as visual and auditory hallucinations. In our weekly visits, Soraya would tell me what she found difficult to share with her family. Now older, her two remaining sons have married and, as is traditional in Afghan households, lived in the same home as she and her husband. Soraya's words fell on unsympathetic ears when, upon sharing of her very real hallucinations, her family responded in anger and frustration.

While the terms "asylum seeker" and "refugee" are often used interchangeably, the legal distinction between the two has a grave impact. Refugees are individuals whose asylum claims have been granted. Once asylum seekers themselves, they have successfully passed through the difficult and lengthy asylum process and been given protection in the form of a

visa allowing them to remain in the country indefinitely. Asylum seekers, on the other hand, exist in a state of limbo that can last years while the government decides whether they will be able to remain in Australia as refugees. During this time, they are not allowed to work and – if they are not in one of Australia’s many detention centers – must make do with the small government allowance they are issued. In addition to work restrictions, asylum seekers are not permitted to formally study and – unless previously approved by the government – are not even allowed to volunteer. For those exercising their human right to seek asylum, meaningful activity is essentially outlawed. Should Australia reject an asylum seeker’s application for refuge, he or she will be forced to return to his or her home country. For many, the prospect of returning to the very place from which they have fled is terrifying – one often equated with death itself.

I remember Peter. He was an asylum seeker from Sri Lanka and had fled the country by boat when it was no longer safe for him to remain. With a Tamil mother and a Sinhalese father, he did not define himself as either. He had been given a Christian name and identified himself as such. Caught between two combatant groups, he had been imprisoned and tortured on several occasions leaving his right hand permanently damaged. Despite his injury, he continued selling fish at the market where he worked and found this kept his hand mobile and mind sharp. Since arriving to Australia, however, his hand had begun to cause him pain beyond what he had previously experienced. The lack of any activity was driving him crazy. He described days on end in which he did not move from his bed. His only repeated request was, “I want to work!” With little money and limited opportunities for involvement in the community, countless asylum seekers living in Australia similarly spend their days inside or wandering aimlessly. Such restrictions play a great part in the general public’s negative perception of the “asylum seeker.” This has proven to be extremely difficult for individuals with a lot of past suffering and ongoing fears, separated from family

members and unsure as to whether or not they will be permitted to remain in Australia. With no means of redirecting one's attention it is not difficult to comprehend how depression runs rampant among such vulnerable individuals.

Every week, as I knocked on her door and was welcomed inside her home, I learned more about Soraya's inability to move on. Simple tasks such as monitoring the potatoes boiling on the stove or picking up certain items from the grocery store proved increasingly difficult. Burning food was left to its own dangerous devices and a confused Soraya would return home frustrated by the fact that she could only recall one of the three items she was sent to purchase. Her little girl could also testify to her mother's poor memory and confusion when, upon opening her lunch box at school, she found a large knife instead of the sandwich it had helped prepare. These incidents contributed to a deep sense of worthlessness. This feeling of inadequacy manifested itself in suicidal ideations and frank conversations in which Soraya expressed a very sincere desire to die.

With all the hope that she could conjure, Soraya had boarded that fishing vessel certain that her suffering would be over after reaching Australian shores. A woman who had already experienced so much pain surely deserved to arrive in a place where long-delayed healing could finally begin. Soraya now has refugee status, though it seems even this has not provided the healing that she hoped for. Had she been able to arrive in a safe country without putting her life or that of her children at risk, would she be less afflicted? Would she know less pain if she had been greeted with compassion upon her arrival to Australia? Would she hurt less if her own family were more understanding of her mental state? I can't help but wonder if in my own efforts to support her I helped in any way. Am I, myself, short of compassion?

I would like to have met the Soraya prior to the transformation triggered by violence. Who is she without her suffering? I do not know how far in her past I would need to return to find her.

## Teaching Nonviolence

RICHARD WERNER

*When we think of violence, our paradigm is subjective or interpersonal violence rather than objective or systemic violence. I focus on the systemic violence of our educational institutions primarily in terms of their organization, norms and values, and grading, invoking my own personal narrative along the way. Our educational institutions are rife with systemic violence that too often alienates, demeans, defines, and harms students rather than helping them become who they are as persons.*

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Everybody knows that the dice are loaded  
Everybody rolls with their fingers crossed  
Everybody knows that the war is over  
Everybody knows the good guys lost  
Everybody knows the fight was fixed  
The poor stay poor, the rich get rich



That's how it goes

Everybody knows

— Leonard Cohen, "Everybody Knows"

The U.S. is unique among Western democracies. Public education is funded by local property taxes. Historically this occurred because the local folks feared that the federal government would use education as a means of propaganda and control the minds of future generations through the educational system. I have no doubt that they had good reason for the fear. But the practice yields other bitter fruit. It helps to drive the massive inequalities in wealth and opportunity that confront us today. It helps to create the stagnant class-bound system we live in, where there is now greater upward mobility in Western Europe and Canada than in the U.S.<sup>12</sup> Wealthy communities can afford the best teachers and equipment while poor communities can barely afford to keep their schools open. As a result the children of the wealthy get the best educations while the children of the poor get the worst.<sup>13</sup>

The children of the wealthy have many advantages besides privileged education: a richer vocabulary and library, higher expectations about their education and achievement, and all the other symbols of social status that build confidence and a sense of privilege. Their cultural privilege is at least as great as their economic privilege. The children of the wealthy quickly learn the values that lead to success, the values of their parents, while the children of the poor too often learn the opposite. The values that lead to success in urban and rural ghettos are rarely the ones that lead to corporate boardrooms or government offices. In addition, privileged education provides the children of the privileged with the connections needed for success in our economy, the other students and their families. Simply put the children of the poor lack the educational and cultural capital of the children of the rich. By basing public school funding on property taxes we help to create a rigid class system. While many of our immigrant

ancestors came to the U.S. so that they and their children could experience the opportunities of upward mobility, we are no longer competitive. It is arguable that what made America great was the wave after wave of immigrant populations that came to the U.S. willing to work for slave wages so that their children could have a chance. The history of the Lower East Side attests to this. Yet we presently close the very door that promoted our greatness for generations.

Another factor that drives inequality in wealth and opportunity is the cost of private education. If not in fact, it is a commonly shared social norm that private education is superior to public education. Accordingly, those who can afford expensive private educations for their children tend to provide that education. They begin in pre-school and continue through graduate and professional schools. Increasingly this is reflected in the curricula of private versus public education. The former tends to focus on liberal arts or professional training while the latter focuses on jobs in the service economy. Compare the present focus on leadership training in private higher education compared with the focus in public higher education on job training. In both the private and the public arena, student success lies in doing what one is told, in following the rules and currying the favor of superiors. What that amounts to depends on the context and the superiors. In the one case it produces smug and arrogant leaders and in the other it produces fodder for the service economy.

A third factor that tends to benefit the children of the wealthy at the expense of the poor is the increased emphasis on accountability in education. Accountability increasingly drives our rigid educational system. While it is patently obvious that no one knows what constitutes a good education and that no standardized test can determine whether one has received a good education or will excel at higher levels, we nevertheless continue to increase the emphasis on the importance of standardized tests. What would constitute a

good education? Getting a good job and becoming rich even if that life is not fulfilling? Becoming an independent and critical thinker in a democracy even if that democracy frowns on such attributes and is increasingly a failed democracy? Learning to lead some kind of a good life, a flourishing life even in a broken world? Notice that these are three very different senses of what constitutes a good education. Notice that it is unlikely that a one-size-fits-all educational system can provide all three at once if for no other reason than the three too often conflict and resources are slim. Yet we demand accountability from our educational system, convinced that there must be some way to measure a good education before we even have the discussion, let alone reach a conclusion, on what constitutes a good education. It is impossible to determine – let alone measure – the effectiveness of the means if we do not know the ends. Let me suggest that the *de facto* goal of a good education for the privileged becomes a good job that pays well regardless of whether it produces a good life. The *de facto* goal of the middle class is to produce workers for the service economy. The *de facto* goal of education for the poor and especially African Americans increasingly becomes to waylay them until they can be permanently warehoused in the prison system.<sup>14</sup> Yet there is no evidence that the tests we use to judge our educational systems, what we call “accountability,” measures for that or anything else. What they do tend to measure is common background knowledge of the sort that the privileged possess, particularly vocabulary, and that the poor through no fault of their own lack. So testing and accountability tend to perpetuate the status of the privileged while retarding the progress of the poor. Increasingly teachers in poor neighborhoods are forced to teach to the test rather than prepare their students for life. But because the children of the poor frequently lack the common background knowledge and especially the common language of the privileged, even teaching to the test doesn’t help since the teachers of the privileged do the same with all of the benefit of the child’s inherited background knowledge

and language. Consequently schools in ghetto areas become holding pens for poor children who were never meant to have a chance.<sup>15</sup>

All three of these issues – public school funding through property taxes, the divide between public and private schools, and the emphasis on accountability in education – help to hinder the children of the poor while benefitting the children of the privileged; they help to rig the game of life. While there are elements of this phenomenon everywhere – even Plato warns (*Republic*) that families will unfairly advantage their own at the expense of others – the injustice is increasingly accelerated in U.S. culture for the past few decades. Why is this so?

First there is the simple fact that Plato is at least half right. If allowed, families will unfairly advantage their own children at the expense of others. We all do it. I grew up in a poor rural family. I'm the first in my family to graduate from high school. My father and mother each left school after 9<sup>th</sup> grade, my father in Germany after WWI and my mother in the U.S. during the depression. While they had little by way of wealth to offer me, they did instill in me the importance of education, both because it was a way out of poverty and because it would help me lead a good life. My mother would say, "What you learn, they can never take that away from you." I am extremely fortunate in that I happened to grow up at a time when educational merit was measured by how well one did on standardized tests and that I was very good at taking standardized tests. I came to understand that my skill at these tests really didn't translate into much else in terms of knowledge or ability, but it did allow me to rise up through the educational ranks. I never paid for my education. Tuition at Rutgers was \$200 a semester and a student could get a state-funded tuition scholarship if he could spell his name. Fortunately I could. It was fortunate because the public school education I received prior to college was pitiful, as I quickly learned from the competition at Rutgers aided and abetted

by Bell Curve grading. But I was fortunate in another way. I knew that if I quit college I would go to Vietnam where folks I didn't know, whose villages we burned and whose children we killed, would try to kill me in return. I had no gripe with those folks. I understood how they felt. But I did not want them to shoot at me and I did not want to harm them. So I studied and stayed in school. Along the way I learned that what my parents taught me was true enough. Education could get me out of the rural ghetto. Learning was great fun when not destroyed by stress-inducing tests and competition or by teachers who were too often the greatest impediment to learning.

My life went well, so well that both of my children attended elite private colleges. I understand that to play the game is to pass my privilege to my children. So well that I have taught at an elite liberal arts college since 1975, where the cost for a student to graduate is now roughly \$250,000. The cost of attending such colleges is among the fastest rising costs in our economy, to give you some idea of its importance in passing privilege.<sup>16</sup> Some of our students spend that amount or more on education to get to Hamilton College, and will spend that amount or more to attend graduate or professional school. The road to success is an expensive highway fraught with many tolls that only the wealthy can afford.

I watched while a poor black student plead out to a felony and was expelled from college for the possession of minor amounts of drugs while the children of the rich return to Hamilton after suspension for the possession of larger amounts of much more dangerous drugs and without the stigma of a felony. I am assured by the administration that similar cases are treated similarly but that the wealthy parents can lawyer-up to find the best deal for their child while the poor cannot. I have watched too many similar cases over the years with similar unfair outcomes. College life simply mirrors civil life. Systemic classism undermines both. *De facto* racism smells as sweet as *de jure* racism.

So what is my point? My point is Plato's point. What the parents of the wealthy do to promote and protect their children is what parents do generally. I had no hesitation in financing my children's private college educations and I hope to help do the same for my grandchildren. Is that fair? Of course not. Is that human? Of course it is. Now do the math. If most will privilege their children at the expense of other people's children regardless of merit, then the end result is that the wealthy will largely manage to pass their privilege to their children while the poor will fail. The rich will get richer and the poor will get poorer. Of course private colleges offer lucrative financial aid packages to help those less privileged. Yet recent decreases in the escalation of tuition costs, not decreases in the tuition costs themselves, hide decreases in financial aid that continue the escalation in actual tuition costs. In addition, we need to earn our nonprofit status some way. Otherwise we'd pay a boatload of taxes. But all too often the student loans connected with financial aid packages leave graduating students so indebted that their career options are leveraged toward well-paying professions that grease the wheels of commerce and grind them to a pulp. One wonders if the generous tuition aid provided by colleges like my own equals the amount saved by their nonprofit status. One wonders whether the high salaries, pleasure domes, and sports palaces are consistent with a nonprofit status.

Look at America: greater and greater concentration of wealth in fewer and fewer hands, the rapid elimination of the middle class, an underclass that grows by leaps and bounds. We justify it all by talk of merit or desert and complain about those who don't want to work while we ignore the chronic high structural unemployment our economy needs to function and the reduced upward mobility. If each of us merits anything it is access to a job, better yet a job with promise. But we live in nation with chronic high structural unemployment and access to the better jobs is largely reserved for those with the most expensive educations and, finally, we make those

educations available almost exclusively to the children of the privileged.

Here is my long overdue explanation of why this is so. Because standardized tests became the main measure of educational success during the 1950's and 60's and because there was a much more equal distribution of educational access during that time, a new elite arose. That would be me. Because the highway to success was paved by education and standardized tests the new elite saw the wisdom in these institutions. They quickly made the kind of education that leads to success prohibitively expensive by turning private campuses into country clubs so that their children could maintain the lifestyle to which they had become accustomed. Financial analysts routinely tell parents that the \$250,000 price tag on high-octane education will rise to \$500,000 by the time their eight-year-old attends university. Now add that cost to pre- and again to post-college education. Parents are advised that it is important to track one's child from preschool so that they can maximize their child's chances of attending the best colleges and universities. Without a post-college degree many of the best professional positions are unattainable. The best education is very expensive, too expensive for the middle class let alone the poor. Granted, institutions like Harvard and Princeton offer free educations for those who attend but cannot afford the cost. But the poor generally do not apply. The reasons are obvious. Who in the urban or rural ghetto knows of the programs? Who in the ghetto wants to undergo the four years of hell at one of these schools surrounded by wealthy students who have the advantage and privilege that money can buy while the poor student speaks a different English, doesn't understand the social rules, and can't afford the textbooks? I too frequently have conversations like this with the underprivileged at my own college. I remember picking up gigs as a short-order cook, a janitor, or a calculus tutor to get through Rutgers while my more privileged classmates celebrated the bacchanalia of the 1960's. I worked

70 hours during the week of Woodstock flipping eggs and burgers. Paying the expense of four years at a college or university is one thing, figuring out how to survive there is quite another. It is an exercise in alienation and otherness. In the process, too often one also becomes the other to one's family and friends. So it was for me.

The road to success is education but education is prohibitively expensive for the poor, financially and personally. In addition, to get into higher education there are hurdles to jump like grades in high school, college preparation, and standardized tests. Too many of the rural and urban poor attend schools where the main objective is to survive from day to day while the main function of the school is to serve as a holding pen for later warehousing in prison. Too many of the teachers spend most of their time trying to maintain order in disruptive classrooms or, if they are fortunate enough, teaching to the test rather than preparing students for college or life. Too many of the rural and urban poor children have parents who are unable to prepare their children for an education let alone an elite education. Whether they are unable because they lack the financial resources or because of their own largely inherited problems and addictions, the sins of the parents are visited on their innocent children. Finally there is the triple whammy of the standardized test written in privileged English, with a wealth of privileged assumptions, and tricky math questions to boot. The playing field is anything but level. It is a minefield where the privileged have maps and the poor go blindfolded. The game is rigged. Sure there are a few who are just plain lucky and make it through to privilege their own children and perpetuate the system. But we are nothing but the exceptions that can be held up as examples to say, "Look at him, the system is fair." I'm here to testify on my own behalf that it is not fair and that those who survive are nothing but lucky. Aristotle called it "moral luck" 2,500 years ago. Little has changed.



So far I have discussed the systemic violence of America's educational system, the way in which the system operates to perpetuate the status quo and how that process disenfranchises the children of the underprivileged.<sup>17</sup> The children of the underprivileged are lessened because of the systemic violence. Their autonomy and freedom are violated in that they never receive the social goods necessary to flourish as a person in our culture, the goods that education should provide. They tend to come to think of themselves as lesser than those who succeed, as less than a fully-fledged person, as defective. Even those who succeed often feel like a thief or a fraud, living the double-consciousness that W.E.B. DuBois foretold in *Souls of Black Folk*.

Students are taught to buy into the prevailing notions that the system is fair and that if folks do not succeed it is their own fault. The educational system helps to perpetuate the myth of merit in our culture.<sup>18</sup> So the poor come to accept their lot as the poor and behave accordingly, often in the process passing to their children the bad habits they learned to stay alive in a system that holds no promise for them no matter how hard they work and increasingly has no job for them regardless of what they do. That the poor are disproportionately people of color in the U.S. goes without saying. That the systemic violence of the educational system is inherently, systemically racist as well as classist also goes without saying. The only real progress made in the past 50 years is the introduction of women into the educational system, although it is usually white women who come from privilege; it is almost as though those already in the system are more comfortable with their economic peers than with poor women or women of color. But women still face the glass ceiling in the marketplace.

I want to shift from systemic violence in education to the more easily recognized subjective violence of the classroom, particularly how that is accomplished with the objective institution of grades and how that too forms a pattern of

systemic violence. I grade my students. I have done so since 1970. I know how to do it fairly, I suspect, as fairly as the judges in pre-Revolutionary War Salem, Massachusetts knew how to identify witches, or 1950's psychiatrists knew how to identify homosexuals who were prone to communism. We teachers share objective criteria about how to assign grades as members of the guild of teachers, just as the guild of witch judges or the guild of psychiatrists knew their objective criteria. Those objective criteria are an intrinsic part of the practices in question. But the objective criteria don't show that the practices themselves reveal anything of significance, not gays, communists, or witches, not scholars or intelligence let alone wisdom. They just reveal who is good at playing the particular game in question, just as I was good at standardized tests that had nothing to do with anything outside of the testing device itself. So much for the merit of grades or the form of life that promotes them.

But that is not my real point. My real point concerns how grades alienate students from learning, from other students, and from themselves. Grades are simply the money of the mind that trains students to perform in the corporate, global economy. Just as workers are encouraged with money to produce what those who pay them desire, so students learn to perform for their teachers. They quickly learn that there are many ways to satisfy besides simply performing well when assessed. But in both cases there is a serious reversal of ends and means that comes to corrupt the process and those who engage it.

Let me focus on grades. Most of us can remember when in our youth learning was a joy. My fifth grade teacher let me do what I wanted independent from class for most of the year. During the fall I collected leaves in the woods and read about trees and forests. In the spring I did the same with butterflies. During the winter I read *National Geographic*, played with magnets and magnifying glasses, studied the globe and atlases, read ancient history. I did most of this outside of class alone.

I never recovered. Sixth grade was a new teacher. She was strict and demanding, filled with rules for everything. I developed a strange malady. I would awaken most school days with a rash. My mother would allow me to miss school. The rash would be gone by noon. By then I was absorbed in our new *Book of Knowledge*. My father's gambling addiction had paid off that summer. But mostly I found myself absorbed by *The Book of Popular Science* that accompanied it. It taught me to throw a curve ball as well as to swim. I learned how to do experiments and the importance of evidence. I learned about the history of science and especially math and physics. I was in heaven. But most of all I was learning to teach myself, an important skill that has served me well ever since.

I received no grades for the best education I received. I missed most of sixth grade, not that it mattered. I still can't spell and I mispronounce too many words. But I learned so much those two years. It sent me on a trajectory that didn't allow me to adjust to school again, until the last two years of college. I realized by then that too much was on the line, and that if I wanted to be something other than a short-order cook I needed to play the school game. So I did. I stopped pursuing what interested me and did what I was told and did it on time. I asked questions in class and stayed after to ask more. Some of it was sincere. I was taking courses I liked for the most part. I began to learn that I could learn in other ways, with other people, and that that was fun too, even more fun in certain ways. My new communal learning adventure carried me through graduate school and into teaching.

But I also learned about alienated learning. I had to perform like a trained animal rather than a person. I was told what and when to read. I was usually told what it meant. I was tested in competition with my peers and expected to repeat what I had read or heard. The stress was painful. I didn't understand it. The pressure was intense. The fear of failure was high. But a lot was at stake. So I persevered. I learned not to look down or too far ahead. I still have nightmares 45 years

later of missing finals because I can't find the room or, worse yet, I find the room only to realize I don't know the subject. Was this a better method of learning? I doubt it.

Learning for some of us is intrinsically rewarding. It quickly evokes flow, a most pleasant state. I suspect that learning could evoke flow in almost anyone if education worked well. According to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the inventor of the concept, flow involves complete immersion in an activity. In his book *Flow* he describes the mental state of flow as "being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost." Athletes, musicians, dancers, and teachers experience it. Almost anyone can experience flow doing almost any activity they enjoy. Flow is the opposite of alienated experience. One merges with the activity, with the object, and with involved others. It is being rather than having. For some of us learning is like that. I am very fortunate in that regard. Leave me alone and I will learn, whether from books or the world or other folks. I am fortunate that I recognized the joy early and that the folks around me, mainly some of my teachers, guided me and helped me cultivate my joy of learning.

Then I learned about grades. Grades alienate. They alienate by causing the student to treat what is an end, learning, into a means and what is a mere means, the grade, into an end. Soon one learns that learning is a drag, something one must do whether it makes sense or not in order to get the grade. Learning becomes an alien other that stands between the student and the grade. The grade is the only reality. I watch some of my best students abuse themselves in order to get that grade because there is so much at stake. They abuse themselves with drugs, with sleep deprivation, with stress in order to drive themselves. Some burn out. They break down or, by the time they graduate, they need to take time to regain themselves. Some don't regain. The number of students beset

by these problems seems to increase over time. It seems to afflict the most driven and often the most gifted. What happens?

They can no longer keep their eyes on the prize of learning because of the undue pressure. They are forced to compete for grades. They begin to look for any competitive advantage they can get. Some are willing to abuse themselves to gain that advantage like an elite athlete or banking executive who turns to performance enhancing drugs to make it through the endless training or workweek. The motivations are the same. In all of these cases, means are confused with ends and ends with means. In the process one is alienated from the true joy of one's work. What is most amazing is that we do it to ourselves in order to reap the rewards the system promises. This is alienation from the process of learning.

But part of the stress one faces in the educational environment is the stress induced by one's competitors, fellow students or colleagues. Because we compete, trust or friendship are problematized. We begin to see those around us not as members of our intellectual community but as a threat to our success. There is a zero-sum game for A's or rewards. In pursuing those A's we become alienated from others as well as from the process of learning. The loneliness and worry increase the stress. The alienation and pain increase. Students come to see their teachers as opposing others to be conned and gamed. There are ways other than learning that lead to a better grade. Teachers come to see their students as an impediment to their research. They have the power to make students' lives difficult, they are generally rewarded by the system if they do, and so they do. The pain we induce as teachers is no different in kind from that of the famous Stanford Prison Experiments, though they do differ in degree. The motivations arise from the same source. Power corrupts. In the meantime, work demands on students only grow. Faculty easily misremember how hard they worked as undergraduates and seem dedicated to breaking their

student's inherent joy of learning to prove their own superiority. We all know that grades are silly. We all know that we don't know enough to know how to educate our students properly because no one does. But we do it anyway and often with relish and bravado as though we can establish our intellectual superiority by berating our students. It is sad to watch.

For student and teacher alike the intellectual life becomes drudgery. The only time one feels alive is when one is no longer working, when one is no longer learning, and when one is no longer engaged with one's fellows. We come to avoid learning like the plague. We develop hobbies. We go on vacation. We seek out community in religious or civic groups away from the academy. Some faculty and students find refuge in less healthy diversions. I know that I have.

My campus experiences an ongoing problem with student drinking that sometimes leads to serious property damage both on and off campus. It occurs primarily over the weekends when work pressure abates for a bit. It is a long-standing problem, an institutional habit. But it is more than that. It is the alienated, miserable student abusing himself in a self-destructive manner in the attempt to drain the stress and strain of student life. No wonder students commit property damage against the institution that seems to enslave them, which continually demands more than they can reasonably give. No wonder too many weekends find a few in the hospital with alcohol poisoning, a drug overdose, or an injury incurred while under the influence. No wonder sexual violence seems to increase as women increasingly outperform men academically. What we are discussing is the way that we become alienated from ourselves through the process of alienated learning. While Paul Goodman's *Growing Up Absurd* is no longer a popular read, its title remains prophetic. Education alienates us from learning, from others, and finally from ourselves in order to prepare us for the corporate, globalized economy.

When I graduated from Rutgers I was married with a young child. We were broke as usual but we never seemed to mind: “If you ain’t got nothing, you got nothing to lose,” was our motto. Now I could get a good paying job with a BA. So I did. AT&T was looking for workers. I thought that I could get a good job working outdoors. But after my interview they called and asked if I was interested in becoming a computer programmer. This was 1970. I had read about computers in *The Book of Popular Science* and elsewhere. I was fascinated. So I went back and took a test and soon they were training me to program. Meanwhile I applied to graduate school in philosophy because I knew that if I didn’t try, I would always regret it. I became a programmer. I soon learned that in a few weeks I could do projects they gave me months to do. I was not unusual in this. The most fun was to go next door to Bell Labs and play *Star Trek* or *NFL Football*. It took forever on a mainframe but we were in no hurry. That’s what *Dunkin’ Donuts* and the local bars were for. I wondered how corporate America stayed in business. A few decades later I understood why they were outsourcing and offshoring.

I got into graduate school. I knew that I would soon quit AT&T to go back to school. I asked my boss a question that troubled me. “Why did you hire me? Was it the math, physics, and logic courses that I took as an undergraduate?” “No,” he told me, “you performed well as a student. You know how to do boring work, do it well, and still respect your bosses. You’re a good bet to work hard and last long at AT&T. You’re simply a good investment for us.” In other words, grades are the money of the mind. They taught me to function in a corporate environment and gave me the needed skills: work hard, do as I’m told, and persevere. Simply put, I was properly trained and alienated to become a professional in a corporate world. I would do mind-numbing work for pay. I would compete with those around me yet honor my bosses. I would drive myself. Or so they thought.

I quit soon after to transfer those very same skills to the academic world where they serve me well. I persevered and

got a Ph.D., a job, tenure, and finally the deviance credit that comes with time at a small college. So now I can be the teacher I always wanted and write pieces that I feel are honest like this one. It is a privilege and an honor for me, an autonomous freedom that few in our culture know. Mostly we trade “autonomy freedom” for choice and noninterference freedom.

But that is not my point. My point is to make evident the alienated school and workplace that is our culture. It is a part of the systemic violence of education: alienation from learning (or work), from others, and from ourselves. Once I realized my condition it took me years to overcome it. It can be done, but only with great effort. Education is one of the greatest sources of alienation, one of the greatest arenas of class warfare in our culture. The natural joy of learning is turned into a mere means to the ends of grades or money, things that by their nature can only be mere means. We learn to treat ourselves as a mere means, as objects, rather than as ends-in-ourselves, as persons. We trade our autonomy freedom for choice and noninterference freedom because we are told that they will lead to greater happiness: we favor the twenty choices in the cereal aisle and the noninterference of no national health care over the ability to become who we are. We learn to fear the other as a competitor rather than establish the kind of relationships that they and we deserve, the kind that yield friendship and community. In the process we cut ourselves off from the very things that bring happiness: the flow of learning, the joy of others in community, the self-respect and independence of autonomy freedom. We become professionals rather than crafts-people, with all that that cold and lonely word “professional” implies. In the process we lose the intrinsic joy of a craftsperson, the person who strives for excellence in her craft and herself: the flow, the relationships, and the autonomy. We become a cog in the machine that is America, where there is no longer any difference among government, business, military, banking, entertainment, sports, and education, where the function of education like



all the rest is to transfer power and wealth upward, to maintain the status quo.

But if the problems that confront us educationally are truly as systemic as I argue that they are, we will not fix them by working within the system. The system itself is the problem. Those with the power will preserve that system since they are also the ones who believe they benefit from the system. They come to believe whatever they need to believe to maintain their privilege as oppressors do, as humans do everywhere. As Martin Luther King Jr. wrote in "Letter From Birmingham Jail,"

Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but... groups tend to be more immoral than individuals. We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.

So what is the solution to these problems of the violence of education? Since these problems are largely systemic problems it is difficult to see their solution without changing the system. That's a big job. But we can change ourselves. We can learn to become honest about who we are and what we do. That's a first step. Perhaps that honesty will lead us to try to reach out to others so that they too can see the invisible problem, see that we are like a bird so long caged that she can no longer see the bars of her cage, to borrow an analogy from Marilyn Frye's *The Politics of Reality*. If we are teachers, perhaps we can teach this honesty to our students, and try to practice it in our teaching as best we see fit. If we are students perhaps we can find like-minded students and teachers who are willing to raise probing questions about the institutions we inhabit, and to try to transform those institutions into something other than training grounds for the global economy. But that assumes we want them to be something other than training grounds for the global economy, that we can do something other than conspire with those who oppress us because we hope that in doing so we can gain a leg up on the competition and win

our own piece of the pie at the expense of the less fortunate who survive on the crumbs that fall off the pie.

We need to teach peace so we might yet have a successful nonviolent American revolution.<sup>19</sup> Because the problem is systemic, because it runs deep, nothing but a revolution will usher in the change required to end our alienation and injustice. We can put band-aids on the problems as we try to do with school reform or increased financial aid, but these will not solve the problems for they will not go to the root of the problem. We need to cure the disease directly rather than cope with its symptoms. The disease is the system itself. Only a revolution can topple the system, can go to the root of the problem and liberate us. Only a radical solution will solve a radical problem.

We of the globalized world are the radical problem and the solution to us lies in small, sustainable, self-governing communities. I suspect the best route to reform the system is suggested by Thoreau, Tolstoy, and Arendt. Like Thoreau, we practice nonviolent resistance and refuse to comply, refuse to conspire with our oppressors. We make a stand. We simply embrace honesty and speak truth to power. Like Tolstoy we form our own communities based on virtues like joy, friendship, and community rather than the competition, alienation, and injustice of our globalized world. Ursula Le Guin offers us a glimpse of such differing worlds in *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia*. We might imagine those new communities organized along lines suggested by Hannah Arendt in *On Revolution*. We would need to trade a good deal of our material wealth for human needs, vain desires for natural desires, and embrace being over having. This is far easier said than done but well worth the trade once accomplished. The goal would be to form sustainable, self-governing communities that live natality and that offer the possibility of surviving the inevitable end of the globalized world.<sup>20</sup>

But what am I to do as a teacher, a teacher of nonviolence?

First, I would impart the love and joy of learning that motivates me. To quote Socrates (*Meno* 86b-c),

I would contend at all costs both in word and deed as far as I could that we will be better people, braver and less idle, if we believe that one must search for things one does not know, rather than if we believe that it is not possible to find out what we do not know and that we must not look for it.

I would do that by evidencing that very enthusiasm in my classroom and encouraging my students to do the same. I would help students recollect the same joy and love of learning that so many have had beaten out of them by the systemic violence of the educational system in preparation for the hedonic treadmill of the global economy. I would do that by removing the grade as an obstacle between them and learning, between them and me, and among themselves, to eliminate the mere means that becomes a dead end to learning and life.

I would constantly remind them that if they try to game me, that they will fail. They will only succeed in gaming themselves. I lose nothing if they receive an undeserved grade. They lose the opportunity to be edified, to experience the love and joy of learning. They will waste their \$250,000 education for a life in the hole, the unfulfilling hedonic treadmill of the global economy.

And I'm gonna let you pass,  
Yes, and I'll go last.  
Then time will tell just who fell  
And who's been left behind,  
When you go your way and I go mine.<sup>21</sup>

I would lose my expectations for what my students should do or become. Those expectations create undue pressure for students, cause them to perform for me rather than for themselves, break the bond that makes a classroom work. "You cannot disappoint me," I would tell them, "all I want from you is to become who you are. You will discover who that is as

your life unfolds if and only if you allow it. Read Lao Tzu, Socrates, Epicurus, Jesus, Rumi, Thoreau, Tolstoy, Gandhi, King, and Arendt. Educate yourself so that you can edify yourself.” As Socrates revealed, excellence cannot be taught. We must discover it within ourselves. We discover it through edifying ourselves. We discover it by finding our craft and honing our skills and in the process becoming who we are. We can attain a very practical understanding of life, *phronesis*. The search for certain theoretical knowledge is worth the ride even if the destination remains elusive. The search informs *phronesis*. Without the search, *phronesis* remains elusive.

So learning is not just acquiring theory, not just living the life of the mind. It is important that the classroom extend into life and that life extend into the classroom. Theory without practice is empty just as practice without theory is blind. It is only classist privilege that leads us to think that theory is greater than practice when, in fact, each one clings to the other under pain of being nothing at all. We need to incorporate practical philosophy into philosophy, experiential learning into our classrooms. Part of the genius of America was to marry theory and practice. Our egalitarianism demands it. No one intrinsically merits the labor of others. Yet the systemic violence of education returns us to an elitism born of unearned privilege, to a stagnant class-bound society.

We need to embrace praxis in the classroom, to live what we learn and learn what we live. William James called it “The Moral Equivalent of War.” Two years between high school and college we should spend living and working together in common housing, wearing common clothes, rebuilding the infrastructure, rebuilding the inner cities, reinvigorating farming – whatever the country needs given the context. Everyone is given the same wage. If we do, we might learn to lose our fear of the other: other races, classes, religions, and genders. We might yet become the great melting pot. Read James and fill it out with your own thoughts.

Finally we need to teach students to think critically, to

give them the tools to examine their lives: critical reasoning, statistical reasoning, the traps of cognitive biases and mental heuristics and especially how language can be used to manipulate thought and create vain desires that fuel the hedonic treadmill. We need to teach students history, especially the history of the multitude of successful nonviolent revolutions – many in our own time – about which our schools are glad to leave them ignorant.<sup>22</sup> We need to teach the history of violence that sinks the West like a stone, especially the way we use confirmation, in-group-out-group, optimism, and hindsight bias to make war seem glorious and victorious, especially when it was not.<sup>23</sup> We need to teach how the military-industrial-congressional complex bankrupts us with silly wars in order to transfer wealth and power upward. We need to teach how we have moved from a welfare to a warfare state and how neither is viable because globalized industrial society is no longer viable.

We need to ask our students to think seriously about what constitutes a good life rather than simply following the course charted for them by their culture and family, the status quo. Is the goal of life wealth and status? Choice freedom and noninterference freedom? Or is it happiness and autonomy freedom? Which life flourishes? Which is a life well lived?<sup>24</sup> Who would you become?

My formula for human greatness is *amor fati* – that one wants to have nothing different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely to bear the necessary, still less to conceal it – all idealism is mendaciousness before the necessary – but to *love* it.<sup>25</sup>

How do we live such a life? By self-creating so that we don't regret our lives. Live a life of self-creation, one that you can look back upon with the fewest regrets, one that you can embrace as your own. Which life will that be? Who will *you* become? The most mendacious idealism, true nihilism, lies in living the lie of the status quo in a vain attempt to avoid what cannot be avoided, what is necessary: coming face to

face with yourself. Who will you become? The greatest realism lies in confronting these questions. Your life depends on it.

Doing nothing, living an unexamined life, the banal life of the status quo, is perhaps the most violent thing that we do, both to ourselves and to others.

That is how I would teach nonviolence.

## Cherry Blossoming: The Practice of Nonviolence in Education

LUIZA MOUZINHO

*This paper describes my experience with educating a poor and abused nine-year old child. It also raises wider issues of helping children develop their capacity to trust, and the responsibilities of educators in the present world.*

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Mr. Fitz leaned against his desk in the center of the room reading a picture book titled *America is Under Attack*. The necks of fifteen third-graders craned toward the turning pages, their unblinking eyes glued to every page, making the focus we could muster up for math lessons seem pathetic. They became so engrossed that the ending we all knew was coming still caught some by surprise. As the twin towers, so precarious on the page, came crashing to the ground, Yaineris yelled, "Die terrorists!" into a silent room. Mr. Fitz looked up, paused, and began to turn what I viewed as a child's misguided

outburst into a productive class discussion on empathy and peace.

My decision to join City Year, a program whose tagline encourages participants to “Give a Year. Change the World,” stemmed from my disillusionment with college life. I chose to study philosophy at a private university in Massachusetts, and during my four years there I often found myself seated in a comfortable lecture hall discussing grand ideas on how to make the world a better place. The coursework fascinated me for a while, but eventually I became frustrated and restless. During the week, my peers and I would affirm our commitment to living for others, but then came the weekends, and just like the college gates – our dedication had limits. On Fridays we would glide over the frozen sidewalks in skimpy herds to Caro Street, where we were turned upside down to suck beer from kegs. After a while, the buzz was no longer gratifying; it just made me feel like a hypocrite. I was a poseur, enthusiastic about debating peace and nonviolence in the safety and comfort of a university classroom, but lacking the commitment to put my so-called ideals into action. I needed a test to see if my idealism could survive in the real world. I wanted a challenge. What I got was Yaineris.

“Miss Luiza, Miss Luiza, Miss Luiza,” Yaineris screeched every morning as she jumped out of her mother’s faded tan minivan from the 80’s. She clung to my arm with her bony hands as I welcomed other students into the school, looking up at me with her large dark eyes every so often to ensure I was committed to being by her side. Sometimes, she broke her typically frightening stare to shoot me a smile. When the first bell rang, I would tell her it was time to go inside, but she refused, and if I insisted she would run away and make me go chase her.

“Yaineris, come back right now!” I hissed at her.

“No!” she screamed back at me.

“If you don’t come back right now, I’m going to call your mom,” I threatened her.



“I don’t care, go ahead.” She always called my bluff.

“I’m serious. I’m really going to call. You have no right to do this. You are just a child, and you have to listen to grown-ups,” I said, wondering about the validity behind my own assertions.

That’s when Yaineris would shut down, stare off into space, and say nothing at all.

“Please, come back? Class is starting, Mr. Fitz is waiting,” I eventually ended up begging her.

At some point, she would huff and puff, cross her arms, and stomp into school. As I led her inside, I tried to look serious and walk quickly, pretending I knew what I was doing.

As a City Year corps member, it was my responsibility to tutor students in math and reading during and after school, encourage daily student attendance, provide behavior coaching, and offer enrichment activities. Each student would be placed on “focus lists” depending on which type of support they needed. Almost every child in my class needed some sort of individual support, but Yaineris was on every one of my focus lists. While we had quite a few challenging students, Yaineris was among the most problematic, both in her behavior and in the external circumstances she brought with her to school.

It was hard to patch together the pieces of her stories to get a comprehensive idea of her life, but the tattered picture I got was of a little girl distrustful of adults because all the ones she knew had failed her. When I came to know Yaineris, she was living in a homeless shelter with her mother. She sometimes came in smelling of urine and dressed in hand-me-downs: shirts that were too tight for her, sweatpants that didn’t quite reach her ankles.

Yaineris and the rest of her family had apparently fled from Puerto Rico in order to escape from her father, who abused them all. Her mother struggled to take care of Yaineris and her siblings. Yaineris often came in late to school, felt

hungry the entire day, and was frequently picked up late. Yaineris never told me she was hungry, nor did she ever ask anyone for food. She was far too proud for that. I could tell just by her frame that she was undernourished. She was tall and slender, with barely any fat on her bones.

I imagined that the growls aimed at her classmates came from the bottom of her empty belly, or maybe her aggressive behavior was learned from the example set at home. I once caught her, Alma, and Raquel in the bathroom screaming at one another to confess who had told Rodrigo about Yaineris' secret crush. I pulled the girls aside to give my best lecture on loyalty, trust, and forgiveness. "I'm sorry," Raquel began before the rest. Alma tried to give them both a hug, and as I watched Yaineris unwrap her crossed arms, and part her pouty lips, I began to smile proudly at her. Instead of embracing her friends and apologizing, Yaineris' hands flew to her hips, followed by an audacious: "Ya'll are fake as hell." She then left the three of us standing there as she walked away.

I would always question her about her behavior, but most of the time, I only received a cold stare. In terms of why she was always late, her excuse was often the same. "We had car troubles," she would say looking up at me with furrowed eyebrows, as if I were to blame. It was not until later that I discovered that Yaineris's mother was not even the one who normally dropped her off or picked her up at school, but her mother's friend. I remember the day she skipped our afterschool program and headed to the office to wait to be picked up. She must have sat up there alone for at least an hour before someone found her and brought her back downstairs to do her homework. She refused of course, choosing to sit by the window instead so she could look out for her ride. When she caught a glimpse of the car, she started for the door, but I stopped her, explaining, "They will come in to get you." "No, they won't," she said adamantly. She was right; they never did, but left without her instead.

Yaineris's distrust of those responsible for her contrasted greatly with the intimate behavior she expressed toward strangers and acquaintances. She would try to touch and talk to men as though she were a teenager stuck in a nine-year-old's body. She was not blatantly sexual, but would often caress the arms of her male teachers as a way to seek comfort and attention. On one occasion, she entered the classroom as if she was on a catwalk, sporting white-wedged heels, a mini skirt, and oversized cheap plastic sunglasses. Dropping a trail of books behind her, she chose a seat at the front of the class, plopped her heels up on her desk, and began sucking loudly on a cherry blow-pop. My teeth clenched as I walked over to her, knelt down, and whispered to her, "You better drop the attitude *right now* and start your homework." She stared up at me defiantly, popped the sucker out of her mouth, and smiled. I realized then that until Yaineris came to value her own intelligence, she would continue to view her body as the best way to prove her worth.

I chose to combat Yaineris's suggestive behavior with encouragement and positive feedback. Like all humans, she craved a safe environment, and the tumultuousness of her home life had left her feeling unsheltered and insecure. She had begun third grade with extremely poor reading skills, sounding out simple words like "get" or "dog." When the class was separated into reading groups by level, she was put in the lowest group with children who could not read a word of English. This group was led by Mr. Fitz, and I often listened in as he patiently waited for each student, including Yaineris, to stumble through his or her part. Yaineris, on the other hand, was not so patient. Whenever I read with her and another struggling student, she would hurry the other student along, laughing and correcting when the student mispronounced a word. It was her way of raising her self-esteem and making it known that she was not the slowest in the class.

Yaineris failed to see that she was far from slow. She was one of the smartest kids in the class, and I eventually came to define my job as a tutor not as making children smart, but getting them to realize that they already were. Once Yaineris cultivated her ability to learn, she could achieve her potential. This task seemed daunting at the beginning of the year, but as time passed, I began to see a change in Yaineris. More frequently, she would raise her head from her table and lift her hand so she could answer questions. Sometimes, hers was the only hand up in the air, and she would become frustrated when she was not picked to display her expertise. One of my most cherished memories was when she ran over to me with her test score in hand. She came right up to my ear, and whispered, "I got a ninety-nine! I would have gotten a hundred if I hadn't made that silly mistake." This was Yaineris at her most confident, finally realizing her intellectual ability.

Eventually, Yaineris became less sassy, treating her teachers and classmates with more respect. Once, Yaineris interrupted two boys bickering about who would get to draw the water cycle for their group project to tell them, "Stop fighting! We can all draw a part." Her attempt at making peace reminded me of Mr. Fitz's lesson at open circle about learning to share with one another.

Open circle was perhaps my favorite classroom activity. The students would loudly drag their chairs to the back of the classroom, and Mr. Fitz would always have to remind them, "*Quietly*, children. We don't want to interrupt Mr. Hathaway's class." We would place our chairs around in a circle, while one kid would hurry so he could be the one to grab the extra chair. We would leave it empty in case any guests happened to pop in, as a way to show the kids the importance of inclusivity.

During the open circle discussion, Mr. Fitz would always bring up a new topic that would foster a safe, caring, and engaging classroom community. One morning, Mr. Fitz discussed group membership. He asked students to name

different groups they belonged to. Students answered, “Girl! Boy! Hispanic! Christian!” Mr. Fitz said he belonged to groups such as “men” and “piano players.” He then asked the students to think about what made them a part of a certain group, and if anyone could join a specific group. If someone belonged to the group, “girl,” then they were to stand. Some girls giggled as other girls didn’t even stand up. Perhaps they identified more with the boy group, I thought. Mr. Fitz then asked everyone who spoke Spanish to stand up. Everyone in the class, including Mr. Fitz and I, stood up. Then he asked those who considered themselves Hispanic or Latino to remain standing. Mr. Fitz sat down. He asked if anyone found it interesting that while he sat down for the Latino group, he had previously stood during the Spanish-speaking group. It was in that way that Mr. Fitz showed students that just because some people belong to one group, it does not mean they necessarily belong to another related group. Students realized that people who belong to the same groups are not exactly the same, although they may have some things in common. By the end, it was insinuated that people should not be judged by what group they belong to, but be treated fairly, as individuals.

“You only have one year. Do your best. Don’t have any regrets,” was what our City Year supervisor had told us at the beginning of the year. Although, I found those words too corny when I first heard them, they stuck with me throughout the year. Toward the end of the year, I took each of my kids to eat lunch with me, one at the time, at our favorite picnic table under the cherry blossoms. They were finally in full bloom, but only for a short time. I took what little time I had left with them to slow down what felt like a bustling year. I repeated to each one the advice I had been giving all year long to make sure they would not forget, and for the first time, I asked them about their dreams.

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” I asked Yaineris. Immediately, she responded matter-of-factly, “A

doctor.” Recently, she had started a new phase of reading biology books and had asked Mr. Fitz if she could do an extra credit project on what she learned. I smiled proudly at her answer, thinking that even if this phase passed, it did not matter because she had already built up the confidence to dream big.

It will be a year this coming June since I last saw my kids. I often find my thoughts drifting back to them and wondering how they are doing. Did anything I said stick with them? Then just the other day a strange number called my phone. “Hello?” I spoke. “Miss Luweeza!” someone screeched from the other end. It was Yaineris. “She still remembered me,” I thought. She told me about her mother’s new job, her new school, her good grades, and her new City Year. Although my time with Yaineris is gone, I feel no regrets about our past. There are and there will always be new people in her life. I know that some will help her continue to blossom, while others will not, but my hope for her is that she will continue to find the strength within herself to become all that she is capable of, and share that strength with others.

Practicing *Ahimsa*  
with the Childhood Victims of *Himsa*  
ANDREW FITZ-GIBBON and JANE HALL FITZ-GIBBON

*In this essay we reflect on over thirty years of caring for children who have been victims of violence, and offer a philosophical framework of interpretation. We suggest that loving, nonviolent re-parenting will help repair the damage done to children who have suffered physical, psychological and sexual violence.*

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**Introduction**

In 1982, we offered to be trained as foster carers. We had seen an article in a local newspaper that said there was a desperate need for people to care for children who had been victims of neglect, maltreatment, and physical and sexual abuse. We wanted to be of service to the community and felt we had something to offer. At the time we had our first two birth children who were four and two years old. Since then

we have cared for over ninety children who have come to us physically and emotionally bruised from often-tragic life circumstances.

Around the same time that we began to care for children in the foster care system, we became nonviolentists. We came to believe that all the great sages and mystics of the world's religious traditions advocated a nonviolent life, a life of love for all.



For us, caring for abused children, became our loving response to the harm and violence that too many children face in the very place where they ought to be loved and safe—the family home. The children we have cared for have mostly not been victimized by strangers, but by those closest to them.

In time we began to call what we practice “loving nonviolent re-parenting.” It is re-parenting because the children we have cared for have often already been parented in inadequate and violent ways.

In 2010, across the United States (where we live and work) there were 3.3 million allegations of child maltreatment involving 5.9 million children. Of those 3.3 million allegations nearly two million received a Child Protective Services (CPS) investigation. Of those a little over 1.2 million were unsubstantiated. Sometimes, even with a grave suspicion that children are being mistreated, it is very difficult to find evidence. Though the level of evidence is less for taking a child into care than it is to prove abuse in a court of law, a mere suspicion of abuse or neglect is not enough. Some children who ought to be in Department of Social Services (DSS) care slip through the gaps. It is also the case that some children are hot-lined where there is no abuse present. Over-anxious teachers, or neighbors, report perceived abuse, which is unsubstantiated. The data reveals that after dismissing nearly two thirds of allegations, over half a million cases of child abuse remain each year.



When an allegation is substantiated, the child is often taken into DSS care and placed in a foster home, like the one we have provided for thirty years (with a few short breaks to take a breath or two). According to the U.S. Child Welfare Agency on September 30, 2009 there were 423,773 children in foster care. Our caring for children has been one very small attempt to help meet a very large need.

### **Kinds of Violence**

Almost all children in care have been the victims of violence. In 2002, the World Health Organization (WHO) gave a definition of violence as:

The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.<sup>26</sup>

This is a helpful place to start, but it does not include all the violence that children suffer. Crucially, the WHO definition does not include violence that is non-intentional, or violence that is non-physical. The difference between intentional and non-intentional violence can be seen in the following hypothetical case.

John is a teacher whose class is about to begin. He looks at the clock on the rear wall of the classroom and decides it is time to close the door. Recently, John's patience has been tested to the limit as Jason, an especially difficult and wearying student, has come late to class every day. As John is about to close the door, Jason ambles to the doorway. Something inside John snaps and he decides to "teach Jason a lesson." He slams the door hard just as Jason is about to enter. The door catches Jason hard in the face. His nose may be broken. It is very painful. At the subsequent disciplinary hearing the school principal adjudged that the teacher had carried out an intentional violent action against the student.

Yet what if it didn't happen quite like that? As the class is about to start John goes to the door and begins to close it firmly. Jason, realizing that he is late again rushes toward the door. John does not see him coming and, sadly, the door crashes into Jason's face. His nose may well be broken. John is mortified! He did not intend to hurt Jason. The school nurse records in her daily log that a student's nose was broken in an accident.

What about one more different angle? This school is a very busy one. Students are often late. When students are moving between classes, it would be very unwise to firmly close a classroom door without taking particular care to ensure no student was trying to get into the classroom. At a meeting later in the day, the department chair offers teacher John a mild rebuke, "John, surely you could have foreseen that your habit of closing the door with a bang would one day hurt a student!"

From teacher John's point of view, the three stories are very different. In the first John is intentionally violent toward student Jason. In the second, there is no violent intention. In the third, there is at least a hint of negligence, but no malicious intent. According to the WHO only the first was an act of violence.

However, from student Jason's point of view, each scenario produces the same result: a broken nose and a great deal of pain. Each scenario has a violent and harmful outcome.

The various harms that the WHO list may be caused intentionally, but also accidentally, and at times a harmful outcome might be foreseen, and hence might be avoided.

When we consider children in care who have suffered violence, we can't simply be concerned with those intentional acts of violence perpetrated by abusive parents. It is the violent effect on children in care in its totality that we need to address. Some violent harms will be caused by accident and some harms might have been foreseeable, and perhaps avoided. In working

with birth parents, it is clear that caseworkers, therapists and foster carers will need to address issues of intentional violence. But they will also need to address unintentional violence whether it is accidental or foreseeable.

To focus solely on the physicality of violence misses those acts that are non-physical in nature.



The first is the kind of violence that is verbal **violence**—mental and emotional torture. The ethical problem of violence, in short, is that violent actions: a) do not respect the integrity and autonomy of the other; and b) the violent action causes harm to the other. That harm is multifarious and not merely physical is clear. An abusive male may not lay a hand on his abused partner, but may make her life a living hell through the use of words (softly spoken or shouted), through insinuation, direct verbal assault, ridicule, and emotional blackmail. That such a woman suffers harm is beyond dispute. Is the male's non-physical harming a form of violence? We assert so.

Adrienne was a pretty, petite fourteen year old girl. Her smile lit up her whole face. The trouble was, the smile was rarely seen. She seemed to carry a weight far greater than her little shoulders could bear. When she came to us she was withdrawn to the point of being non-communicative. Her academic scores revealed she was far below her actual grade level in all her subjects. Over time, as we gained her trust, Adrienne told her story. We pieced it together from the dribs and drabs of many little conversations and hints. She had been told she was “retarded” several times a day by her mother's abusive partner. So far as we could tell, she had never suffered physical violence. Yet, the deep wounds of emotional and psychological battering produced a deep harm. Emotional belittling, psychological assault, is a form of violence that causes deep pain, as real as any physical assault. For Adrienne, with much care and affirmation from both the school and us, she was able to improve beyond anything we could have imagined. She came out of herself. Her smile was more

frequent. Her grades improved remarkably and she was able to graduate high school and move on with her life. Though her story had a happy ending, we realize the terrible harm caused by the violence of words.

Bill and George were six and nine. They were brought into foster care because of neglect. They arrived on our doorstep in the late afternoon, each clutching a small plastic bag containing their few clothes and treasured possessions. They were small for their ages with dirty faces and unkempt hair. Their eyes opened wide as their glances darted everywhere taking in their new surroundings. They wore stained jeans that were a couple of sizes too small, covered by what would have been white t-shirts now greying, shapeless garments full of holes. Though neglect is often physical, it is also a form of emotional abuse. Bill and George had endured the taunts of peers about being smelly and wearing dirty clothes. They had been outcasts and friendless at school. Yet they had looked after themselves, eating whenever they could, as their parents succumbed to the ravages of substance abuse. After many months, as they began to trust us, we gradually built up a picture that included physical and sexual abuse and much emotional damage.

The implication is clear for the care of children who suffer harm in multiple forms: psychological wounds are a form of violence. Simple neglect, too, where the child's basic needs are not met – food, adequate clothing, and safe housing – is also a form of violence. We might argue that the WHO might mean this kind of violence in the notion of “power” threatened or actual that causes harm. The abusive parent intentionally uses his power to subject the child to harm. Psychological and emotional violence is, clearly, a misuse of power, and so may be implicitly included in the WHO definition. However, we would prefer to see it more explicitly stated.

A more subtle form of violence is structural in nature. It is one of the tragedies facing children in the care of social services. Often, the birth home is intolerable and CPS workers

decide that the child must be removed. Yet, the removal itself is harmful to the child. As a culture, we are just beginning to understand the very deep roots of attachment that form in the womb and in the first few years of life. When a child is taken away from her birth mother those maternal attachment bonds are broken. The child suffers disorientation, emotional pain, and grief. Like any form of grief, shock, disbelief, anger, and depression are the usual accompaniments. The harm done to the child's sense of self might be irrecoverable, or at the very least take a long time to repair.

Once in the system foster children are subject to an investigation, including invasive questions about their parents' behavior and lifestyle. Loyalties are tested.

Juan's caseworker and teacher were convinced that he had been physically abused. But when pressed, even gently, by the caseworker, Juan's response was, "What happens at home stays at home!" He repeated it as would a well-drilled soldier who gives only name, rank and serial number when questioned by the enemy. Even at his young age, and having experienced neglect and abuse at the hands of his parents, Juan had learned to perceive the "system" as negative. However bad his home life, it was still his home. He demonstrated immense loyalty. Yet, the system becomes adversarial as children are pitted against their birth parents. Attachments are tested, strained and sometimes broken beyond repair.

When children are freed for adoption and eventually adopted, the adopters seeing their dreams of having children finally coming true, often change the child's **name—most** often surname, but sometimes first name too. It marks a new beginning. It says to the child, "Now you belong to our family." But, just as it marks a new beginning with the adoptive family it marks a distinct break with the birth family. Doubtless many adopted children make the transition well. Some do not. When attachments are broken, the child's ability to form attachments in the future is called into question. This too is a



form of harm that derives from the system in which the child finds herself.

We are not saying that children should be left in an abusive situation where they face the prospects of further neglect and abuse. But we are saying that we must recognize that the system itself is a form of violence – not intentionally, often accidentally, but mostly foreseeable. The choice of taking a child into care might be considered the “lesser of two evils.” Care might be better than the birth home, but is still not the ideal.

### **Violent Parenting – Nonviolent Re-Parenting**

Most of the violence children suffer derives from inadequate parenting. Whilst we have worked with birth parents who are intentionally cruel, for the most part parents are violent because they know no other way to “care” for their children. In recent years, we have noticed an increase in children being in foster care because their primary carers are drug and alcohol addicts. One caseworker described it as an epidemic in our county. In 2010, almost twenty-six percent of child abuse was linked to drug and alcohol abuse.<sup>27</sup> Drug and alcohol abuse compounds the suffering of children.

There are no tests for parenting skills before a couple have a child. Parenting skills, if learned at all, often come by watching parents, aunts, brothers and sisters with their own families.

With the breakdown of extended families, suitable and stable role models are hard to come by. Often, when new parents reflect on their own upbringing they remember that parental discipline involves spanking and punishments, and so they do what they think is best. Out of principle, or exasperation, or frustration they resort to violence. Often, part of the loving re-parenting task is to work with these parents, to model new ways of discipline.

Foster carers and adopters do not begin with a blank slate. Besides damage caused in the early years, it has now been

suggested that attachment issues and harm caused can begin in the womb.<sup>28</sup>

Sara was a pre-adoptive baby who we took into our care at six hours old. Her mother had discharged herself from the hospital immediately after giving birth. We knew we were going to care for her as soon as she was born although had not expected her to come to us quite so young. As we tended her during her first few days of life, every now and then she gave what we could only describe as a frightened cry, like she had been startled by something. These cries didn't last long, just a minute or so, and she was easily comforted. Somewhere deep inside we were sure she knew we weren't her birth parents. She was frightened and disoriented because she had been abandoned by her mother. Interestingly, we did not experience this with pre-adoptive babies who came to us at three or four days old.

Much that has been "written" on children in care has a continuing and long-term effect on their growth into adulthood. When what has been written is the language of violence, much work needs to be done in re-parenting nonviolently.

Clearly, foster carers and adopters need to empathize with the child's predicament, to get a feel for why they exhibit the behaviors they do. The literature on child abuse is vast and growing constantly, and many training courses focus on the children for whom we care – and rightly so. However, to date there is little discussion about the kinds of people needed to care for these deeply damaged children. We suggest that loving nonviolent re-parenting will help meet this need.

Though foster parents agree in their training that no form of violence will be used – it is illegal, for example, in New York State for foster parents to use physical punishment – it is not clear that all foster carers have internalized the values of nonviolence. In a training session for potential foster parents, after a session on the law regarding physical punishment one attendee asked, "Will I be able to spank him when needed

when he is adopted?” The person asking the question was a gentle, kind man. Yet he saw spanking as a valid and helpful form of discipline. Clearly, the state law was seen as merely one more layer of bureaucracy to pay lip service to. The idea of nonviolence had not been internalized as a good in itself. Part of our current work is to try to help foster parents internalize nonviolence for its own sake not because it is the law. The need for further nonviolent training is clear.

### **Nonviolence in the Home, Modeling Nonviolence in Speech and Actions**

The task of loving nonviolent re-parenting also involves issues other than meeting the child’s needs. We mention three here briefly:

1. *Setting boundaries.* This is hard for children who have been neglected. They have often run wild and been left to their own devices. The concept of bedtimes, or sitting at a table for mealtimes, is new to them. Yet harder than the physical boundaries are the emotional ones.

Linda and her baby sister came to live with us. They had been neglected and abused physically and sexually. Linda was pretty, with tight red curls and a winsome smile as she tilted her head to one side. However, she had no boundaries. Though only three years old she approached strangers in a way not usually seen in children. We remember a time in the checkout line at the food store when she turned to the man behind us and start rubbing her hand up and down his leg. The man was clearly embarrassed and made a joke of it, but it was still a difficult situation.

It is harder to enforce bedtimes with teenagers and very difficult to get them to let you know where they are. This is much the same as with birth children. The difference is that foster carers are required to know where their foster kids are at all times. This is especially so when from being young children they have had a large measure of freedom to do as



they please, often being allowed to roam the streets at any hour of the day or night.

2. *Example and presence.* We have found that it is necessary to be a certain kind of presence in the home, always being careful about speech, tone, reactions, mannerisms, and ways of dealing with conflict. There has to be constancy in every area of life. Part of the task of re-parenting is to model loving nonviolent behavior as we mentor these young people. They note everything we do and say.

3. *Empathy and self-control.* Much ink has been spilled about what human nature is, or whether there is such a thing as human nature! By and large, scholars have tended to lean toward British philosopher Thomas Hobbes (human nature is basically bad and needs to be controlled) or French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (human nature is good and needs to be free to express its creativity). It seems most likely to us that there is potential in human beings for both good and bad. Part of the success of a well-lived life is to be able to control the baser elements of the human psyche (anger, jealousy, and hate) and to develop the higher faculties (love, kindness, and sympathy). With children, much of the hard work is helping the child learn self-control. In this Rousseau was wrong, and Hobbes was right! If children do not learn self-control they will become troublesome adults. Equally hard work needs to be done to develop the child's innate empathic side, her feeling for others, the ability to place herself in their shoes – in other words, to nurture her compassionate side. In this Rousseau was right and Hobbes was wrong! Human nature has immense potential for love and compassion. The empathic, self-controlled adult is a good citizen. It is our experience that when children have been neglected and abused, they have learned neither self-control nor empathy. If we had a dollar for every time a foster child has said, "I don't care!" we could retire early!

### **Vegetarianism and the Issues it Raises**

When children first arrive, we welcome them into our kitchen. In the winter months, more often than not, there is a friendly log fire blazing in the hearth. In the summer, usually, we will sit on the deck in our backyard. For administrative and practical reasons, children often arrive late in the afternoon. Their arrival is often accompanied by the smell of cooking. We offer the caseworker a cup of tea and, then we have our first chat.

“So, Jane, can you tell Angeleek what the rules of the home are?” said the caseworker.



“To be honest we don’t have many,” Jane replied, looking at Angeleek with a smile. “But here’s **one–no girls** in boys rooms.” Angeleek looked down at her shoes, a little embarrassed.

“And we don’t do physical violence,” Andy joined in. “That means no hitting each other. Also, we try to be kind to each other with our words. That means we don’t raise our voices, if we can at all help it. We don’t shout at each other, or call each other names.”

“That’s because we are a nonviolent home,” continued Jane.

The caseworker, who has known us for a while and has brought a number of children to us, said, “But, tell Angeleek the big rule.”

“Ah, you mean that we are vegetarians,” Jane replied. She smiled again at the young girl. “We don’t eat anything that had a face, as Linda McCartney used to say.”

Angeleek looked up from her shoes to the caseworker, a look of pleading in her eyes. “No meat. I think, I’ll die! What can I eat?”

Angeleek didn’t die, and in a very short time she came to enjoy the variety of vegetarian cuisine. When we went to a restaurant, Angeleek often chose the meat she craved. In time,

the craving lessened and she became happy with vegetarianism, often choosing a non-meat dish for herself.

But not all children are as compliant as Angeleek. Many American children have been fed the lie – along with their Big Macs – that a large amount of meat is essential for a healthy diet. Meat eating, particularly for boys, becomes a point of pride. Some of our foster children have gone out of their way to tell animal cruelty stories, just to “get a rise” from us. We have learnt not to play. Rather ours is a low-key refusal to be involved in the gross cruelty to animals that is the factory farming industry. When children ask us why we do not eat meat, we share stories from Farm Sanctuary and other compassionate organizations that care for animals. In the summer months we make at least one trip to Farm Sanctuary at Watkins Glen, New York – we have supported the organization for many years – to allow our foster children to meet the animals we sponsor: the pig (Shirley, who passed on, and now Terrin), the sheep (Donna), and lots of turkeys. Giving children exposure to living, sentient, playful beings, rather than meat on a plate, helps children develop empathy with others.

To develop empathy is crucially important. In the early years of life, children in a caring and loving relationship with parents, develop the two faculties of empathy and self-control. It is empathy that enables us to feel as others feel, to walk in their shoes, and so to exercise kindness and consideration to others. We learn not to harm others because we know what that harm would feel like if it happened to us. This empathetic faculty is the basis for the Golden Rule: do to others what you would have them do to you. Or, don't do to others that which you would not have them do to you. In either its positive or negative iteration the Golden Rule is found in all the world's great cultures, religions, and philosophical traditions. Scholars, like eighteenth century British philosopher David Hume, argued that empathy, the ability to feel sympathy for others, was the basis of human, hence moral, life.

Contemporary brain science is adding scientific weight to the idea.<sup>29</sup>

Self-control is the faculty that helps us restrain our worst urges. A great part of the parental task in the early years is to help children develop empathy and learn self-control. Those children who do not develop these faculties enter adult life troubled, and likely as not will cause trouble to others.

We have noticed time and again that for many children entering foster care, these two faculties have not been developed. Abused children often do not have the ability to feel with others, nor the ability to control themselves. The absence of these skills accounts for much of the trouble children face in school and in the home. Our task is to (re)parent children to help them to develop that which is missing.

For us, creating a nonviolent home, with its twin ideas of respect for others and control of the self, is at the heart of foster caring. As the production of meat, at least the way most meat is produced in developed economies like the United States, necessitates great cruelty to animals, we choose to be vegetarian. It is a lifestyle consistent with nonviolence.

Our culture is so enamored with meat that on occasion someone suggests to us that by not having meat in our home, we deprive the children of some good. When Jane teaches new foster carers how to welcome children, she will suggest that foster carers find food that the children are familiar with. It provides comfort, and sameness, and an element of security. That makes sense. We have found that there is usually some non-meat food that fits the bill. In some cases we take children to a burger place, to provide the necessary familiarity. But leftover meat does not come back to the house.

Nathan was a particularly difficult boy. He came to us at thirteen and had already suffered much. In the home he was surly, disrespectful, violent toward his siblings, and defiant. During the year he was with us he often mocked our

vegetarianism. Driving down the road, he would laugh at “road kill,” and would say, “If my dad was here, we’d have stopped and taken that baby home for supper.” Nathan left us in difficult circumstances and went to live with other foster carers. When children leave, we are often left wondering how things worked out. We hope that we have done some good, but often we don’t hear anything. We were surprised by comments, some months after Nathan left us, during a conversation with his new foster dad at a support group meeting.

“Nathan’s doing great!” said the amiable David. “Do you know what he said to us the other day? He starts telling us how important it is to be vegetarian. Gives me this whole speech about animal cruelty in factory farms. I could hardly believe my ears!”

Juanita is a grown woman now, doing well in school on the U.S. west coast. When she came to us, she was a troubled mid-teen passing through a “rebellious” stage. Part of her rebellion was tattoos, piercings, and experimenting with drugs. The drug abuse was the immediate reason she was in care. Her mom could not keep her safe. Part of her rebellion was, also, to become vegetarian. Juanita was a deeply sensitive and empathic young woman. Her vegetarianism was heartfelt. She breathed a sigh of relief when she discovered we were a vegetarian household. She actually cried. In her last foster home, she was forced to eat meat. Her carers there thought she was just being difficult. We cast no blame. When our eldest son became a vegetarian at age seven, for several years we misguidedly told him he had to eat at least some meat or fish for protein. We were simply ignorant of the facts of nutrition and healthy eating. Thankfully, in time we realized the sincerity of our son’s conviction, educated ourselves about meat, and followed his lead.

### **Conclusion**

Max came to us after years of physical, violent abuse. He had suffered terribly. His way of dealing with it was to reenact

violence. Mostly this was, thankfully, not violence against people (though it could be). It was mostly destructiveness with things. He had broken several of his possessions – literally smashed them to pieces. The anger inside reared up at trivial little things. He had broken three Xbox computer games machines. We had on many occasions talked with him about trying to control the anger, and not letting it control him. We had learnt that when we heard his voice raised from the basement playroom, to try and head it off by an early intervention. On this occasion we heard a roar.

“Max what’s up?” asked Andy. Max was clearly beyond speech, his fist poised over the Xbox.

“Max think! Don’t let the anger control you,” Andy spoke firmly, “You can do this, you can beat it.”

“Go on Max we know you can do it,” Jane encouraged.

We continued to encourage him for several minutes as his fist remained motionless in the air. Eventually, with a huge physical effort that we could actually see on his face, he safely lowered the fist. A huge grin spread across his face. He had done it and he was so proud of himself. Max never smashed anything again. He had learned that he could control anger. But, it was not easy, and was not the work of a moment. It would have been easy to give up on Max and to allow the violence to overcome him.

There is much work to be done with children who have been victims of violence, like Max, who in turn become violent. Nonviolent approaches to (re)parenting are urgently needed. We suggest four areas that require attention, at least as a beginning:

(A) There is a need for a greater public awareness of the scope and kinds of violence that children face at the hands of their parents and guardians. This will include awareness of intentional and non-intentional, physical and psychological violence by family members and by the system of care for child victims of violence.

(B) There is a need for the education of case managers, case workers, and decision makers in departments of social services with regard to the possibilities of nonviolent re-parenting. If those with the authority to make life-changing decisions in the lives of children have not internalized and intentionalized nonviolence, then there is little hope for progress at the actual level of care for children.

(C) Training in nonviolence for foster carers is essential. Particular skills need to be learned with regard to children who have experienced violence in the home. This needs to happen at the level of skills (what to do in what circumstances) and at the level of character (what kind of people do foster carers need to be to apply loving nonviolent (re)parenting).

(D) There must be an intentional drive to recruit foster carers committed to nonviolence who desire to work with psychologically damaged children to repair the damage of violence.

## (Non)Violence in Prison

MATT HARPER

*In this essay I describe my two-year experience of working in a youth prison (“Belize Central Prison”). Although they are still children, many of its inmates are accused of one or more murders. The culture of violence was pervasive, both among the inmates and in the guards’ relationships with them. It is very difficult to change this culture of violence and, despite my persistent efforts, I have failed to do so in any major way. Nevertheless, I have also noticed a desire for change and have discovered numerous small ways in which this culture of violence can be softened.*

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This is not a “success” story. That is, this is not a story of how I effectively implemented a system of nonviolence in a youth prison that occasionally used more aggressive means. In fact, it would probably be more accurate to call this a story of failure (if your preference is for dichotomic choices). I was more vocally opposed to violence before I arrived than when I left, and I may even have been more nonviolent myself.



The temptations and pressure to using violence as a solution are all around us; our society doesn't prefer nonviolence, or at least, it does not seem to entertain nonviolent options for very long. Too much money is spent on tools of violence to expect they won't be used. Therefore, I see now, the story of implementing nonviolence will inevitably involve failure and obstacles, in any situation or location. And, since journeys involve both "successes" and "failures," I think it would be best to share the journey, documented through my journal entries (indicated by italics) of my two years working abroad in the Belize Central Prison. Maybe somewhere in between the thoughts and feelings I had and amidst the terrain I covered there will be something that rises to the level of a reflection on nonviolence.

I finished off my college years in a culminating moment that mirrored for me the person I believed I had become at the College of the Holy Cross. Twenty six days before walking across Fitton Field with the rest of the graduating class of 2011, and as word and celebrations spread in response to the assassination of Osama bin Laden, I stood with a small group of students and a large poster asking many of those same schoolmates, "Is this justice?" I saw the celebration of violence and the unwillingness to appropriately use the judicial system as a violation of what our country says it stands for. I also doubted that the raid on bin Laden would serve to resolve the pervasive cycle of violence in the world. Finally, while militarily creative, I saw this operation as an unfortunate example of our nation's failure to bring that same level of ingenuity, planning and investment into solving problems nonviolently. During my undergraduate career, I had found that it was easy to stand for "social justice" as a privileged college student at a wealthy, Jesuit, liberal arts institution. But on that night, in that somewhat challenging moment, I felt that the person I had claimed to be those last years of college finally matched up with the person I was showing to my classmates. I cannot recall of a moment where I have felt more authentic, a value I prize incredibly highly.

And so it was on that note, with a newfound conviction in both optimism and identity, that I took my first large steps out into the world beyond the safer spaces I had previously limited myself to. Exactly three months after that night on campus I arrived in Belize City to begin my commitment to a two-year international volunteer program. I entered a city plagued with many forms of violence and began work in the Belize Central Prison with young men who were committing some of these violent acts. In those first days, though the exterior world provided ample opportunity for me to feel clumsy as I adjusted to the newness of Belizean culture and the Kriol language, I felt hopeful that the more foundational aspects of myself, my beliefs and values, would not be rocked.

I had no idea of the complexity of experiences awaiting me at the Kolbe Foundation. This private institution, having taken over the government-run Central Prison about ten years earlier, has made real progress in addressing the needs and rights of those housed in its facilities. And yet it is clear to me that prisons are forgotten places, housing ignored and sometimes hated people. Because of this, there is still much room for growth, particularly to address the power-based violence perpetrated there by some of its employees. What I desire to reflect on is why some officers and staff members may have turned and may continue to resort to violence against the youth. Put another way, I am curious what the obstacles to nonviolence are. While I refuse to rationalize the actions of the officers and staff, I equally refuse not to try and understand them. Looking at the complexity behind their decisions will help me reach a better understanding of why individuals chose violent responses as opposed to nonviolent ones.

It is important also to note upfront that not every staff member was guilty of using violence against the boys and there were many officers who never resorted to unnecessary force. I also recognize that it would be unfair for me to separate myself from those who used violence. I realized that there is

something in me that encourages and pushes me toward violence. I do not believe these tendencies make others or me better. I hope that by reflecting on them I can grow into better processes and reactions.

I remember the first time I saw a staff member hit a boy. Exactly one month after I arrived in the country, nine days into my work at Wagner's Youth Facility (WYF), I watched one of the staff members push his fist into Beats' nose. This was the first blatantly physical assault on a youth by a staff member or officer I was to witness. I asked my coworker, another volunteer from the same program (and my housemate), about it and *he suggested both that he's gotten used to it and that he's seen worse. Apparently an officer hit a kid with a huge Maglite last year...* I was amazed that he could get used to it (although it was a sentiment I would later come to understand as I myself became desensitized to much of the violence), but I was more shocked at the act itself. It seemed to violate everything I thought I believed in. But as we talked more I found myself trying to justify the act, realizing that *this culture quietly promotes corporal punishment (and suggests most of the problems have come because it is no longer allowed). I also said, 'Well, these kids are serious criminals; maybe this is the only thing they will respond to.'* Fortunately I quickly noticed the stereotypes and prejudices contained in these thoughts. *But I've made unfair and biased assumptions about specific populations of people before without really knowing the truth, and I've been dead wrong. What makes me think I'm right this time? So yeah, I don't really know how to process things from here...* (9.1.2011).

I felt deeply troubled, both by the violence and by my own attempt to rationalize it, and my discomfort stayed with me. I still remember that event. I hoped that would be the end of my witnessing violence. Unfortunately, in my next 439 workdays, there would be more than fifty different occasions, of varying severity, where I would watch officers or staff members hit the boys. I hated it. I detested seeing anyone use his or her power in that way. But more than anger at the staff,

I felt nauseated by my own inaction, consumed with self-loathing at my own silent justification of violence. A boy called an officer a liar – thud (even though the officer had been lying). Another youth “disrespected” an officer’s demands – slap (even though the officer had demanded the boy go to the lock down for an offense he didn’t commit). Hands, belts, ropes, boots, sticks, books. Usually the boys took it silently, unwilling to give the officers the satisfaction of a response, or plea or cry of pain. Sometimes they *couldn’t hold back the yelp* and a wail would echo out (2.7.2012).

And I would stand there, unable to bring myself to challenge this officer in front of the boys and yet afraid of what might happen if I left. I saw my refusing to leave as my small act of support, hoping my presence would minimize the punishment. And yet, simultaneously, I found myself unsure of how to act so as not to be viewed as simply another privileged American telling others I had the truth and they were wrong. I couldn’t find a way to balance my value of nonviolence with the realities of being a foreigner, especially when I saw so many white American Christians coming down with arrogant and damaging cultural blinders on. It didn’t take long for my conviction in identity and values to lose their clarity. I was confused and angry, expecting to combust at the friction I felt in my being or vomit from the disgust I felt in my gut. I never did either.

But the violence I witnessed was not just from officers and staff toward the boys. Although it made me less internally conflicted (because of the difference in power dynamics and responsibility), there was also inter-youth violence, which occurred far more frequently and was, I believe, an inevitability of frustrated youth. Fortunately, the usual methods of violence – punches, kicks, broomsticks and fan shafts – often proved relatively harmless. Sometimes we confiscated boras (sharpened toothbrushes or random metal shrapnel) and even real knives, the first being in surprisingly easy supply. Usually, though, the boys kept these only for protection, not

to attack one another. The first day I was there a boy, Slick, had been jumped by youth from a rival gang the night before and *the punches broke his jaw* (8.24.2011). Sometimes two boys would jump one; other times, as the staff explained to me, rival gangs would put a hit out for one of our boys and other boys would attempt to take it up. The most serious incident happened in my first year, when *West stabbed Ben with a toothbrush bora [shiv] five times in the head, neck and shoulders* (4.12.2012). Fortunately, this incident was not fatal. Then, as we were putting West in the lockdown we discovered *a partially sharpened spoon on Simon* who was also in the lockdown, planning to get revenge for Ben.

It seemed like every week there were more fights to break up or talk out and more potential weapons to confiscate. What became very clear early on was that violence was the only means of addressing conflicts that the boys had learned, or had reinforced. It must be difficult to consider alternatives to violence when violence surrounds your life. Some considered other means of problem-solving, but they must have proved futile frequently enough, doing nothing to minimize the fear they felt for their well-being, because they would eventually return to violence. I remember a conversation I had with one of the boys one day. *“Let’s say I choose to ‘rehabilitate’ myself,” Thomas said. “I dropped out of Standard 3 (5<sup>th</sup> grade), my family doesn’t have the money to move from our neighborhood, there are no jobs, no one wants to hire a 14 year old who’s been in prison, my gang is the only group that will protect me because other gangs want to get back for some of the things I have done. What do I get if I ‘rehabilitate’ myself?”* (10.2.2012). I recognized then the immensity of what these boys face.

Knowing the presence of inter-youth violence (with and without weapons) and knowing the stereotypes that exist in relation to prisons and inmates, it would be easy to generalize as to the “dangers” of working with incarcerated individuals. That generalization is used far too frequently and often applied without any real knowledge of dynamics in prison.

However, it would be equally inappropriate not to acknowledge that the weapons discovered and the incidents that occur have and continue to put the officers at risk of harm. In my first week, *a nearly 10-inch knife was found in WYF* (8.25.2011). Months later, while breaking up a fight, one of our officers was punched in the mouth and *had to get stitches* (1.31.2013). Staff members also shared with me stories from previous years *about how WYF used to be – jumped guards, escaped prisoners– 120 youth housed at WYF. One officer was almost beaten to death one time* (9.22.2011), and that was just in the youth facility. One of our officers, GII Smith, witnessed a murder when he was stationed in the adult facility. The perpetrating inmate told GII Smith that if he testified he would be killed. The history of that threat being real created enough fear that he chose not to testify. Some of our boys admitted to the staff that *our 80 youth are responsible for roughly 100 murders* (10.5.2012). While I don't completely believe that large of a number, I don't doubt that the number is high, and we've seen enough pictures from court disclosures to know *some of the gruesome acts committed by our youth* (1.4.2013). With the knowledge of these past actions and the responsibility to confiscate weapons and break up altercations, it is easy to understand the fear that gets created in officers' minds. Many officers always fear for their safety and well-being, and I imagine the fear created in these situations can motivate some officers and staff to convey a dominance they believe they need to have. Thus, violence occurs.

Belize is also an incredibly small country in terms of geography (a little smaller than Massachusetts) and population (324,000). Relatives from all over the country constantly run into each other and families are so interconnected that some of the boys I worked with had dated cousins and never knew until later. This close proximity means the actions of some of our boys have had a direct impact on our staff, adding to their frustration and anger. The brother of one of our officers was caught in a grenade blast that was

supposedly thrown by one of our boys, Devon. While this youth was far too protected by gang ties to permit any retaliation, I have to believe that incident affected the officer's daily experience, making it more likely that his frustration would manifest in violence against other youth. Also, a coworker of mine got very close to one of the youth and his twin brother, Michael and Keron, while the two of them were in our facility. Days after Michael was released he was killed by a rival gang member, and *the person believed to have done the killing* [John] *was then brought into our facility* where my coworker had to teach him (9.1.2011). John, so young that he still had all his baby teeth, also admitted to staff that he had killed four individuals, although he was brought in for fourteen counts of attempted murder. My coworker never let those factors influence his actions, but I can imagine that sort of reality can wear on an officer.

As I mentioned, I saw power as a huge factor behind the use of violence. And there were three power dynamics I identified during my time at WYF. The first was between the administration of the prison and the staff. Employees all over the prison were constantly telling me the myriad of ways they felt abused by the power of the management, a sentiment that reflected the reality for many workers in Belize: 12 hour shifts plus one to two hour commutes, 7-day rotational shifts (i.e., limited time with family), low wages and unpaid mandatory overtime. Much of this is an inevitability of Belize's struggle toward capitalistic development; it is a developing nation after all. But when workers shared about questionable firing practices and a legislated ban on unionizing, I recognized that connected to individual practices of the institution. And while I really only had access to one side of the conversation, I trust these individuals to be able to articulate their experiences, trends they recognized and how they felt treated by their employers. Every time these officers and staff felt power being exerted over them, a reality to which they had few alternatives, recognizing the high unemployment and

similar challenges in other industries, I can imagine they became more likely to flex the power they still had left. In situations where they could push their weight around without much fear of accountability, even though it often felt so hypocritical to me, some did. Again though, many did not.

The second power dynamic I witnessed, between employees and inmates, manifested itself in many ways other than the wanton use of violence mentioned earlier. If the staff (hired or volunteer) wanted something done – an errand run, a spill cleaned up, coffee made – they would “ask” a boy to do it. They would ask the boys for some of the food their parents brought; they would ask for vegetables from the garden that the boys had grown; they would use a boy’s mp3 player but then not allow him to use it. Oftentimes staff members, including myself (which is why I feel confident saying this) would tell a boy to do something just to be sure the power dynamics were clear to the youth or even just because we knew we had power that could be exerted. One time there was a Tom’s shoe drop<sup>30</sup> for the boys. A few weeks earlier the United Nation’s Development Programs (UNDP) organization came to the prison and gave basketball shoes to our youth, but because some of the boys had sold the shoes they received (which were sold to one officer who told the boys to lie if the prison asked where the shoes went) they were *forced to turn over the Tom’s shoes*, never to receive them back. *The officers, however, kept the shoes they received* (6.21.2012). These instances and uses of power, more frequent than the physical acts of violence, nevertheless reflected a similar mentality. As Shane Clayborn said about those with authority, “It is not that they were inherently evil. People just aren’t meant to have that much power. It tempts us beyond what we can bear.”<sup>31</sup>

I also recognized the power dynamics among the youth, between more senior youth inmates and younger boys, and even between the youth and animals. I feel that it is only worth noting for this reflection but ultimately played little to no role in the use of violence by staff, other than as justification for violence by staff.



As I thought about it more, I began to see that the use of violence reflected some things that were far simpler than the confusing reality of power. First was the lack of training our officers received. I was told that, in years prior to my working there, the prison *sent officers to the University of Belize for youth development classes so that our officers who worked with kids could be trained* (4.9.2013). It had not happened for years. In fact, most current staff began work without any formal training at all. Sometimes we even received officers who had been hired the day before and then sent to our facility. When they finally did have training there were no sessions dedicated to anything that would really assist in handling power, de-escalating situations nonviolently, conflict resolution, discipline, rights of inmates, responsibilities of employees to inmates or anything of that sort. It wasn't until *our facility coordinated and requested our own officers' training* that we were able to touch on some of these: rights of incarcerated juveniles, ethics and values, inmate rehabilitation and intake, and dealing with youth from a developmental perspective (6.5.2013 and 6.13.2013). However, due to the irregular shifts, the prison management did not follow through on their promise to coordinate the schedule of officers to make sure everyone got trained. So, with a lack of better ideas or training, I was not surprised that staff resorted to more simplistic modes of problem solving. Our juveniles frequently mirrored a similar unwillingness to find and use alternative paths to violence.

Part of the reason why the prison stopped the practice of sending officers to get some level of training on how to handle youth, and why our facility stopped following through with the training, was because of the frequent transferring out of more senior and mature officers for younger, less developed officers. The Chiefs of Security that came through WYF in my time there constantly complained that *when an officer finally learns how to do his job well, the prison transfers him to the adult facility* (5.30.2012), despite the repeated admission by the Chief of the Prison that *the youth facility was one of the hardest*

*places to work* (1.12.2012). Maybe officers were transferred because more serious violence seemed to take place in the adult facility, but officers played a significant role in the rehabilitation program of our youth and so their transfers had a larger impact on the potential success of our efforts. New officers who had received no training would then replace those officers. This made us lose officers with much-needed experience and made our training sessions useless. In addition to these things, it was also frequently the case that the officers we received were only a couple of years older than our boys. I found that, for some, their lack of maturity, general development and life experiences made it more likely that their responses would be more emotional, severe and power-based. Again, this was not always the case but common enough to make it worth noting.

As important as these factors were, it would be inappropriate not to emphasize (and even prioritize) the real challenge of understaffing. At the height of my time at WYF, we had over 80 youth. At the best of times, we were given one Chief of Security (COS), two low-ranking officers (Basic Grade, Grade I, Grade II or Grade III, depending on the promotions received), one civilian Director and one or two volunteers. At the worst of times, we would have one officer stationed at our location in addition to myself – *No Flowers today, Waight is on a month vacation, BG [Basic Grade] Darius was mad they sent no other help, so he locked the boys down most of the day* (11.22.2011). Sometimes I would serve as an officer to assist the one left to keep control of 40 to 80 youth.

In order to handle the challenges and conflicts that arose in the healthiest way possible, we needed the ability to go into the office to talk with the youth about incidents that occurred. But when staff members are simultaneously trying to watch over the other youth and run a rehabilitation program or when officers are simultaneously trying to maintain security and address a conflict that has arisen, there just aren't the bodies needed to do these things. So, when a

fight breaks out and an officer has no backup, I can imagine the use of violence seems to offer the best promise of quelling the behavior of the misbehaving youth in the short term, instilling fear in the other youth, and allowing the officer to get back to his post.

A shortage of officers added unquantifiable stress to officers present, but there were also few rehabilitation staff at our facility or even in the prison as a whole. While the officers were responsible for keeping order, the rehab staff was needed to provide thoughtful intervention and counseling as well as targeted services and classes to assist the development of the youth's behavior. I was told that at the beginning of the Kolbe Foundation, the prison hired an equal number of officers and rehabilitation staff. During my time there, the prison consistently had about 300 hired officers, but only eight "rehabilitation" staff: four program directors, two counselors, one principal and one chaplain for around 1450 inmates. There was simply not enough staff (trained or untrained) to assist in the work. I imagine that the prison removed the additional rehabilitation staff for any number of reasons (problems with funding, security or productivity/effectiveness), but without them present there was never any way to manage the challenges and conflicts that arose in the most effective ways possible.

While the prison didn't commit to extra rehabilitation staff, they did make two attempts to try and increase the training of WYF employees by sending staff to workshops held by outside organizations. The first training was attended by the Chief of Security for WYF and was offered by the Friends of Belize (Quakers), specifically on *how to use nonviolence to address conflicts and instances requiring discipline* (10.17-24.2011). GII Waight returned from the training excited, feeling that he had learned many new techniques, but I never saw that information brought back into the facility for future trainings in any meaningful way. While I know that officers would still resort to violence in later incidents, and sometimes in a serious

or disproportionate way, it is possible that his training cut back on the frequency of staff violence. But maybe it didn't. Either way, that information was never passed on and he was transferred shortly after, thus making the information inaccessible for other staff.

The prison also made it a priority to send *three WYF officers to a two-day training on Human Rights and Juvenile Justice*. My boss asked me to attend and *compile a report of my findings*, so I joined (11.23-24.2011). We sat with social workers and law enforcement officers as we all discussed the three UN documents relevant to the international standards set for dealing with incarcerated juveniles: the UDHR, the CRC and the JDL. We did not cover what the Belizean laws specifically required, but I saw that there were many standards that Belize had signed on to but was not honoring. Without teeth to demand accountability, Belize was able to espouse certain values without dedicating resources to bringing them to fruition, a position shared by many countries. I finished my report and felt glad that I might be able to utilize my privilege in a way that brought critique and accountability to the prison. When I informed my boss, *Flowers, Jon and I talked about how effective it would be to give ... out* (12.14.2011). I desired deeply to give it, both to feel like I was finally being an ally to these youth but also because I felt it thoughtfully pointed out the areas where the prison had made great progress and the areas left for growth. At the suggestion of my boss, however, I ultimately chose not to submit my report to the prison. In an attempt to feel I was honoring my perceived responsibility, I would try and *incorporate it into some of the classes* I would later teach (1.17.2013), but never was able to do it justice, particularly as my responsibilities changed from teaching to program coordinating. I always promised I would share the information with the youth later. I never did. And so, my findings, my suggestions and the knowledge gained at the workshop never came to anything productive.

Up to this point, I had remained relatively silent as to my serious discomfort and disagreement with the violence that continued in our facility, although my inaction ate away at my conscience with each passing act. I acknowledged the limitations of my cultural lens, having very little comparable experiences to the Belizeans I worked with. One of my friends said it well when he admitted that *here our identities don't comfort us – we are not able to be at peace with ourselves...* I recollected conversations back in the U.S. where individuals would critique the ways other communities lived, where cultural differences were often deemed deficiencies and where one way of thinking was the Truth while others were determined to simply have it wrong. I desired to engage this new world with as little judgment as possible and thought that would best be accomplished by listening before speaking. Finally, though, one day I reached a place where I felt compelled to share my thoughts with my coworkers rather than continuing to accept my rationalization that I would speak up later. I reflected, *...can there be a best way to exist here? Can we avoid negative impacts? Even though we can hold doubts in one hand and faith in the other, we ultimately have to make a choice. This is real life too, not just where we go after this, and we can't let our perceived future actions justify our inaction here...* (8.7.2012). As Marvin Gaye sang, "Since we've got to be here, let's live."

As a spiritual person, one of the realities that most frustrated me was the use of religion to justify the violence. Most mornings, the Chief of Security (COS) would lead an hour-long Christian devotion with the youth. Many of these officers, coincidentally, had experience as ministers and preachers. Perhaps because of the perception of the responsibility of their positions, many of our Chief of Security officers were also the greatest perpetuators of violence. They never acknowledged that there was a contradiction between the violence used and (what I perceive to be) the deepest message of Christian scripture. We reflected some of the diverse interpretations of scripture that exist. That being said,

I found it particularly hypocritical that many of them referred to Islam, the faith of my boss, as a “violent” religion, the way many Christians in the U.S. do as well. The first officer felt that *the spiritual realm is the most important, and we all [those who question violence] focus too much on the physical spheres.* For this COS, his belief *justified a little violence if it meant getting someone’s spirit on track* (12.16.2011). There were situations where a boy would enter into hysteria, seemingly falling out-of-touch with the world around him, and an officer’s physicality would shake him back into control. I don’t know how to make sense of this, but it was the exception to the normal use of violence. For another officer, *he mentioned that sometimes he needs to do these things [violence] even though they seem counter to God but he has permission, as do soldiers, because, “Blessed are the peacemakers...”*<sup>32</sup> *To him, anyone whose work is to help build peace can use violence* (7.17.2012). He constantly assured me that his appointment was divine.<sup>33</sup> Understanding their logic, or at least their justifications, although I found them incredibly frustrating, proved important to feeling comfortable questioning their actions further.

This led me to engage in conversation about the hypocrisy I identified with the staff’s use of violence. First, it pulled at my sense of fairness that the staff’s use of violence was deemed perpetually justified (simply because of their perceived authority) while the use of violence by the youth was condemned and punishable. There was never any consideration as to whether the officer’s violence was necessary or right. (I recognize that this logic has far-reaching implications as one considers the authority of those in power in our own society, but I own the implications of that.) Second, I found myself confused by the mindset that we were trying to teach the youth that there are better ways to solve problems, more “mature” ways, than to use violence, and yet we use violence to instill that message. It was the same hypocrisy I identified with the country’s installation of a Gang Suppression Unit (GSU) with complete immunity, authorized to use

violence to address the gang violence problems, and the prison's installment of the Quick Response Team (QRT), which had similar immunity to use force whenever they desired. The fact that we could not find the same alternatives when problems arose for us in handling the youth flabbergasted me. Likewise, the youth in our facility identified this hypocrisy and it lessened their commitment to our programs and their desire to behave as we wanted. Their intelligence and rationality seemed logical to me.

Besides the problems I had with the hypocrisy of our justification of violence, I also found myself opposed to the short-term nature of the solution. I found that the staff violence only served as a Band-Aid to our problems; it refused to get to the roots (the only place from which a problem can be eradicated). I recognized that violence worked in the short-term to stop a behavior, but that ultimately these actions were not creating long-term solutions. I saw my responsibility there to try and provide the best long-term education and training so the boys could live better. One staff member brought up an interesting challenge to that when he reminded me that *we don't have the luxury of time* (8.29.2011), that many of our boys will not live to see twenty five, given the reality of gang violence and retaliation. He was right, *the reality my job is built around does not slow down, does not wait for people and, since it is made of angry, helpless, hopeless youth, it is not quick to forgive (if it can forgive at all)*. And yet, no matter how immediate the needs are for many of these youth, I believed we could do better for them without simply trying to give ourselves easy, short-term "solutions."

I almost would have felt better about the violence if the perpetrating officer had at least owned up to his violence publicly. But frequently there was an unwillingness to consider one's own culpability even when addressing the "misbehavior" of others. We had an occasion where the mother of one of our boys coincidentally came the day after our Chief Officer had hit the boy. Smith *promised the mother he would take care of*

*her son* (9.18.2012) but took no ownership of the assault he had made the day before. On other occasions, my boss would ask me to write a report about an officer's violence for the management of the prison when he was a perpetrator of violence himself. Still other times, our COS would get upset when a BG officer's actions resulted in an angry parent contacting prison management thus bringing heat down on the COS, as if the phone call could not have been about his own violence (9.18.2012).

I did not discuss many of these last issues with the violent officers, which I identify as part of the fear I felt in calling out an officer I had to work with everyday. And thus I can admit to my own hypocrisy. But my hypocrisy goes deeper than not sharing all my thoughts with staff. I remember the first time that I got physical with a boy. Only three months into my program, I was sitting with Charlie at a lunch table listening to him talk of being bullied. Of all the youth in our facility, Charlie was clearly the most bullied. He struggled to find a group that accepted him. As we were talking, one of the other boys, Ziekel, began antagonizing Charlie. He would prance around the table and each time he would pass Charlie he would hit him or jab him in his side, while saying anything he could to upset him. I warned Ziekel. I threatened Ziekel to leave us alone (a form of violence in itself). Then, *as he made one last move toward Charlie, I turned on him and thrust my arms into his shoulders. He flew back and hit the wall behind the table. Ziekel stood up laughing and walked away* (11.10.2011). I haven't forgotten that event. In another instance, we had a youth (Peppy) suffering the serious cognitive and emotional effects of major drug withdrawal, and one day in class he started to cry. One of our other most bullied boys (Jimmy), suffering from his own cognitive issues, began to laugh in the kid's face. *I got furious, took Jimmy outside, grabbed him by the collar and began yelling and cursing in his face* (5.15.2013). These instances sit with me, especially as I reflect on the anger I felt at the officers' violence. I am guilty as well, and I don't know how to reconcile those things. Yet, I still oppose this violence.



As a civilian and a volunteer, I felt an extra weight on my shoulders to protect these boys. But I recognized that my failure mirrored a similar failure of other non-officers charged with making sure the well-being of these boys was looked after. The Ombudsman, in charge of human rights in Belize, *came to speak to the youth for a few minutes but never took the time to educate them on their rights, how to proceed when they felt their rights were violated or even to interview some of the boys to get an idea of the facility's standards (1.22.2013)*. At the workshop I had gone to on juvenile justice, the social workers present were, fairly enough, very critical of the Kolbe Foundation. The prison officers with me admitted how much further the prison had to go, at least in terms of these international standards. However, on later occasions I saw some of those very critical social workers witness acts of violence in the prison and do nothing about it, despite their responsibility to report such things.

Although it was hard for me to watch others (including myself) who were supposed to look after the interests of the boys failing to live up to our responsibilities, it was equally frustrating when the youth had opportunities to bring justice but chose not to. We frequently had youth come into the prison with bruises and bloodshot eyes from having been abused by police. I remember asking my boss what we were supposed to do about it and he *said reporting it would either be useless or only make things worse (10.22.2012)*. However, one day *I accompanied Steve to an interview with two police – from Internal Affairs investigating a report – of police abuse. Steve's mother had reported her son had been hit and shocked with a battery. His mom apparently took photos on her phone camera and complained but it wasn't until a letter from the Ombudsman that anything happened*. I sat through the interview, as a friend and witness, given that Steve was only 17. We talked about the options he had, if he wanted to file a report or not, and while I desperately wanted him to file a report, I wanted to make the decision completely up to him. *He ultimately decided he did not want to make a statement about the event and we came back to the Youth Facility (2.18.2013)*.

He shared his fear about reporting it, knowing the officers would likely come for him when he got bail, but also his distrust that anything would come of it. It made more sense to him not to follow up the report his mother filed. Clearly the reality behind the decision to report abuses was riddled with challenges, but it was still frustrating to see the first chance for accountability of officer violence go away as quickly as it had come. But, truth be told, we should never have had to rely on someone externally or the boys internally to bring about accountability and thus a change in how things were done.

There were two decisions that were made internally which significantly reduced the violence that took place. The first was the decision by staff and prison management to bring in adult inmates, some to live in our facility as prefects (Harry and David) and others to serve as models (Gregory). Their role was to assist in the work being done (due to the understaffing we had) but the effect of their presence was categorically larger. The youth could complain about tensions in the camp to these men and these men would help solve the problems without involving the officers. When the officers considered resorting to violence, the presence of adult inmates to watch and take note minimized the likelihood of their violence. We viewed these individuals as middlemen and encouraged them to report to us things that they saw and we would decide how to respond to those allegations. As mentioned, these men also served as models. They all had been through many of the same experiences as our youth – some were even viewed as “Generals” in the gang world – and they had grown and matured in prison and thus were able to share their insights. They were not saints and they had no formal training, but through their experiences they had found the balance between appreciating the complexity of their worlds and desiring to be their best. And these men really did look out for everyone equally, at least when it came to making sure no one was abused. Sure, these men had things to gain from being placed here – extra freedoms and privileges,

among other things – and sometimes they resorted to forms of violence themselves. But what they brought was transformative. While violence didn't completely stop, it altered it dramatically.

The second decision, which was not done intentionally to address the violence, was to change the Chiefs of Security for our facility. After some relatively violent Chiefs of Security, management appointed GIII Martinez to serve as both Director and COS. This was the first time we had completely new staff in WYF leadership, and that minimized obstacles to a change in camp culture. His appointment made clear to me the power and significance of the role of a leader in our facility. After our discussions about my perceptions at WYF, he made the decision to no longer tolerate physical violence from staff except in the most necessary of cases. This simple commitment transformed the facility overnight because those below him took their cue from the demands of their boss. Violence nearly disappeared from the youth facility, at least violence from officers and staff. There was a slight rise in inter-youth violence after this decision, something that still needs to be addressed, but a preferable problem, knowing it was all minor violence. Having a boss take a stand like this was crucial. Unsurprisingly, people in charge can have an incredible impact when they choose to prioritize making a difference.

Even more than just his role as a boss, I recognize it was also the power of having an ally and supporter. Now, I was not alone in my vocalized desire for nonviolence. Having two voices rather than one was significant, just as I had found having another volunteer witness the violence with me made it easier than when I had to witness the violence all by myself. Even if my response was always inaction, it removed some of the burden from my shoulders, I no longer felt that everything rested on me.

Now, with a higher level of commitment to nonviolence, it was up to us to determine what the alternatives would be. I'll save the suspense – we never figured out the best nonviolent

way to discipline our youth. But as I reflect back on my two years at WYF, some anecdotes come to mind that provide insight into this incredibly challenging question. One of the priorities of my work was to form real relationships with the boys. The more I got to know them, really know them, the more their facades fell away. I saw them for who and what they are. They are good kids, victims and perpetrators of a broken world. I also saw that I was really no different from them, merely the beneficiary of being born into a different reality. These relationships deepened my concern for them, even though my actions toward them didn't always reflect this knowledge. Forming relationships also changed how the boys acted and listened to me. These relationships built trust and respect, which minimized the instances where boys would act out, thus removing our need to use discipline. We could engage each other maturely.

Finding creative ways to get our thoughts and opinions across also worked well. I remember Flowers, my original boss, bringing ten youth into our office the day after they were locked down for fighting. *He sat them on the floor and played "Zombie" by the Cranberries. We talked about the history of this song, about the IRA killings in Northern Ireland that plagued the seventies, eighties and nineties. We shared how this violence tore apart a country and how, like today in Belize, everyone was losing from this senseless killing. We encouraged the boys to share their experiences with this same reality. It was powerful (2.16.2012).* He also called our whole facility together for a "family meeting" *after a series of problems over the weekend – people aired their grievances and people were able to share their frustrations and call things out in front of others (11.5.2012).* After this, we talked about what was shared and tried to work issues out.

Sometimes, though, issues had to be solved on a smaller level. Staff tried removing privileges when boys misbehaved. We also tried rewarding people for good behavior, recognizing that reinforcing good behavior was a more positive action than punishing bad behavior. Offering incentives also worked.

The boys knew there was the possibility of a secret trip if they behaved well. So they did. When they finally went to Altun Ha, the Maya ruin, they were perfect, showing us that *with the right encouragement and rewards they can be as well behaved as we desire them to be* (3.21.2012). When some of our boys showed female inmates an offensive picture, *I had them write apology notes to the girls* (3.12.2013). This forced them to process their actions, try to understand the women's perspectives and then apologize. One time, when a boy misbehaved in my coworker's class, he gave him the job of copying ten words and their definitions from the dictionary, both as punishment but also to try and help increase the kid's vocabulary. I even tried researching *alternative (nonviolent) punishment and discipline for the officers and staff because I didn't see the violent responses having any change in behaviors* (1.28.2013) but unfortunately I couldn't find any resources for that online. So, as a small step forward, we brought the UNDP and Belize social workers in to do a presentation on inmate's rights to the boys and officers present. These small actions were positive and reflected some potential for a better way to run our facility.

And so, as things began to click, my two years ended. I found myself leaving Belize gratefully full from the experiences that filled those two years but also with more questions than I had entered with. First and foremost, I felt unsure about how best to manage the confusing terrain between cultural differences. I remember a quote I once read, "We must reject the temptation for power, security and easy answers." Usually, for those of us who get to live in the sheltered world of privilege and power, the easy answer is to assume that we have all the right answers and others are backwards, naive or just plain wrong. But there is so much my limited experiences and perspective have not afforded me the opportunity to know, and Belize was an important step in gaining new depths and knowledge. The world becomes a little bit bigger when we really begin to see and cherish other perspectives. As Thich Nhat Hahn said, "When you understand the situation of the other person, when you understand the

nature of suffering, anger will vanish because it is transformed into compassion.”

I also left with greater doubt about how best to find a balance between my ivory tower ideals and “practicality.” I saw in Belize how slow change can be, and I began to see how sometimes the desire to be effective can lead us away from perfectionist standards. I made friends in Nicaragua who work with an after school program for 40 young kids. *It kills me that there are children who don't get to benefit from our services, the Director told me. But if we want to provide the best programs we can, we have to be mindful of our limitations. We have to hope and pray that the other kids will get support from others* (4.9.2012). So I was forced to admit the reality of my own limitations.

And yet eventually I had to face an important truth, *There is a lot to be overwhelmed by here, but if that is where we are going to stop then we shouldn't bother starting* (8.7.2012). Despite my doubt in maneuvering cultural differences and my struggle to reconcile my abstract ideals with reality, I came to recognize the importance of standing for things. One of my journals carried this reflection: *Discerning is good beforehand and processing is good after but sometimes there is a moment just for immediate action* (6.3.2012). And so the challenge is to hold both my beliefs and my doubts as I act. Equally as important, though, is to refuse to be so consumed by the desire for “effectiveness” that I lose the call for faithfulness. While remaining cautious to declare absolute truths, I must not be paralyzed from standing for what I hold to be true. For me, for now, I choose to err on the side of the love and nonviolence that permeates Christian scripture and other sacred texts.

Maybe there is a time and a space where violence is the only answer. I don't believe I have witnessed a time when that was the case, not in the prison and not in my life, but I won't remove the possibility. But using violence to solve a problem puts something deeply negative into the world, and using violence to solve a problem society played a part in creating violates my perception of justice. Yes, the youth bear a burden

of responsibility for their actions. But when I look at the myriad of ways these youth were set up to fail (socially, economically, academically, and more), I cannot put all the onus on their shoulders. As WYF's substance addiction classes always stated, "Honesty is the foundation of recovery." It is time for us to be honest about so many things.

I believe it is time to be honest about the use of violence in prison. The use of power-based violence diminishes everyone. We are smarter, more creative and more developed than this. I believe that nonviolence is a noble pursuit and a worthwhile investment, and must be given an honest chance. As Gregory, one of our inmate facilitators said, "These boys are trees that can still bend," and it is up to us to ensure we do everything in our power to facilitate that reorientation without breaking them down further. I believe, too, that the boys will respond to nonviolence. As one of our volunteer coaches so aptly expressed, the boys are good at *matching respect for respect* (4.19.2012). I also believe that an examination of my two years in Belize provides excellent ideas on how to start creating a space that is most suited to nonviolence in a prison. Even if other institutions still choose to relate to these youth with violence, our decision to pursue different methods would positively impact the lives and behaviors of our boys, and I believe that is our job.

If the Kolbe Foundation wanted nonviolence to be a reality in this prison, first and foremost it would need to look at the nature of the relationships of all parties: the prison, the staff and the youth. Improving the health of the relationship between the prison and the staff would create a model power-dynamic for the officers to emulate. It would also minimize the frustration staff felt toward those holding power above them, making it less likely that they would abuse their own power. Then, if the staff took the time to build healthy relationships with each other and with the youth, this would minimize the risk of the boys being seen as stereotypes undeserving of our best. By understanding and caring for

these youth, the option to use violence would be less attractive. And if someone took time to research why officers use violence, or what the history and frequency of the boys' exposure to violence has been, we would be better informed and more effective in our application of punishment. We could get a lot of honest information that would assist us in deciding the best way of administering discipline.

In addition to adjusting the nature of the power relationships, improvements could also come by investing time, money and energy into the staff at Wagner's. By increasing the training, maturity and number of officers, as well as that of rehabilitation staff, one would create a space where problems could be addressed in more healthy ways and where youth could be attended to in a way that will mitigate future incidents. Opening dialogue between staff members to share training resources, address hypocrisy and accountability, foster sentiments of a healthy team and research alternatives to violent discipline would create a collective mentality that provides support. Often, I believe, it was the individualistic mindset that fostered the fear that led to violence. Bringing in leaders, both incarcerated adults and professional employees, who value nonviolence – or at least integrity, respect and fairness – would add to that support as well as set the tone for new staff on what was expected of the team. We are all capable of being better when we have the support of allies.

But in the case where an institution falls victim to the temptation not to respect the rights of these youth, there need to be outside organizations that exist to receive and investigate complaints, perform unannounced inspections and interviews and have the authority to hold those institutions accountable. That being said, there also needs to be flexibility to leave space for our humanness. When I chose to respond physically and verbally to the bullying of some of the inmates, I fell victim to the frustrations of not having a better solution. I believe by being in a system that has a level of mercy, while also holding



its members accountable for their actions, we actually make people less fearful and more compassionate. When we are shown grace, we are more likely to show it to others.

We can be creative people. The young men I worked with showed that frequently. I remember when *the boys got so frustrated that the basketball would bounce into the garden and break the stems of their squash, tomato and sweet pepper plants*. They were able to convince the prison to donate old rusting fence pieces, which they ingeniously connected and anchored in one day (11.14.2011). We should start directing that imaginative power toward things that really improve our prisons and the futures of our youth rather than things that hurt or simply give the appearance of a solution. We can do better.

I was able to play sports with the boys almost every day. On one occasion, during a soccer match, rain started to pour down out of nowhere. It was so loud on the zinc rooftops that we pretended we couldn't hear the officers' whistles and voices calling us to the mandatory lockdown. All over the field people were slipping and sliding as they tried to run. People crashed into each other and to the ground. A deep laughter rose up from the mud, in a contagious crescendo. In that moment, those boys were not their pasts or their futures, not their gangs or rivalries and not the victims of societal neglect and contempt. They were just kids, having fun in the rain. That is what this life is about. I will never forget that moment, or those boys, although their lives continue on without me. I just hope that they can be seen as the incredible young men they are, created in love and capable of the very best, even if they sometimes fall short, like the rest of us.

## Motivation to Become a Nonviolent Person

SUBHASH C. JAIN

*We can be happy without being wealthy, as happiness and wealth are governed by different laws. Wealth is controlled by man-made laws and/or chance, while happiness is governed by the universal law of karma. Wealth is produced by the particular consequences of our deeds that depend on factors beyond our control, while happiness is created by the universal consequences of deeds that we can rein in by controlling our actions. The maximization of wealth requires violent deeds that increase the karmic load and decrease happiness. Living nonviolently decreases our karmic load which, in turn, promotes spiritual growth and increases happiness. The principle of voluntary limitation of wealth is the nonviolent way of promoting spiritual growth and greater happiness.*

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We all desire wealth and happiness, as most of us have neither. We identify happiness with wealth, because we equate

happiness itself with those means to happiness that we acquire via wealth. We have the misperception that our body, not our soul, is pertinent to happiness. Due to this false perception, we develop desires for worldly objects concerned with our body and remain ignorant of the qualities of the soul. Happiness has two facets: physical and spiritual. Physical happiness is transient in nature; hence, we can never attain long-lasting physical happiness. On the other hand, spiritual happiness is long-lasting in nature; consequently, we can achieve long-lasting spiritual happiness, termed bliss. The attainment of bliss is more vital than the achievement of momentary physical happiness. We acquire the means of physical happiness via wealth and, hence, momentary physical happiness, not bliss. We do not need wealth to attain bliss, as demonstrated by the lives of Mahavir and Buddha, the reviver of Jainism and the founder of Buddhism, respectively. Both of them were born into royal families, but they renounced wealth to achieve eternal bliss. But ordinary persons like us need not renounce wealth to be blissful; we definitely require limited wealth to meet the basic needs of food, clothes and shelter. We can be blissful without being wealthy, however, because the consequences of deeds that create wealth and deeds that create bliss are governed by different principles.

We perform deeds all the time; twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. All deeds have consequences, but all consequences are not governed by the same law. One type of consequences that depends only on deeds, termed invisible consequences, is universal and governed by universal laws. A second type of consequences that depends on deeds as well as other factors, termed visible consequences, is non-universal and governed by man-made laws and chance. Wealth is produced by the visible consequences of deeds that depend on factors that are beyond our control. We can control our deeds, but not the other factors that have power over the consequences of our deeds. Bliss is affected by the invisible consequences of deeds that we can rein in by controlling our deeds.

Nonviolent deeds give rise to bliss, but they are not compatible with deeds that maximize wealth. In general the augmentation of wealth beyond a limit entails violence. Our desire to maximize wealth is the root cause that creates tension in our life, which, in turn, leads to unhappiness. Nonviolence is a prerequisite for bliss. Only nonviolent persons achieve bliss. Wealthy persons are blissful as long as they are nonviolent.

Bliss, not the momentary physical happiness we experience with worldly objects, is a quality of the soul. As explained later, bliss is affected by the invisible consequences of our deeds, which, in turn are controlled by the intensity of *yoga-plus-moha*. The duration of bliss increases with the decreasing intensity of *yoga-plus-moha* that is mild in nonviolent deeds; consequently, a nonviolent person experiences bliss for a long period.

### **Nonviolent Person**

Nonviolence (*ahimsa*) is commonly understood as not killing other human beings, but such a perception of *ahimsa* is very rudimentary. Most of us do not kill human beings; it does not mean that we are nonviolent persons. On the contrary, most of us are violent, because we directly or indirectly (through others) hurt, harm, injure or kill, not only human beings, but other living beings also. We hurt others not by bodily injury alone but in many other ways, including verbal and mental abuse. We hurt others physically by beating, mutilating, wounding, and killing; verbally by speaking harsh and unpleasant words; and mentally by oppressing and harboring ill-feelings. We cause suffering to others by acquiring more than our fair share of limited natural resources. We harm others by lying, bearing false witness, using abrasive language, stealing their possessions, adulterating commodities, and so on. We hurt others by unchaste sexual activities. The practice of *ahimsa* requires that we should refrain from all these violent actions, including desires and motives connected with these actions. Our actions should be

governed by five types of abstinence: abstention from harming or killing living beings, false or hurtful speech, theft and illegal or immoral transactions, unchaste sexual acts, and craving and hoarding worldly possessions.

Renouncing violent actions obviously requires accepting nonviolent actions. Negating desires and motives to harm life implies reverence for life, which in turn needs to develop compassion and equanimity toward life. Nonviolence inculcates feelings of benevolence and harmony.

Abstaining from violent actions and being a nonviolent person are not the same thing. It is not sufficient that one should be a nonviolent person to abstain from violent actions. A violent person *can* abstain from violent actions, but a nonviolent person *cannot* carry out violent actions. One should be a nonviolent person rather than a violent person who avoids violent actions. But it is easier said than done to become a nonviolent person; it is difficult, though not impossible. However, we are not likely to pursue the lifestyle of a nonviolent person without a motivation that offers *something* more valuable in return. What could that *something* be? That *something* in return is related to non-material rewards defined in elusive terms as spiritual growth. The *karmic* load of a nonviolent person decreases with time, as explained below. The decrease in the *karmic* load generates spiritual growth, which manifests itself as bliss. In other words, a nonviolent person leads a blissful life.

Living as a nonviolent person requires learning to live with far greater inner resources, which grow with increasing spiritual growth. Spiritual awareness and transformation require a true religious faith that blossoms from the deeper center of the Self and embracing the spiritual principles associated with that religion. What we believe usually dictates our attitudes about people and events, which in turn generate our emotional responses toward them. Since we have practiced our attitudes and beliefs over a lifetime, we are very loyal to them. We must ensure that we have effective attitudes and beliefs that can lead us toward true happiness.

We need to find, each of us in our own way, a path leading to spiritual transformation and inner resource expansion. One such path is based on the doctrine of deeds. According to this doctrine we have to bear the consequences of our deeds. This doctrine has been expressed in different ways in different faiths, such as “you reap what you sow,” “every action has a reaction,” “what goes around, comes around,” “you bear the fruits of your *karma*,” and so on. All religions, including the western religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and the eastern religions of Jainism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism, preach this doctrine. This tenet in the eastern religions is known as the law of *karma*, which is the cardinal principle of Jainism and the basis for the motivation to become a nonviolent person.

### **The Law of *Karma***

We perform deeds all the time, and all deeds have consequences, but the law of *karma* does not govern all consequences of deeds. The law of *karma*, similar to the law of gravity, is a universal law, as it is valid everywhere and at all times. The relationship between a deed and its consequences also are universal. In other words, the law-of-*karma*-governed consequences of a deed depend only on the deed and no other factors such as the time and place of the deed.

There are, therefore, two types of consequences of deeds. The first type of consequences of deeds, termed invisible consequences, depends only on deeds; such consequences are universal and governed by the law of *karma*. The second type of consequences, termed visible consequences, depends not only on deeds, but also on other factors such as the time and place of the deed; these consequences are nonuniversal and governed by man-made laws and/or chance, not by the law of *karma*. We can rein in the invisible consequences by controlling our deeds, but not the visible consequences, as we have no control over the factors other than our deeds.

It is easy to recognize that wealth not only depends on our deeds, but also on factors other than our deeds. For

example, our earning as an employee not only depends on our deeds, it also depends on the time and place of the employment and the employer-made laws. We have no authority over the return of our labor; market forces over which we have no control determine it. Similarly, we buy a lottery ticket and win wealth as a reward. The buying of the lottery ticket is our deed; the reward, however, is the consequence of not only of our deed of buying the lottery ticket, but also a consequence that is governed by chance over which we have no control. We can acquire wealth by stealing, deceiving, or bribing others provided we are not caught committing such activities, which are not entirely in our control. In these, and similar other examples, our acquisition of wealth depends not only on our deeds but also on factors other than our deeds. Hence our acquisition of wealth is a visible consequence of our deeds and is not governed by the law of *karma*.

Wealth is amassed at the cost of others, which, in turn, entails violence. The entire labor force is engaged in production work for money. The maximization of wealth requires that the laborer should be paid the bare minimum, and it leads to exploitation through power and violence. Violence is unavoidable to achieve wealth beyond a limit.

### **Invisible Consequences of Deeds**

The invisible consequences of deeds cannot be identified with physical senses as they are carried by an extremely subtle matter called *karma*, which bears fruits, termed *karma phala*, in the future. *Karma phalas* are the invisible consequences of deeds and are born by the person who performed the deeds. In order to realize the nature of *karma phalas*, we need to understand the process of enduring them. When we say that we bear *karma phalas*, we mean that our soul and body experience *karma phalas*. The body, which is made of living matter, and the soul have qualities. The modes (*paryāyas*) of the qualities of the soul and living matter change constantly. *Karma phalas* affect the qualities of the soul and living matter

and modify the modes of their qualities. In other words, *karma phalas* manifest as changes in the modes of the qualities of the soul and living matter.

A soul has four qualities of perception, knowledge, spiritual energy (*vīrya*), and bliss/*moha*. All these qualities, including bliss, are affected by the invisible consequences of deeds, i.e., *karma phalas*. Bliss is, therefore, governed by the law of *karma*. As mentioned earlier, most of us have the false perception that our body, instead of our soul, is relevant to happiness. Due to this misperception, we develop desires for things that are concerned with the body and remain engrossed in attachment/aversion to worldly objects and gratification of physical senses. The quality of misperception-*cum*-attachment/aversion of the soul is termed *moha*. Although *moha* is considered antithetical to bliss, the two are not mutually opposite entities; they are two ends of the same continuum. Bliss and *moha* are the purified (*svabhāva*) and defiled (*vibhāva*) states of the same quality of the soul, respectively. The soul at any time can be either in the bliss state or the *moha* state. In other words, the duration of bliss depends on the duration of *moha*. The duration of bliss and *moha* depend on the *karmic* load, as explained in the ensuing section.

### ***Karmic Load***

We attach *karma* to our soul by the deeds that we perform all the time. A deed is defined as an intentional, voluntary activity carried out by the physical action of mind, speech, and body, termed *yoga*, and the spiritual action that includes misperception, attachment/aversion, motivations and desires, etc., termed *moha*. Hence a deed not only involves a physical action, but also a spiritual action. *Yoga* is the physical action and *moha* is the spiritual action. In short, a deed is an activity performed by *yoga-plus-moha*. The attached *karma* is considered as a load, termed *karmic* load that a soul carries with it. The influx of *karmic* load is the function of the intensity of *yoga-plus-moha*. The larger the intensity of *yoga-plus-moha*, the larger



the influx of the *karmic* load. In order to reduce our *karmic* load, we need to reduce the intensity of our *yoga-plus-moha*.

Our deeds have two aspects: external and internal. The external aspect is related to *yoga* and includes the activities of mind, speech, and body, which in turn are supported by the sensory system. The internal aspect deals with *moha* and includes misperception, attachment, desire, motivation, etc. The control of the internal aspect of deeds, i.e., *moha*, is more critical than that of the external aspect of deeds, i.e., *yoga*. *Controlling moha automatically controls yoga*. While we may control *yoga* without controlling *moha*, we do not become a nonviolent person by controlling *yoga* alone.

The intensity of *yoga* is reduced by controlling the physical action of mind, speech, and body, as would be the case during meditation. The intensity of *yoga* in the nonviolent actions mentioned above is mild. We should commit our entire energy and capabilities to conduct nonviolent actions that deal with the external aspect of our deeds. But we do not become a nonviolent person just by abnegating violent actions. The intensity of *moha*, which deals with the internal aspect of our deeds, also should be mild in performing nonviolent actions in order to become a nonviolent person. The powerful forces of sensual attraction, desire, and delusion constantly drag the soul toward objects of sensual pleasures and lead to attachment toward physical objects. We should not be governed by our lusts and desires. Hence, we should concentrate on getting rid of the misperception that the body, instead of the soul, is pertinent to bliss. The misperception is overcome by living the spiritual life of a nonviolent person. The intensity of *moha* is controlled by repeated practices of self-discipline which include: confession and repentance of past misdeeds; resolution to renounce unrighteous conduct and the feeling of attachment to worldly possessions; and expiation through introspection, self-analysis, contemplation, and meditation.

The intensity of *yoga* and *moha* is mild in nonviolent deeds; consequently, the *karmic* load decreases in nonviolent deeds.

On the other hand, the intensity of *yoga* and *moha* is strong in violent deeds that increase the *karmic* load.

### **Spiritual Growth**

The law of *karma* includes several universal rules. One such rule, called the “Rule of Growth,” controls our spiritual growth. According to this rule we achieve spiritual growth as we reduce the *karmic* load that our soul carries with it. Spiritual growth manifests in the increasing potential of the qualities of the soul, which, in turn, leads to the destruction of the misperception that the body, not the soul, is pertinent to happiness, the realization of the relevance of the soul to bliss and the longer duration of bliss. The person with spiritual growth does not experience any dearth of worldly objects and always remains happy. We need to reduce our *karmic* load in order to increase the duration of bliss. The lighter the *karmic* load, the longer the duration of bliss, as would be the case in nonviolent deeds.

As long as we carry the misperception that the body, instead of the soul, is pertinent to long-term happiness, we keep on maximizing wealth for experiencing momentary episodes of physical happiness. The earlier we realize that the soul, not the body, is relevant to bliss, the sooner we stop running after wealth and begin performing nonviolent deeds for promoting spiritual growth and increasing the duration of bliss. As a result of this true perception, our attitude toward life and outlook toward worldly objects turns out to be completely different.

We have to choose between two intentions; one, the maximization of wealth for experiencing episodes of physical happiness, and the other, the maximization of the duration of bliss. The goal of maximizing wealth is achieved by violent deeds that increase the *karmic* load and decrease the duration of bliss. The *karmic* load of a person who performs on average more violent deeds than nonviolent deeds increase with time; consequently, the duration of bliss decreases with time. Such

a person becomes increasingly less happy in life. On the contrary, the goal of maximizing the duration of bliss is achieved by nonviolent deeds. The *karmic* load of a person who performs on average more nonviolent deeds than violent deeds decreases with time; consequently, the duration of bliss increases with time. Such a person becomes increasingly blissful in life.

All of us experience episodes of physical happiness in our daily life, but only a very few of us, if any, have experienced bliss. We are so occupied in achieving physical happiness that no time is left to get even a glimpse of bliss. This was exactly my condition during the first phase of my life. The primary aim of my life was to maximize wealth and fame. The level of stress in my life kept growing with increasing accumulation of wealth. I was performing on average more violent deeds that resulted in increasing my *karmic* load; consequently, I had no feel for bliss. One day I realized that my soul, not my body, is relevant to bliss. This completely changed my life. This transformation of my consciousness did not occur overnight. It was the result of living a life of spiritual discipline consisting of self-restraint with the five types of abstinence mentioned above for becoming a nonviolent person. The second phase of my life was just the opposite of the first phase. The aim of my life changed from accumulating wealth to increasing the duration of bliss. I became a nonviolent person, which resulted in decreasing my *karmic* load and increasing the duration of bliss. I am currently living a blissful life.

### **Conclusion**

Man-made laws and chance control wealth, while the universal law of *karma* controls bliss. Nobody can become happy with wealth alone, because the source of happiness lies within our soul. Limitless desire for wealth is the greatest obstacle in achieving spiritual growth and the source of tension in life. The earlier we realize the relevance of the soul to bliss, the sooner we begin nonviolent deeds for promoting spiritual growth and increasing the duration of bliss.

## *Ahimsa* in Jainism and the Moral Imperative of Veganism<sup>34</sup>

GARY L. FRANCIONE

*Jainism recognizes that the principle of ahimsa prohibits imposing suffering and death on animals. On this ground, most Jains are vegetarians. But many Jains continue to consume dairy and other animal products, and to wear animal clothing. In this paper, I argue that there is no morally coherent distinction between meat and other animal products and that a non-arbitrary interpretation of ahimsa requires veganism, or not eating, wearing, or otherwise using any animal products.*

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### **I. Jainism and *Ahimsa***

*Ahimsa*, or nonviolence, is the fundamental principle of Jainism: *Ahimsa Paramo Dharma* – nonviolence is the highest religious duty. We can think about the concept of *ahimsa* in Jainism as having two dimensions: a dimension that focuses

on *ahimsa* as a spiritual notion and a dimension that focuses on *ahimsa* as a matter of normative ethics. In certain respects, this distinction tracks the one proposed by Acharya Kundakunda in *Samayasāra* between the *nīścayanaya*, the nonconventional or absolute point of view, and the *vyavahāranaya*, the conventional or worldly point of view.

*Ahimsa* as a spiritual concept concerns the state of the soul, or *atma*, and says that we achieve *ahimsa* only when the *atma* is in a state of complete tranquility, or a state of being *vitaraḡa*, or free of attachment or aversion. If the *atma* is vibrating in any way, it is attracting *karma*, and whether that *karma* be good (*puṇya*) or bad (*pap*), there is not – and cannot be – a state of *ahimsa*. So if we have not achieved liberation, or *mokṣha*, we are necessarily participating in some form of *himsa*.

*Ahimsa* as a concept of normative conduct focuses on not injuring other sentient beings in thought, speech, or action. *Dravya himsa* is used to describe the actual action of injuring a sentient being. *Bhāva himsa* is the intent to inflict injury. Both types of *himsa* result in the accumulation of *pap karma*. When these two sorts of *himsa* are combined – when a violent action is undertaken with a violent intention – the *karmic* result is most inauspicious.

## II. Jainism and Vegetarianism

The Jain ascetic is enjoined not to commit violence against any living being, including those with one sense (*ekendriyas*) and that are immobile (*sthavar*), such as plants or those organisms that have earth, water, fire, or air as bodies. But *all* Jains are forbidden from *himsa* against all mobile beings (*trasa*), whether they have two (*dwindriya*), three (*trindriya*), four (*chaturindriya*), or five (*panchendriya*) senses. The five senses are: touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing. The mammals, birds, and fish that humans regularly consume as food all belong in the highest class of those beings with five senses – a class in which humans, who are mammals, belong

as well. This prohibition is not limited to what a person does directly (*krita*) and extends to causing others to do *himsa* (*karita*) and to approving of the *himsa* of others (*anumodana*). This clear and broad rejection of *himsa* by Jainism is the basis for virtually unanimous support among Jains for not consuming meat, poultry, and fish.

### III. Jainism and Veganism: The Problem

But many Jains are not vegans. Many – indeed most – consume dairy products such as milk, clarified butter or ghee, ice-cream, yogurt and cheese. Many eat eggs, not usually as a separate food but as contained in cakes or other baked items. They use dairy and wool in temple worship events. They wear wool, leather, and silk, and use products that contain animal ingredients.

In order to justify vegetarianism as a morally coherent position that can inform our understanding of *ahimsa*, it would be necessary to somehow formulate a limiting principle that can distinguish meat from other animal products. But *all* animal products – including dairy, eggs, wool, and leather – involve inflicting suffering and death on mobile, five-sensed beings, with the exception being silk-worms, who are considered to have two senses.<sup>35</sup> Some forms of production are more brutal than others and some involve more death than others, but under the very best of circumstances there is a great deal of suffering involved in the production of these products, and the death of animals is a necessary aspect of any industry or practice that uses animals. Jains are *necessarily* committed to veganism if they are to seek to apply *ahimsa* in its normative form in a way that is at least consistent with the recognition that eating animal flesh is a serious violation of *ahimsa*. Moreover, the failure of Jains to adopt veganism rather than vegetarianism as a baseline makes *ahimsa* appear to be arbitrary and this weakens the normative force of *ahimsa* as a foundational principle.

The usual response at this point is to say that while some treatment of animals used in the dairy, wool, and silk industries

is terrible, these products can be produced without violence in “humane” ways.

But this way of addressing the matter misses the point in two ways.

First, the issue as far as Jainism is concerned is not *how* violent dairy products or wool are. The issue is whether they involve violence *at all*. If they do, then dairy and wool involve the intentional harming of mobile, five-sensed beings. And there can be no doubt that the most humanely produced dairy and wool involve harming and causing distress to animals and killing animals. That is, the dairy and wool industries *necessarily* involve the suffering and death of mobile, multi-sensed (and for the most part five-sensed) beings.

Animals used in dairy production are kept alive longer than animals used for meat, treated as badly if not worse, and end up in the same slaughter-houses after which humans consume their bodies. Cows used for dairy are impregnated forcibly on a yearly basis and are manipulated with hormones to produce six to eight times as much milk as they would normally produce. They are killed after about five or six years although their natural lifespan is about twenty years. The male babies of dairy cows are sold into the veal industry and most of the females are used in the dairy industry. It is an endless cycle of exploitation, suffering, and death. There is an inextricable relationship between the meat industry and the dairy issue. You cannot have a dairy industry without a meat industry. It is no coincidence that India now is the largest producer of dairy products in the world<sup>36</sup> at the same time that the Indian beef market is growing and India is exporting 44% more beef than four years ago.<sup>37</sup>

Many Jains, particularly those in the older generations who spent their childhood in India, still hold the idyllic concept of the dairy cow that grazes in the pasture, and is provided with good care and has a good life. If milk or other products come from such an animal, how can that be morally problematic? In the first place, no animal products come from

such animals. Most dairy products – wherever in the world they are produced, including India – come from animals kept in intensive conditions known as “factory farming” that involve unspeakable brutality and violence. Even those animals who are supposedly raised in “free-range” circumstances, or whose products are advertised as “organic,” are raised in conditions that *may* be *slightly* less brutal than the normal factory farm, but there is still a great deal of violence, suffering, and death. Small rural milk producers in India use artificial impregnation, keep animals tethered, prevent calves from drinking milk, sell calves to the meat industry (even where cow slaughter is prohibited, buffalo slaughter is not and buffaloes make up about 50% of the India dairy herd), and sell cows for slaughter after no longer than ten years.

The person who keeps only one cow on her or his property must keep that cow pregnant in order for the animal to give milk and this means that there will be a steady stream of calves. In most cases, most if not all of these calves will end up on someone’s table. And whenever a calf is separated from her or his mother, there is tremendous suffering from that alone. Is a glass of milk or ghee or raita worth inflicting that suffering? The picture of the happy cow grazing in the pasture bears no relationship to reality. The process of producing dairy – however “humane” it may be – involves *himsa*. The details of treatment under various systems of production and in different countries are matters of detail that go to how much harm is present in each system in each place. But *all* systems involve *himsa*; the *use* of animals to produce dairy itself involves *himsa*. There cannot be a dairy industry without the suffering and deaths of animals.

The same is true of eggs. After hatching, the chicks are separated into males and females. Because male chicks will not be able to produce eggs and, because laying chickens are a specific laying breed that are not suitable to be “meat” animals, more than 100 million male chicks are killed in the United States alone every year by being thrown alive into



grinding machines, suffocated in garbage bags, or gassed. Laying hens are confined in tiny battery cages where they get, on average, 67 square inches of space, or about the size of a single sheet of letter-sized paper, to live their entire lives. Most laying hens are subjected to forced molting, where the birds are starved for a period, causing them to lose their feathers and forcing their reproductive processes to rejuvenate, and to debeaking to stop the birds from injuring each other. Those hens that are not confined in battery cages are raised in “cage-free” or “free-range” circumstances that still result in horrible suffering. And laying hens are all slaughtered once their egg-producing capacity decreases, usually after one or two laying cycles. So if all you eat are eggs, you are still directly responsible for the suffering and death of many chickens. It is interesting to note that the Indian egg industry is growing at a compounded annual rate of over 8%, with production increasing from 75 billion eggs in 2012 to about 95 billion in 2015.<sup>38</sup>

The same is true of wool. Wool may be produced more or less humanely in that the farmers can be more or less gentle when shearing sheep but all shearing involves frightening the animals and the gentlest shearing involves cuts and other injuries. The farmer may or may not engage in mulesing, which involves cutting away skin from the sheep’s rump in order to create a scar that thickens the skin and prevents flies laying eggs in that area. But the sheep are subjected to some level of suffering and they all eventually end up in the slaughterhouse. Again, wool *necessarily* involves suffering and death; it necessarily involves *himsa*. And leather is the skin of a slaughtered animal. Leather directly and necessarily involves *himsa*.<sup>39</sup>

Second, even if, in some perfect world, dairy, eggs, wool, and leather could be produced without violence, this is not that world. These products are not available to *anyone* at the present time. I have had many Indian people tell me that milk *could* be produced without harming cows. But these

people all live in Los Angeles or New York or Mumbai. And, even if dairy products could be produced without harming cows, which is not the case, these people have no access to such products *today*. They often say that they buy only “organic” milk. But “organic” only means that the cows are fed organic food and are not given antibiotics and growth hormones but they are still exploited, impregnated forcibly, slaughtered around 5 years of age, many times kept in small restricted areas, and their newborn calves are taken away for veal. In fact, cows involved in “organic” milk production may suffer more because farmers are not able to use antibiotics to address mastitis infections; instead, the cow is usually just taken out of production until the infection subsides. But this means that the cow has to suffer with the infection. Even the consumer of milk from the small Indian dairy cooperative cannot buy milk free of *himsa*. Again, some dairy may involve less *himsa*; some more. But *all* dairy involves *some himsa*. All wool – even the most “humanely” produced – involves some *himsa*. And as we cannot get the skin of a dead animal without the animal being dead, all leather involves *himsa*. Although some leather might come from animals that were not slaughtered as part of the meat industry, such supply could, in reality, constitute a minute portion of the market.

#### **IV. Jainism and Veganism:**

##### **Explanations That Do Not Work**

To their credit, most Jains accept that, as a factual matter, there is harm to animals inherent in the dairy, egg, wool, and leather industries. They usually rely on one of four arguments to justify that harm. None of these arguments works.

First, there is the argument from tradition. Some defend the use of animal products because it has been traditional to use dairy products or wool or leather. But tradition can no more suffice here than it can in any other area of human conduct. If Jainism stands for anything, it represents the notion that ethical principles are a matter of rational thought and careful consideration. It is precisely when we have been lulled

into complacency by tradition that we must be most conscientious.

As part of this appeal to tradition, some Jains say that the *Tirthankaras*, or the human beings who have achieved omniscience and who teach it to others, never condemned the consumption of dairy as involving *himsa* and that some ancient texts contain references to ghee or other dairy products being present on auspicious occasions. But this is like using the Bible as an authority to justify homophobia or capital punishment. The important books of most religious and spiritual traditions are full of all sorts of inconsistent ideas and matters that the most fundamentalist believer does not accept. So the fact that there may be references in Jain scriptures to dairy is irrelevant. The fact that dairy was consumed by Jains thousands of years ago is irrelevant. The point is that Jains regard *ahimsa* as the foundational and defining principle of their tradition and *ahimsa* prohibits the intentional infliction of suffering and death on mobile, multi-sensed creatures. The only question for the Jain is whether the conduct in question – consuming dairy or wearing wool or leather – involves inflicting suffering and death on mobile, multi-sensed beings.

Second, there are some who say that we cannot live a perfect life so it is acceptable for us to eat dairy or to use other animal products as a “compromise.” Jainism certainly recognizes that, with the exception of the omniscient who have gained liberation, we cannot avoid all violence if we live in *samsara*, the material world. That is the primary problem with *samsara*; our existence *necessarily* adversely affects others. But if our inability to avoid all *himsa* means that we can eat dairy or use wool, which involves inflicting injury and death on five-sensed beings, then it must mean that we can eat flesh as well. That is, there is no limiting principle that would allow us to distinguish between dairy and wool or leather, and flesh, or indeed, from any form of violence. If we cannot avoid all violence, and, therefore dairy, egg, wool, and leather are

morally acceptable, then why just dairy, eggs, wool, and leather? Why not meat? Why not robbery or assault? Or murder? So this justification for nonveganism also fails.

The third and most frequently used justification involves the principle of *anekantavada*, or what has come to be known as the “Jain doctrine of relativity” – that no position on any issue can be absolutely true because all positions can only reflect a particular perspective. When I have discussed the need to eschew dairy, wool, and leather, I have had Jains say to me that the principle of *anekantavada* means that I cannot say that it is immoral to consume or use these items; all I can say is that it is immoral from *my* perspective. Any such argument must fail.

The doctrine of *anekantavada* concerns ontology, or the nature of existence, and has nothing to do with moral issues. The doctrine developed historically as a way of mediating the dispute between Hinduism, which emphasized the permanence of things, and Buddhism, which emphasized the impermanence of things. The Jain doctrine of *anekantavada* says that *dravya* or substances, including living and non-living, material and non-material, are permanent in that these substances possess certain *gunas* or qualities. However, matter is in a constant state of changing; the *pariyayas* modes or states of matter are always in flux. So existence is both permanent and impermanent and no one can have complete knowledge of a substance because that would require knowledge of all modes of the substance, which only the omniscient can know. Non-omniscient beings can only have partial knowledge of the substance depending on standpoint or perspective. But as we can see, this doctrine has nothing to do with morality. The doctrine of *anekantavada* simply cannot be used to stand for the proposition that there is no absolute truth and so we cannot say with any certainty that consuming dairy or wearing wool or leather is morally wrong as involving *himsa* inflicted on mobile, multi-sensed beings. Indeed, if this interpretation of *anekantavada* were even possible, it would make any

assertion about violations of *ahimsa* – from eating meat to human genocide – subject to a relativist interpretation. But the Sutras contain the wisdom of the *Tirthankaras* and, in *Ācārāṅga Sūtra*, it is written: “All breathing, existing, living sentient creatures should not be slain, nor treated with violence, nor abused, nor tormented, nor driven away.” That is clear; it does not admit of any relativist interpretation.

Fourth, some argue that it is inconvenient to practice veganism. Convenience cannot be the touchstone. No Jain would think that considerations of convenience justified eating meat, poultry, or fish. If, as I and others maintain, dairy, eggs, and other animal products involve *himsa* inflicted on innocent mobile beings, then convenience can similarly not serve as a moral justification. But having said this, it is certainly no more inconvenient to be a vegan than it is to be a vegetarian. There is a variety of delicious non-dairy “milks” (soy, rice, and almond) available and these can be used for cooking and in beverages. There are delicious vegan “butters” made from soy that can substitute for ghee. The range of vegan clothing has increased dramatically in recent years and it is now easy to avoid the use of animal products for clothing.

## V. Conclusion

The issue of veganism is not merely significant; it is crucial for Jainism. If Jains do not embrace veganism, then their rejection of eating animal meat is simply arbitrary. We cannot make a coherent distinction between meat and other animal products because all involve the intentional infliction of suffering and death on mobile, multi-sensed beings. To say that *ahimsa* prohibits meat but not other animal products makes *ahimsa* meaningless as a normative principle, because the principle would not even pertain to all situations that are substantially similar. That is, it is one thing if a moral principle covers situations *x* and *y* but a distinguishing feature makes situation *z* different from *x* and *y* in some relevant way and there is a question as to whether the moral principle still covers situation *z*. But if *x*, *y*, and *z* are all relevantly similar, and the

moral principle is interpreted to cover situations  $x$  and  $y$  but not  $z$ , then the moral principle is being applied in an obviously arbitrary way. A moral principle that cannot rule out instances of conduct that are substantially similar is necessarily weak because it does not include any limiting principle.

In this regard, I will recount an incident that occurred when I was giving a lecture on animal ethics at a university. I was explaining that I objected to animal exploitation in part because of my commitment to nonviolence. A student pointed out that the Jains, who made nonviolence the central focus of their spiritual tradition, did not think that dairy foods or eggs or other animal products, such as leather or wool, involved violence. The student asked me to justify my understanding of nonviolence as including dairy, eggs, wool, and leather in light of the Jain view that these did not involve *himsa*. He pointed out that the Jains must have some principle that distinguishes these other animal products from meat, which is prohibited by *ahimsa*. I responded that there was no distinguishing principle. He replied that *ahimsa* must then be an arbitrary notion. He was correct. And if a non-Jain student can see the oblivious flaw in the Jain doctrine of *ahimsa*, that is a signal to Jains to rethink an interpretation of *ahimsa* that is so clearly arbitrary.

Finally, I recall visiting a Digambara temple once and there was a sign at the entrance of the main area of worship that read, "No leather allowed." I asked a Jain friend who was with me why leather was prohibited inside the temple. He said: "Because of *himsa*." I remarked to him that it was odd that Jains thought that it was morally acceptable to wear something outside the temple that was prohibited inside the temple. He had no answer.

That is because there is no answer.

## Alarming Behavior: The (Ab)Use of Alarms in Nursing Homes

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*In nursing homes, we are entrusted with the care of the elderly. Our responsibilities include trying to prevent falls, since wounds in the elderly heal slowly, if at all. To prevent such falls, we use numerous alarms that significantly restrain the freedom of movement of the elderly and many perceive of them as humiliating. Since falls still occur despite the continually increasing number of alarms, I raise the question of whether imposing such alarms on the elderly does not amount to a violation of their privacy and freedom.*

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Grace was a lovely lady in her nineties who was evaluated as a “fall risk” upon her arrival at the nursing home. She was immediately issued a chair-pad alarm and a tab alarm. A chunky bracelet was put around her ankle, which activates a door alarm when she approaches the unit exit door, and her bed was outfitted with a bed alarm that gets activated every

time she tries to turn, or even cough. Fortunately for Grace, she had a sense of humor. Her comment was: “I am so much alarmed that you would think the FBI and the CIA are after me.”

In the middle of the night Victor is determined to find the “noisy box” under his bed and deactivate it before going to the bathroom. It is usually a race: for him to find the alarm box, turn it off, and make it to the bathroom before the night nursing attendee can get to his room and remind him that it is not safe for him to walk to the bathroom alone. Each time, we hope that Victor doesn’t fall under his bed in his efforts to find and deactivate the annoying alarm box. In Victor’s case, the alarm placed to prevent falls is more likely to trigger one.

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In 1990, the government passed a law to eliminate physical restraints in nursing homes. The fear that this would lead to more falls, and more injuries that had to be reported to the Department of Public Health, was addressed by increasing the use of alarms and chemical restraints. In 2012, the Center for Medicare and Medical Services addressed the issue of chemical restraint by demanding that the nursing homes reduce the use of antipsychotic drugs by 15%; so far, eleven states have achieved this goal while the rest are still working on it. This initiative aims to improve the quality of care and the quality of life for the country’s 1.5 million nursing home residents, but does nothing to eliminate the noisy alarms that are still prevalent in US nursing homes.

If you ever visit a nursing home, you can’t help noticing at least one or two types of alarms on the residents’ wheelchairs. Typically there is a (2”x3”) box hanging on the back of wheelchair that is connected with an alarm cord attached to the back of the elderly person, or to an alarm pad (5”x10”) that this elderly person sits on. Then there is also a bed alarm, a door alarm, a floor alarm, a bathroom alarm, a sensory alarm, and a leg bracelet that triggers the door alarm. After 15 years of working in a nursing home I am still amazed



at the ability of the “alarm industry” to come up with ever new types of alarms. Each of these alarms makes a loud noise, and if two or three are activated simultaneously, the noise is so unpleasant that it is impossible to focus on anything else.

Here is a snapshot of the nursing home “alarming on arrival” routine. Any elderly person with a history of falls who takes up residency in a nursing home (short or long term) is assigned the same types of alarms on arrival. The reason for this *alarming on arrival* policy is the safety of a resident. The Physical Therapy Department evaluates each new resident and works together with the Occupational Therapy Department to make every resident as independent as possible. Their stated goal is to provide maximum safety and, if possible, to eliminate alarms. A few elderly people are able to achieve this goal and become alarm free, but the vast majority are not. The elderly with short-term memory impairments (Alzheimer’s and other dementia) and those who have a history of falls usually are stuck with alarms “for life.” This is a most unfortunate situation for Alzheimer’s and other dementia patients: How do you teach someone who has no short-term memory that the noisy alarms are there for their safety? How do you teach them that the sound of the alarm means they should sit down, and not to stand up and walk around in panic?

Do these alarms really help? Do they create a safer environment by preventing falls, or do they create an unsafe environment that actually increases falls? How can we claim to provide the best quality care for the elderly, if our alarm policy makes their environment so noisy and confusing that we put their safety at risk? Are we not diminishing the quality of their lives, in the name of preventing possible falls?

There is a general belief in nursing homes that injuries in the elderly should be prevented by all means. And there is good reason for this: a fall with an injury (broken hip, arm, leg, shoulder) in an elderly person may lead to physical and cognitive decline, and the recovery from such an injury is a long and often painful process. Some such falls are even fatal: adults over seventy years old are three times more likely to

die following a low-level fall. The Department of Public Health will not be satisfied with the simple explanation that falls are a normal part of daily life for the elderly; maybe in their own homes, but not in a facility where taxpayer dollars are used. And so we try to prevent those falls, by all the means available to us, including those countless noisy alarms.

I often wonder whether it has to be this way. I wonder if we are really providing the best nursing care for the elderly, by hooking them up to those alarms.

Let's for a moment go back to the meaning of the word "nursing." Nursing primarily means healing and caring. I am sure the intention of all nursing home directors and supervisors is to provide the best possible care for their residents and at the same time to meet the requirements established by the Department of Public Health – and there are many of them. One requirement is to develop an institutional plan of fall prevention. This leads to the routine use of alarms, and this is why they have become such an important part of life in the nursing home. If an elderly person has two or three falls in a short period of time, she or he is likely to end up tied to most or all of the above-mentioned alarms. The fear of another possible fall will prevent the nursing staff from taking any of these alarms away, and the number of alarms in nursing homes just keeps growing and growing.

When it comes to fall-prevention, the nursing staff is driven by the fear that the number of falls or injuries caused by falls may devalue the status of the facility, which often means losing jobs and changing personnel. The use of alarms to prevent falls in nursing homes is driven by the best of intentions, but the noisy environment these alarms create is counterproductive to the original intent. Alarms not only do not prevent falls, but they violate the freedom of movement and the quality of life for the elderly.

Obviously the alarms are there to alert the staff of any risky movement by the residents – things like getting up, and

attempting to self-transfer or walk. Yet falls happen even with the alarms in place. There is no data to support the claim that alarms really prevents falls. My experience is that their loud, unpleasant noise agitates the elderly greatly and in fact increases the number of falls. There are initiatives around the country to eliminate alarms as a safety measure, but as long as the Department of Public Health treats alarms as if they prevent falls, the majority of the U.S. nursing homes will continue to use them as a preventive measure. Any initiative to reduce (not eliminate) the number and use of alarms in nursing homes usually fails due to the reduction being just temporary – it looks good on the monthly or quarterly performance improvement report. The number of alarms eventually goes back to what it used to be before, or even increases, due to the constant production of new types of alarms. In fact, according to a study at the Jewish Rehabilitation Center for the North Shore, Massachusetts, the number of falls *dropped* 32 percent below the average quarterly fall rate after all the alarms were removed from a 450-bed unit. Why do we continue to use alarms in nursing homes, even though the available data show that facilities which eliminate alarms actually record a decline in falls?

There must be better ways of keeping the residents safe than by hooking them up to alarms. There must be better ways to nurse and protect the elderly who are entrusted to our care. One simple way is for nursing staff to get to know their patients better. This is especially important with the elderly who are diagnosed with Alzheimer's or any related dementia. The better we know them, the better we can predict their behavior, movement, needs, what makes them happy and what makes them sad. The better we know them, the easier it is to be proactive in satisfying their needs. We need to be like detectives in figuring out their personal needs, through both verbal and non-verbal language. We need to carefully observe their agitation, restlessness, wandering, pacing, and calling out.

It is especially important to find out what their daily routine is and to help them to create a new daily routine if necessary. Once short-term memory is gone, the daily routine becomes even more important, for in a way it substitutes for the lost memory. The daily activity program created to work with what is still intact in dementia residents is the most constructive way of keeping them safe. It keeps them socially engaged, brings out good feelings, and hopefully keeps them happy throughout the day. The activity program should include music, art, small social groups, walking, chair exercise, attending religious services, being outdoors, and recovering information from long-term memory, like reminiscing, nursery rhymes, and easy trivia to allow success.

If the Center for Medicare and Medical Services is serious about improving the quality of life of nursing home residents, then we must reduce the number of alarms in our nursing homes. If we do not want to violate the freedom of movement of the elderly, and want to care for them in the true, original sense of nursing them, we have to make them feel good about themselves – we have to help them be engaged, and enjoy their lives. We cannot accomplish these goals if we tie our nursing home residents to countless alarms and make them feel that as if “the FBI or the CIA are after them.”<sup>40</sup>

Violence in the Practice of Law:  
The View from Here

KENDY M. HESS

*In this essay I return to my decision to walk away from a successful corporate law practice. It was a job I enjoyed, and one that provided me with wealth, power, and security, but something about it just never felt right, so after 15 years I finally left. The Western accounts of morality that I now study and teach simply couldn't identify any serious problems with the situation I'd left behind, and I remained unable to account for the deep sense of wrongness that had ultimately driven me out. Looking back, however, the theory of ahimsa provides a completely different perspective on both my practice and my experiences there. It reveals the depth and pervasiveness of violence in the contemporary workplace, and provides a sobering look at the implications of contemporary ideals of professionalism.*

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It is a truism that important events in our lives become clear only in hindsight. In more philosophical circles, it is a truism

that this happens over and over again – that we can revisit the same event from different perspectives, with each visit yielding a different understanding. Sometimes we can see things from “here” that we never could have seen from “there,” and it is precisely what was hidden from us at the time that made the experience so powerful. When the new vantage point succeeds in revealing what was hidden we experience a sense of power, completeness, and freedom, as our revised narrative finally closes a felt gap between our prior understanding and our current reality. Other times it is more frustrating as we fail, and fail, and fail to grasp those old experiences in ways that truly *account for* both what happened and who we became as a result of it.

I assume that all of this is generally familiar, that we have all had this kind of experience. In this essay I want to share some of my own efforts to account for a very important event in my own life – something that I was completely unable to do until I encountered the philosophy of *ahimsa*.

I was a corporate environmental attorney for fifteen years, and it was a very good life. I was a partner at a big international firm in Chicago, and spent my time leading clients through the complicated processes of cleaning up contamination, bringing facilities into compliance, redesigning practices to reduce environmental impacts, etc. The hours were long and the work was stressful, but it was also exciting and well-rewarded, and I had time to pursue personal interests outside of work. Beyond that, I genuinely liked many of my clients and colleagues, and was lucky enough to have few (if any) ethical concerns about my work. There was a lot of moaning and complaining, but most of my clients wanted to comply – or were resigned to complying – with legal requirements, so there was little or no ugliness there.

By almost any conceivable standard I was wealthy, powerful, and secure (though I would have disputed that description at the time). I lived and worked in a safe and beautiful place, I could buy anything I was likely to want, and

I was near the top of most of the power structures in my life; as a result, I was respected and deferred to by most of the people I encountered on any given day. I was also, of course, generally and gloriously unaware of the mechanics that made this kind of life possible. Structures of privilege and power are by their nature invisible to the people on top of them. So without thinking about it too much, I had a general sense that I was talented and successful; that people were nice and helpful; and that life was pleasant and not all that difficult.

But. But I was just *uneasy*, almost from the very beginning – certainly by my second year, more so by my third. My unease increased from there, growing steadily into a powerful discontent. There was just this deep sense of wrongness, very subtle but pervasive and insistent, and it was ultimately strong enough that I left this life of wealth, power, and security to get away from it. I spent years trying to articulate the source of my unease, trying out and discarding one possibility after another. It just seemed so ridiculous! What could be wrong with the life I just described? I thought maybe it was the long hours, so I cut back until I was averaging *an hour a day*. That wasn't it. I'd always been uncomfortable about making so much money – proud and impressed, to be sure, but uncomfortable – so I tried to live simply, cut my salary along with my hours, and (after I'd paid off my school loans) donated increasing amounts to charity. That wasn't it. I thought maybe it was the lack of intellectual stimulation, so I started taking night classes. That wasn't it. When I tried to talk to my (wonderful, supportive) friends about it, most of them had no idea what I was talking about; those who shared my unease to a greater or lesser extent simply chalked it up to stress or exhaustion, shrugged in a half helpless/half cynical way, and said I should take a vacation. But of course that didn't help either.

In 2003 I finally made a decisive move, leaving my firm of ten years and moving across the country to enroll in a graduate philosophy program (though I continued to practice law for

another five years). I can't begin to tell you how unlikely, how wildly out of character that was for me. I am the epitome of the cautious, methodical planner, and yet I abandoned a secure, comfortable position for the rigors and radical insecurity of graduate study; the chances of ending up with any job at all were quite slim, and there was no possibility of achieving the wealth, power, or status I had previously enjoyed. In retrospect, my willingness – my *need* – to abandon that life tells me exactly how deep and powerful my discomfort must have been. But it doesn't tell me why, or help me explain to others what I found so inimical about the work. When people asked why I'd made such an enormous change, I would wave my hands around and – like my friends – talk about stress and exhaustion, but that story didn't really make sense to any of us.

### **What Was So Wrong With That?**

Right in the middle of all this, still somewhat in shock about what I'd done, I landed in a philosophy grad program. I'd always had an interest in ethics, and it seemed likely that I would be able to answer this question for myself on my way to getting my degree. As I studied the major ethical traditions, each with its own distinctive conception of human nature and its own distinctive claims about how we should live, I grew increasingly confident that one of these theories would help me account for my experience. In the end, though, none of them really seemed to work.<sup>41</sup>

Mill's Utilitarianism says that pleasure and pain are the only things that matter, and that we should always act so as to maximize pleasure and minimize pain – not just for ourselves, but in the world in general. I doubt I was *maximizing* pleasure in the world, but my work had certainly been *full* of pleasures, both given and received. That's one of the benefits of being near the top of a power structure: you're in a great position to increase the pleasures of others, and they have every incentive to please you. Pleasure everywhere. There had even been wonderful moments of higher pleasures – pleasures of



the heart and mind. There was plenty of pain given and received as well, of course. Big-firm corporate practice is a contact sport, figuratively speaking. Criticism is direct and often scathing, manipulation and misdirection are *de rigueur*, and you're expected to work to exhaustion. Beyond that, everything moves at lightning speed and there are simply enormous sums of money at stake, sums that can be lost through a single moment of carelessness; there is little or no room for error, and failure is not tolerated. Still, most of the people in my world were pretty tough. After a while you become inured to that kind of atmosphere and it (mostly) stops being painful. With that, as far as I could tell, the pleasures vastly outweighed the pains – certainly to the extent that I was aware of them, and whatever was bothering me had to be something that I was aware of on *some* level.

Kant's ethics seemed promising, with his emphasis on respect – surely there was something disrespectful about all this? That didn't pan out either. Kant's ethics focuses on the support and exercise of rational autonomy – free will, basically, as guided by the rational mind. For Kant, the primary imperative is to treat rational autonomy, in yourself and in others, always as an end and never as a mere means. It has to do with setting and pursuing goals for yourself, and respecting and supporting other people's ability to do the same. That certainly sounded good, but again: my legal practice had been chock full of this. My practice wasn't loving or compassionate or anything like that, but that's not what Kant requires; he requires respect, and in a certain sense, my practice had been powerfully respectful.

As a big-firm corporate attorney, I was engaged in a highly stylized practice – almost like a game. Everybody in it knew the rules and generally played by the rules, and everybody had effectively consented to them. In that context, playing by those rules *is* respectful, and playing *hard* is even more so. When you and I are engaged in a game and I play hard – push for every advantage, take every hit I can't avoid, dish out

as much damage as I can (within the rules) – I say that you and I are equals, that I respect your talent and your power and your commitment to your own ends enough to take you seriously, whether as an opponent or a colleague. Anything less is a failure of my duty to my client, to my colleagues, and in an important way, to my opponents. Besides, this is a big part of what makes legal practice exciting and invigorating, and it often generates a real sense of camaraderie among the people working on a project, even among people working on opposite sides. Moreover, people generally go out of their way to be pleasant, even friendly and playful: the hours were long and stressful, and we spent a lot of time engaged in this “game”; we tried to make it a nice place to be. Nothing about “playing hard” requires disrespect or unpleasantness. If anything, open disrespect and gratuitous nastiness violate the rules. So Kant wasn’t much help.

Aristotle came the closest, and for several years I used his philosophy to try to explain my dissatisfaction. Aristotle also emphasizes our rational autonomy, but he looks inward, focusing on the plasticity of our characters. We naturally possess certain capacities, but it is the choices we make over and over again – the habits we form – that determine which of those capacities develop into character traits. For Aristotle, the moral imperative is to develop habits that lead us to develop a specific suite of character traits – the virtues – that are paradigmatic of human excellence, and a person is “excellent” to the extent that he or she is able to play certain roles in society.

*This was getting at something important. My job as a lawyer was to make things happen for my clients: to remediate contamination, obtain permits, etc. In order to make things happen in this setting – under the rules of this game – I had to be a certain kind of person. I had to be hard, and sharp, and unbelievably quick, able to anticipate and respond on the fly to any suggestion, proposal, challenge, or attack. I had to exude an air of absolute confidence and possess an unquestioning expectation that my requirements would be*

met, both for the benefit of my own clients and colleagues and for “the other side of the table”; any doubt or indecisiveness had to be purely tactical or (better) immediately converted to a tactical advantage. I had to be able to simply walk into a room full of (often hostile) strangers in a way that instantly conveyed that I was someone to be taken seriously; in this context, “being taken seriously” is effectively equivalent to “being recognized as a potential threat.” In short, I had to act wealthy, powerful, secure, entitled, and ruthless, and I had to do that – convincingly – for sixty to eighty hours a week, or more. As Aristotle points out, the habits you develop shape the person you become at a very deep level, so in order to do my job I had to *become* a wealthy, powerful, secure, entitled, ruthless person. Which is unsurprising since that is, in fact, the paradigm of the successful, “excellent” person in America today. We usually say “focused” or “committed” instead of the more accurate “ruthless” but I’m sure you recognize the widely admired type.<sup>42</sup> This is what most of my students want to be.

The problem was that I neither liked nor admired people like that, and I certainly didn’t want to become one, but this is where Aristotle let me down. He’d helped me identify the source of my unease, which had something to do with the kind of person I had to become in order to do my job, but he had little to say about what was wrong with it. Why *shouldn’t* a person become wealthy, powerful, secure, entitled, and ruthless? Aristotle identifies his virtues on the basis of the role they enable the bearer to fulfill in society, and the character traits I was so busily forming would allow me to fulfill a highly valued one – reference again the wealth, power, and prestige attached to it. I was *becoming* the American paradigm of the excellent person, and Aristotle didn’t think there was anything wrong with that.

This is where things sat for several years.

### ***Ahimsa***

Then I came across a book on *ahimsa*.<sup>43</sup> Other essays in this collection have already done an excellent job of

introducing the philosophy of *ahimsa*, so I'm just going to touch on three key pieces.

First, the picture of human nature at the core of *ahimsa* is very different from the picture at the core of the western traditions I just described. *Ahimsa* recognizes the human capacity for rational autonomy, but isn't focused on it; *ahimsa* focuses instead on our capacities for love, compassion, truth, and wisdom. Placing the emotional self at the center of the philosophy in this way makes *ahimsa* uniquely sensitive to the complexity and deep vulnerability of human beings (and other creatures, and the planet itself). Looked at from the point of view of *ahimsa*, we don't appear first as rational planners fundamentally attuned to either pleasure or goals (chosen or otherwise). Instead, we appear first as a complicated nexus of power and vulnerability, fundamentally attuned to the wholeness we experience when those aspects of ourselves are properly integrated. The self needs to remain whole both for its own sake and for the sake of those with whom we interact: the more deeply our own wholeness has been violated, the less able we will be to act with the love and compassion that is our birthright, and the less able we will be to grasp truth and wisdom. The western traditions don't deny the existence of emotion or vulnerability any more than *ahimsa* denies the existence of rational autonomy, but they differ in focus. In the western traditions, emotion and vulnerability are not of primary concern and play at best a secondary role in moral reasoning and justification.

Second, instead of focusing on "right" and "wrong," *ahimsa* is uniquely concerned with "*himsa*"; it was the concept of *himsa* that finally allowed me to answer my question about my law practice. *Himsa* is often translated as "harm." This is somewhat appropriate because the English word "harm" captures the enormous range of events that fall under the term – everything from ugly thoughts to hurtful speech to drug abuse to battery and beyond – and *himsic* acts are indeed harmful. The problem with translating *himsa* as "harm" is that "harm" is such a soft, gentle word. It isn't shocking to hear that someone

has been harmed, and we laugh about the many ways we harm ourselves: “I know it’s bad for me, but....” As a translation of “*himsa*,” “harm” is rather innocuous, and that is misleading. An act of *himsa* is an act of violence, an assault on the essential integrity and wholeness of another being or – often – of the self. Both the giving and the receiving of violence tear at the integrity of everyone who experiences it, and this is as true of ugly thoughts, hurtful speech, and drug abuse as it is of physical battery.

Interestingly, acts of *himsa* are not necessarily “wrong.” They may or may not be, but that’s a separate, complicating issue and something of a distraction. Looking directly at violation is uncomfortable, and we tend to move quickly to the complicated (and abstract) question of whether the action was wrong because this is a much more comfortable (and abstract) place to be. Working with the concept of *himsa* forces you to temporarily set the question of wrongness aside and focus on the violation itself, and *that* allows you – or forces you – to see the violence, to recognize how much violence there is in the familiar patterns of your own little everyday life. It is everywhere. Castigating yourself for failing at some task can be *himsic* – a violent assault on your own sense of worth and security. Walking past your smiling neighbor without acknowledging him can be *himsic* – a violent assault on his sense of worth and belonging, and a stinging rejection of his offer of warmth and courtesy. The very familiarity of these and similar behaviors makes us want to reject the label of “violence,” but they *are* violent, and all the more so for the ease with which we inflict and receive them. We like to think of violence as an exceptional event, something that leaps out from a background of normalcy, and thus assume that anything familiar must not be violent. The concept of *himsa* helps us see that this is false.

Of all the *himsa* we practice on a daily basis, the most common – and the hardest to see – is the *himsa* we practice against ourselves. This is the third idea from *ahimsa* that I’d like to mention. Again, the human being at the core of *ahimsa*

is a complex, emotional, and vulnerable creature, and it suffers when it experiences *himsa*. The violated individual may experience pain, anger, fear, frustration, despair, shame, exhaustion – the list goes on, and it is long and varied. For the sake of simplicity, I'll use the word "pain" to refer to all of these negative states, but it is important to remember that different individuals will feel different responses to *himsa*. Regardless of the particular form the pain takes, the individual who experiences it doesn't like it, of course, and often retreats into numbness to avoid it. Numbing doesn't prevent or reduce the violence that we experience, and it doesn't even necessarily make it hurt less. What it does is distance us from the pain. When we become more numb we become accustomed to pain, so that it is no longer frightening or intrusive. (Numbness is actually a defense against any sensation that we find frightening or intrusive – even sensations that might otherwise be pleasant.) Violation is just as destructive for the numb individual as for the sensitive one: a broken leg is just as broken, regardless of how the person feels about the fact. It just doesn't carry the same kind of significance for the numb individual, because the instinct to flinch away from pain has been eroded (as has the companion instinct to gravitate toward pleasure). Having inflicted this violence upon ourselves, undermining the integrity of our own experience and reaction, we become increasingly indifferent to our own pain (and pleasure). As a direct result we become increasingly indifferent to the pains and pleasures of others, and this very indifference becomes yet another act of *himsa* that we perpetrate upon the world.

It is the concept of *himsa* that finally answered my question: What was so wrong with my law practice, and my life as a lawyer? It was difficult to say that it was really morally wrong, according to the major western traditions, but it was absolutely drenched in violence. Drenched in violence, and premised on violence – it was everywhere, and yet so hard to see.

In the previous section I tried to describe my practice as I saw it at the time, and I hope that it seemed as relatively

innocuous to you as it seemed to me – stressful and demanding, of course, but not really remarkable. But go back and *look* at what I said, and the language I used. I said I had to be “hard and sharp and unbelievably quick” (like any good weapon), ready to attack or defend at any moment. I had to carry myself in a way that suggested power and potential threat in order to accomplish the simplest tasks. I had to be able to “take hits” and “dish damage” just to be heard and taken seriously. I had to push myself to exhaustion, constantly overriding my intuitive sense of when I needed rest or recovery until I no longer *had* an intuitive sense of when I needed rest or recovery. And I had to live with the constant expectation of being manipulated and misled to the detriment of myself and those in my care, always knowing that some of that manipulation would come from people on my own team. There was no physical violence, of course, but I (and we) used that language for a reason. An attack on your dignity or livelihood instead of your body is still an attack; damage to mind and spirit – from contempt, humiliation, or threat – is still damage. It’s just easier to pretend that it isn’t when there’s no blood on the floor.

Beyond being able to *do* all that, I had to make myself into a person who could *thrive* on it, and laugh jovially with my colleagues while we did it. This only becomes possible once you’re sufficiently numb, and once you’ve achieved that level of numbness it’s almost impossible to see the violence of it anymore. The “senses” you once used to register the presence of violence – the feelings of pain, indignation, fear, outrage – have all been turned off. Something happens and you think, “Wow, that seemed pretty awful. It’s not bothering me, though, so I guess it must not have been.” You look around and all of your friends and colleagues are smiling and nodding and insisting (implicitly or explicitly) that everything’s fine, and so you dismiss the intuition of harm. You grow just a little more numb. And the more numb you are, the more pleasant it is. In many ways, the very pleasantness of the whole experience (after you’ve reached the requisite level of

numbness) is the most confusing part. I was very, very lucky to have colleagues who went out of their way to protect each other and create a happy work environment. This did little to reduce the amount of violence, but it made my transition to a functional numbness easier and laid a pleasant veneer over all of the parts we couldn't change. On the surface, it all seems so lovely. The work is often exciting and empowering, the life is materially secure and full of pleasures, and there's a great deal of respect, laughter, and goodwill everywhere. Working within the frameworks of the familiar western ethical traditions, this just doesn't seem so terrible.

Working within the framework of *ahimsa*, this is horrifying – a fractal of violence, repeating and recreating itself at every boundary in every available dimension. To take the essentially loving and compassionate self and turn it into something that can not only swim in these waters but *thrive* on it requires a staggering amount of violence, almost all of it self-directed. First you have to become indifferent to your own pain, learning to ignore fear, exhaustion, embarrassment, pity, and compassion (at least wherever they might interfere with your work). You achieve this by continuing to work regardless of any inconvenient emotional states, month after month, year after year. The frantic pace, the pressure to perform, and the unblinking expectations of your colleagues make this quite easy, as do the respect and admiration that greet you at every turn (most of which you absorb without notice – another irrelevancy). *Ahimsa* teaches that it is impossible to become indifferent to your own pain without becoming indifferent to the pain of others, but the increasing indifference to others is equally welcome and necessary. None of this works if you're too squeamish about how other people might be affected by your actions, or the positions you have to take. So I had to become generally indifferent to my own pain (which I certainly did) and I had to be willing to inflict pain on others (which I certainly was). That's not how we described it, of course. I already mentioned that the people in my world were "pretty tough," and that's how we thought of it. We described the



first step as “toughening up,” “developing a thick skin,” “not taking things personally,” or even “growing a pair,” and we described the second as “holding people accountable,” “being honest,” and of course “playing hard.” Which, you’ll remember, was considered *respectful*.

All of this looks shockingly violent to me now, though again, I didn’t see it that way at the time. I quickly learned to think of this level of violence as normal and – therefore – not really violent. I lost the sense of insult or outrage at being attacked, lost my reluctance to attack and retaliate, and generally learned not to be upset by much of anything. Once you’ve reached that stage – which is admired, sought-after, and rewarded – an injury has to be pretty spectacular to register at all. To give an example, I once broke my leg in six places and then walked on it for four weeks before simple exhaustion forced me to get it looked at. Of course it *hurt*; it just didn’t really seem worth *doing* anything about it. It was just pain – mine, yours, ours, anybody’s – and not worth addressing until it started to get in the way. Looking back, I find my attitude a little mind-boggling, but at the time it hardly seemed noteworthy. Most of my colleagues were somewhat impressed by my stoicism – but only somewhat. Again, this was a little extreme, but in general we were expected to display this kind of indifference. It requires a deep familiarity with pain – mine, yours, ours, anybody’s – to be so indifferent to it, and an extraordinary amount of violence to generate that much pain. But it was so prevalent in my law practice that it was hard to see it at all. It just vanished into the background.

I remember the first time I got a clear glimpse of it. It was toward the end of my practice, after I’d begun grad school, and I had to make a business call from the grad lounge. One of my consultants had made a serious mistake and we had to discuss it, but I wasn’t too worried. I didn’t anticipate any shouting or arguing, and the grad lounge was crowded and noisy and already full of philosophy grad students engaged in heated debate. I just tucked myself into a corner so as not to

bother anybody and placed the call. The call was brief and actually quite friendly (I'd been working with this consultant for years). I said he'd completely failed at his task and he agreed; I described his failure and he assented to my description; I said it was entirely his fault and he assented; I told him that I expected him to fix it within seventy-two hours, to cover all the costs himself, and that we'd talk later about whether I would require anything further. Then I made a little joke, he laughed appreciatively, and we both hung up – me feeling satisfied that the matter had been handled and him probably feeling relieved that it had gone so well. There'd been no anger, no raised voices, no unpleasantness, and the whole call had taken about ten minutes. And the grad lounge had gone absolutely silent. I turned around to see everyone staring at me with shocked expressions, and suddenly heard the echo of my voice. Listening to that echo, I suddenly *heard* my voice and realized what I sounded like, outside of a business context. Within that context I sounded notably pleasant, even gracious; outside of that context I sounded absolutely savage. I couldn't imagine how to explain to the grad students that it had actually been quite a friendly call – the very suggestion sounded ludicrous with that echo ringing in my ears – so I just shrugged and smiled weakly. And of course I pushed the sudden doubts aside.

The philosophy of *ahimsa* helped me answer my own questions about why I found my law practice – my generally happy, successful law practice – to be so inimical. Its conception of a human nature in need of wholeness and its ability to recognize the violence of familiar actions captures almost everything that had made me so uneasy for so long, and that's provided exactly the sense of narrative closure that I talked about at the beginning of this essay. The part that is still so difficult for me to accept is that I could have been so completely unaware of the violence – that I could have participated in, and perpetrated, *so much* violence without knowing that I was doing it, and that my friends and colleagues apparently did the same, equally unaware. Even now, looking

back at my practice from such a safe distance of time, space, and spirit, I sometimes have trouble seeing the violence. I know it's there, that practically every action in that context was violent in some way or another. If nothing else, I obtained my position through violence against myself and others; once I'd obtained that position I automatically presented (and needed to present) the *threat* of violence, even if I never acted on it, and the threat of violence *is* an act of violence. But even knowing all of that, sometimes I can't see it. I look back and it vanishes under an obscuring haze of laughter, acceptance, and familiarity. It's not until I remember the lingering sense of wrongness that I can see it again, and then it snaps into focus with shocking clarity.

### **Postscript**

It was quite difficult to write this essay. I don't think I had entirely confronted the depth or extent of the violence until I tried to write it all out, and it was shocking all over again to understand – years after the fact – that I had been the victim of violence and hadn't even realized it. A student of mine once shared with me that she had only just realized that she had been raped, years before; I think I understand a little better what that realization might have been like for her (though of course her experience was vastly harsher than mine). I was concerned that I might have gotten caught up in my own story and exaggerated the situation, so I shared a draft of this essay with a number of friends and former colleagues familiar with the setting. For what it's worth, the general consensus was that this presents a fair description. And then, just as I was ready to submit, I came across a headline on CNN: "Why Are Lawyers Killing Themselves?" ([http://www.cnn.com/2014/01/19/us/lawyer-suicides/index.html?hpt=hp\\_c3](http://www.cnn.com/2014/01/19/us/lawyer-suicides/index.html?hpt=hp_c3)). I think I have an idea.

## Exhibitions on Nonviolent Resistance: A New Medium for Peace Education

CHRISTIAN BARTOLF and DOMINIQUE MIETHING

*In collaboration with the Berlin Anti-War Museum, the Gandhi Information Center has created and presented thirteen exhibitions on the concept of nonviolent resistance for peace education between 2008 and 2016. These exhibitions presented significant quotations from activists and thinkers of nonviolence, accompanying images against injustice, militarism and poverty: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Count Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Henry David Thoreau, John Ruskin, Carl von Ossietzky, “Leo Tolstoy and the Doukhobors,” Rabindranath Tagore, Étienne de La Boétie, Kurt Tucholsky, Karl Kraus, Wolfgang Borchert, and “Paintings and Poems against War.” This essay summarizes this ongoing project of “Exhibitions on Nonviolent Resistance – A New Medium for Peace Education.”*

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The Berlin Anti-War Museum is a permanent private exhibition of artifacts of the two world wars commemorating the victims of war (following the peace education efforts of the pacifist Ernst Friedrich between the wars). It is also a member of the International Network of Peace Museums. Between 2008 and 2016, the Gandhi Information Center has collaborated with the Berlin Anti-War Museum to create and present thirteen exhibitions on the concept of nonviolent resistance for peace education. Each exhibition presented significant quotations from activists and thinkers of nonviolence, portraying their spiritual resistance against injustice, militarism and poverty, along with facsimiles, paintings, photographs and portraits. These historical personages come from Austria, Canada, England, France, Germany, India, Russia, the United States of America: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Count Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Henry David Thoreau, John Ruskin, Carl von Ossietzky, the Doukhobors, Rabindranath Tagore, Étienne de La Boétie and Kurt Tucholsky, Karl Kraus, and Wolfgang Borchert. The Center is also planning exhibitions on the ancient Chinese sage Laozi's *Tao Te Ching*, the social reformer Henry Stephens Salt's vegetarian philosophy, Gustav Landauer's ethical anarchism, the Alsatian moral philosopher Dr. Albert Schweitzer, the Dutch educator Bart de Ligt's "Plan of Campaign against All War and All Preparation for War," the history of the Quakers' peace activities, and others who have inspired the concept of nonviolent resistance and anti-war pacifism.

We now summarize the main aspects of our exhibitions, including sample quotations which resonate with today's global political reality.

From 1994 to 2008 we published our two-page quarterly members information "*Satyagraha*" in three languages (English, French, German), copies of which are kept in the Swarthmore College Peace Collection, and in the Commonweal Collection at the J.B. Priestley Library,

University of Bradford. Then we decided to find another medium to spread the message of nonviolence and peace and developed a museum-based volunteer program of peace education for the public's benefit. This coincided with our meeting of Tommy Spree, director of the Anti-War Museum, who asked us to organize an exhibition for the 60<sup>th</sup> death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, calling it "Gandhi's Path to Nonviolence." He knew that we were deeply familiar with Mahatma Gandhi's writings and was confident enough to give us free rein to bring about the first exhibition for the museum's Peace Gallery. It opened on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2008 after only one month of preparation.

During the first exhibitions, we worked with architect and designer Thomas Oertzen who designed the 21x29.7cm sized panels on 40x60cm black frames. (We later used larger formats for 29.7x42cm and 42x59.4cm sized panels.) In addition, three original English language audio documents were translated into German (Gandhi's spiritual message, "God Is," broadcast by Columbia Records in London, Kingsley Hall, 30 October 1931; his address to pacifists at Victoria Hall, Geneva, Switzerland, 10 December 1931; and his address to the Inter-Asian Relations Conference on 2 April 1947 in Delhi, India; as well as original audio documents about the significance of Gandhi by Professor Albert Einstein and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.). These talks could thus be studied by many visitors during Berlin's "Long Night of Museums" and for some months on – for the first time ever, in Berlin. The Gandhi quotations were taken from his two autobiographies: *Satyagraha in South Africa* and *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Ten final quotes portray the concept's elements: vegetarianism, bread labor, equality, tolerance, empathy, world federation, civilian peace service, civil disobedience, spinning wheel, and humility. All of the exhibitions have been inaugurated by the Mayor of Berlin's central district, Dr. Christian Hanke, who has always found words of deep appreciation, gratitude and constant inspiration

for his own political work in the cultural and social aspects of his multi-cultural neighborhood.

This *ahimsa* (nonviolence) is the basis of the search for truth. I am realizing every day that the search is vain unless it is founded on *ahimsa* as the basis. It is quite proper to resist and attack a system, but to resist and attack its author is tantamount to resisting and attacking oneself.

For we are all tarred with the same brush, and are children of one and the same Creator, and as such the divine powers within us are infinite. To slight a single human being is to slight those divine powers, and thus to harm not only that being but with him the whole world.

—Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

The second exhibition highlighted Leo Tolstoy's social ethics. We showed rare photographs and quoted his essays and pamphlets in order to build a bridge of understanding to the timeless relevance of the Russian Count's philosophy and wisdom. As background music for the exhibition space, we chose Tolstoy's only composition, a Waltz in F Major in a new piano version – a sentimental and thoughtful piece of music to create the atmosphere for absorbing the gems of wisdom of the Russian sage. Tolstoy focused on nonviolent resistance (called "non-resistance," meaning absolutely no violent retaliation, no revenge, no punishment, no violence), bread labor, vegetarianism, trusteeship, co-operative farming with farmers harvesting the profits of gardening, fruit-tree planting, ploughing and tilling the soil. Several Russian portrait paintings and photographs of the Yasnaya Polyana Estate Museum near Tula in Russia illustrated this first-time presentation on the occasion of Leo Tolstoy's 180<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary.

People must feel that their participation in the criminal activity of governments, whether by giving part of their work in the form of money, or by direct participation in military service, is not, as is generally supposed, an indifferent action, but, besides being harmful to one's self and to one's brothers, is a participation in the crimes unceasingly committed by all

governments and a preparation for new crimes, which governments are always preparing by maintaining disciplined armies.

The age of veneration for governments, notwithstanding all the hypnotic influence they employ to maintain their position, is more and more passing away. And it is time for people to understand that governments not only are not necessary, but are harmful and most highly immoral institutions, in which a self-respecting, honest man cannot and must not take part, and the advantages of which he cannot and should not enjoy.

—Leo Tolstoy

The third exhibition (premiered on 29.7x42cm sized panels) was an homage to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s civil rights and freedom movement, from Montgomery to Memphis. The Nobel Peace Laureate and Honorary Citizen of the United States of America was killed in 1968 during a sanitation worker's strike in Memphis, Tennessee. He is portrayed at the height of his leadership during the epic March on Washington (August 28, 1963) when he gave his legendary "I Have A Dream" speech. All the photographs show scenes of this joyful and sunny manifestation for equality, human rights, inclusive integration and social justice. The words chosen for this presentation are taken from the chapter "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence" of Dr. King's first autobiography "Freedom." Here he illustrated his own long way to his pledge of nonviolence, as the creed of his existence and the soul of the movement.

True pacifism is not unrealistic submission to evil power. It is rather a courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love, in the faith that it is better to be the recipient of violence than the inflictor of it, since the latter only multiplies the existence of violence and bitterness in the universe, while the former may develop a sense of shame in the opponent, and thereby bring about a transformation and change of heart.

To retaliate in kind would do nothing but intensify the existence of hate in the universe. Along the way of life, someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chains of



hate. This can only be done by projecting the ethic of love to the center of our lives.

In speaking of love at this point, we are not referring to some sentiment of affectionate emotion. It would be nonsense to urge men to love their oppressors in an affectionate sense. Love in this connection means understanding, redemptive goodwill.

—Martin Luther King

The fourth exhibition paid homage to the creator of the concept of civil disobedience, Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau, a transcendentalist at heart, lived in Concord, Massachusetts, along with Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Nathaniel Hawthorne and many other pioneers of nonviolent revolution in the nineteenth century, all of them ardent abolitionists. The wise young Henry of Walden Pond refused to pay poll taxes as his “aesthetic gesture” to protest the U.S.-led war against Mexico and the evil, exploitative system of human slavery. The background music of Henry David Thoreau’s favorite hymn, “Tom Bowling” by Charles Dibdin, made this presentation one of the most beautiful. It included quotes from Thoreau’s essays on Captain John Brown, and the duty of each individual citizen to follow her or his voice of conscience to resist the government by civil disobedience.

Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison... A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority; it is not even a minority then; but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight. If the alternative is to keep all just men in prison, or give up war and slavery, the State will not hesitate which to choose. If a thousand men were not to pay their tax-bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is, in fact, the definition of a peaceable revolution, if any such is possible.

—Henry David Thoreau

The fifth (German language only) exhibition (first time 42x59.4cm sized panels) was the first public display of Carl von Ossietzky’s pacifist views, commemorating the 120<sup>th</sup>

anniversary of his birth. The German journalist and Nobel Peace Laureate of 1936 (posthumously for 1935) set a living example for his democratic, pacifist and republican principles when he decided not to escape from the Hitler dictatorship. An international campaign chose to award him, a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp, the Nobel Peace Prize. Not only was Carl von Ossietzky an avid reader of Leo Tolstoy and inspired by the courage of Mahatma Gandhi; he was also married to the Manchurian nurse and civil rights activist Maud Hester Lichfield-Woods, born in Hyderabad, India, as the daughter of an Anglo-Indian marriage. We chose Karl Amadeus Hartmann's "*Concerto Funebre*" (Funereal Concerto) for orchestra and violin, cast in four movements, to accompany the exhibition. The final chorale is based on a popular German song "*Unsterbliche Opfer*" (Immortal Victims). In Russia, it seems to have originated as a song of mourning for the victims of the 1905 Revolution.

After much consideration, I have made the decision to accept the Nobel Peace Prize that has fallen to me. I cannot share the view put forward to me by the representatives of the Secret State Police that in doing so I exclude myself from German society. The Nobel Peace Prize is not a sign of an internal political struggle, but of understanding between peoples. As a recipient of the prize, I will do my best to encourage this understanding and as a German I will always bear in mind Germany's justifiable interests in Europe.

—Carl von Ossietzky

The sixth exhibition highlighted the leading English art critic of the Victorian era, art patron, draughtsman, watercolorist, prominent social thinker and philanthropist John Ruskin. Ruskin's historic house and gardens at Coniston Water, in Cumbria's Lake District, is a permanent monument for the social critic who inspired Mahatma Gandhi through his four essays on the principles of political economy, "Unto This Last." Additional quotations from "Fors Clavigera," "Munera Pulveris" and "The Stones of Venice" illustrate how John Ruskin intended to uplift the downtrodden and weak to

create welfare for all, not only for a privileged and rich minority according to utilitarianism. His plea for the good labor of the craftsmen, farmers and gardeners convinced the young lawyer Gandhi in South Africa and inspired him to build up his first communal farm, the Phoenix Settlement near Durban. John Ruskin also inspired the Jewish educator, orphanage director and writer Janusz Korczak from Poland to draft the first charter of children's rights, because Ruskin's "The Ethics of the Dust" emphasized the human dignity of children and juveniles.

The first reason for all wars, and for the necessity of national defenses, is that the majority of persons, high and low, in all European nations, are Thieves, and, in their hearts, greedy of their neighbors' goods, land, and fame.

But besides being Thieves, they are also fools, and have never yet been able to understand – that the prosperity of their neighbors is, in the end, their own also; and the poverty of their neighbors, by the communism of God, becomes also in the end their own. 'Invidia', jealousy of your neighbor's good, has been, since dust was first made flesh, the curse of man; and 'Caritas', the desire to do your neighbor grace, the one source of all human glory, power, and material Blessing.

But occult theft – theft which hides itself even from itself, and is legal, respectable, and cowardly – corrupts the body and soul of man, to the last fibre of them. And the guilty Thieves of Europe, the real sources of all deadly war in it, are the Capitalists – that is to say, people who live by percentages on the labor of others; instead of by fair wages for their own.

Capitalists, when they do not know what to do with their money, persuade the peasants, in various countries, that the said peasants want guns to shoot each other with. The peasants accordingly borrow guns, out of the manufacture of which the capitalists get a percentage, and men of science much amusement and credit. Then the peasants shoot a certain number of each other, until they get tired; and burn each other's homes down in various places. Then they put the guns back into towers, arsenals, etc., in ornamental patterns (and the victorious party put also some ragged flags in churches). And

then the capitalists tax both, annually, ever afterwards, to pay interest on the loan of the guns and the gunpowder. This is what capitalists call “knowing what to do with their money”; and what commercial men in general call “practical” as opposed to “sentimental” Political Economy.

—John Ruskin

The seventh exhibition was the first one in Germany about Leo Tolstoy and the Doukhobors (Spirit Wrestlers) from Russia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Canada. We took the opportunity of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Leo Tolstoy’s death to focus on his core message during the last two decades of his life: to resist and be in active solidarity with resisters worldwide. The leader-in-exile of this pacifist and vegetarian community, Peter Verigin, was deeply inspired by Leo Tolstoy’s *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*. On the night of June 28/29 (July 10/11, Gregorian Calendar), 1895, Verigin encouraged a part of his community to demonstratively burn their weapons and resist the military draft in the Caucasus and the Kars province of today’s Turkey. Their persecution by the Tsarist Cossacks led Leo Tolstoy in the year 1897 to nominate the Doukhobors to be recipients of the first Nobel Peace Prize ever, because they served the cause of peace best. The Doukhobors escaped genocide by going into exile in and after 1899, first to Cyprus, then to Saskatchewan in Canada, resettling to British Columbia between 1908 and 1912. They were supported in this by Tolstoy (through the royalties of his last novel *Resurrection*) and his son Sergey, Peter Alexeyevich Kropotkin and Alexei Ilyich Bakunin (the nephew of the Russian anarchist thinker Michael Bakunin), James Mavor (professor of political economy at the University of Toronto), as well as British members of the Quaker Doukhobor Relief Committee. The exhibition featured an interactive multimedia presentation, which included authentic footage of the Doukhobors as well as original voice recordings by Leo Tolstoy, reciting from his wisdom book, *For Every Day*, in English, French and German. These recordings have never been publicly presented before. For the purpose of giving all

visitors of the exhibition a chance to listen to them, we employed digital audio cleaning methods for improved sound quality and provided transcriptions. We owe gratitude to the Canadian Doukhobor historians Andrei Conovaloff, Larry A. Ewashen and KoozmaTarasoff.

The armies can be reduced and abolished only against the will, and not with the will, of the governments. The armies will be reduced and abolished only when the people who, from fear or advantage, sell their liberty and take up a position in the ranks of the army are branded as murderers by public opinion. The armies will be reduced and abolished only when the people who, now unknown and condemned, refuse to give their liberty into the hands of other men to become instruments of murder, in spite of all persecutions and sufferings they bear, are recognized to be what they are: champions and benefactors of humanity. Only then will the armies at first be reduced and then be entirely abolished, and a new era will begin in the life of humanity.

—Leo Tolstoy

The eighth exhibition celebrated the Bengali poet, social thinker and Nobel Laureate in Literature (1913), Rabindranath Tagore, together with the Bangladeshi and Indian communities in Berlin. We presented the polymath Tagore in his poetry, in his essays against nationalism and in his active critical solidarity with Mahatma Gandhi. Along with other celebrities like Einstein, Freud, and Gandhi, “Gurudev” Tagore signed (after the 1919 Declaration of the Independence of the Spirit) the 1926 and 1930 anti-conscription manifestoes that provided the basis for the new “Manifesto against conscription and the military system” launched by the Gandhi Information Center in 1993 ([www.themanifesto.info](http://www.themanifesto.info)). The exhibition again featured an interactive multimedia presentation, which included authentic footage of Rabindranath Tagore singing his composition “*Jana Gana Mana*” (the Indian National Anthem since 1950) and modern choir interpretations of this anthem and Bangladesh’s national anthem, “*Amar Shonar Bangla*,” of which he wrote the lyrics. We owe gratitude to the Bulgarian anthropologist

and teacher Elena Stateva and the social pedagogue Marion Gericke, who has generously assisted us with this and the following exhibitions, and the translator Wolfgang Grätz.

We enter a darkened world possessed by nightmares. Civilized conduct, even as we watch, is being tortured beyond recognition. Such repulsive caricature and world-wide brutalizing of civilization would have been unthinkable a short while ago. Values in civilizations have undergone secret transformation: they are mainly identifiable with skill in material manufacture. Sitting in warehouses stocked with machines breeding goods, greed has become ever more lustful. Nations, vulture-like, hover shamelessly. Sanguinary greed hides behind pulpits and classrooms; streams of religious sermon and science pour from specialized intellects without washing it clean. Civilization's base is being sapped; in the dark underhalls of empires live acquisitive passions; pillars of triumph slowly rot, threatening in their downfall the fabric of same humanity. Where is redress? I wished I knew. Toward abyss slide hoarded empires once formed by feeding, in undisturbed security, on the two weak continents – Asia and Africa. The devourers could not think that their own have-not cousins would one day rise up and threaten their spoils. Whirlwind of killing goes on, weapons follow weapons in unending mathematics, where can this stop? Mutual manslaughter proceeds on premises strewn with leavings of ill-gotten food; yesterday's carousers talk peace today in the hour of disaster, but even then they will not clean their courtyard.

Violent worship, propitiating the gods by sacrificial blood, has continued from man's barbarous past up to this day. Through love alone is worship, great teachers have sometimes proclaimed, but the world has taken this to be true on the spiritual, not on the practical plane. In spheres of life where results can be ignored such teaching signifies, but where results are needed – so runs popular conscience – the gods have to be won over by sanguinary offerings. Behind this lies a patient's faith in bitter, pungent medicines; medicines, indeed, he is convinced, tasting the lacerating drops. So in worldwide political pharmacies virulent remedies are being piled up. Virile tonics, blood-red force advertised in their color. Physicians with high records of death to their credit are venerated; countless deaths may,

conceivably, slowly change a doctor's belief in a particular system of treatment. Death's institutes have been opened everywhere; millions of students are being killed to supply lessons – perhaps man may learn something final from this, but when or where I cannot prophesy. What we find is that lessons go on endlessly, more and more loudly repeated in the classroom they seem never to terminate. Such being the case, I would prefer silence, not knowing what answers to give to path-seekers.

—Rabindranath Tagore

The ninth exhibition was on display in Berlin and Paris, because it was a trilingual exhibition in French, English and German; the exhibition emphasized the relevance of Étienne de La Boétie's "Discourse on Voluntary Servitude" (*Discours de la servitude volontaire*) for the concept of nonviolent non-cooperation that became the premise of Leo Tolstoy as well as of his followers Gandhi and King. La Boétie was a legal scholar who was appointed to the "Bordeaux Parlement" (assembly of lawyers) where he met his friend Michel Eyquem de Montaigne. It was La Boétie, not Montaigne, who wrote the first political essay, thereby inventing this literary genre. Montaigne called La Boétie his greatest friend and hero, because he patiently mediated in the growing conflicts between Catholics and Huguenots in the age preceding the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre. La Boétie's "Discourse on Voluntary Servitude" as facsimile text of the first handwriting was put on display along with photographs of the historic sites of La Boétie at Sarlat and Montaigne's tower at the Château de Montaigne, both in Dordogne, France. We owe gratitude to our collaborator Jean-Louis Jankowski and Dr. Ulrich Klemm (professor of education in Augsburg and Leipzig) for his opening address.

Everyone knows that the fire from a little spark will increase and blaze ever higher as long as it finds wood to burn; yet without being quenched by water, but merely by finding no more fuel to feed on, it consumes itself, dies down, and is no longer a flame. Similarly, the more tyrants pillage, the more they crave, the more they ruin and destroy; the more one yields to them,

and obeys them, by that much do they become mightier and more formidable, the readier to annihilate and destroy. But, if not one thing is yielded to them, if, without any violence they are simply not obeyed, they become naked and undone and as nothing, just as, when the root receives no nourishment, the branch withers and dies.

You sow your crops in order that he may ravage them, you install and furnish your homes to give him goods to pillage; you rear your daughters that he may gratify his lust; you bring up your children in order that he may confer upon them the greatest privilege he knows – to be led into his battles, to be delivered to butchery, to be made the servants of his greed and the instruments of his vengeance; you yield your bodies unto hard labor in order that he may indulge in his delights and wallow in his filthy pleasures; you weaken yourselves in order to make him the stronger and the mightier to hold you in check. From all these indignities, such as the very beasts of the field would not endure, you can deliver yourselves if you try, not by taking action, but merely by willing to be free.

—Étienne de La Boétie

The tenth exhibition (German language only) highlights the German-Jewish journalist, satirist and writer Kurt Tucholsky. Tucholsky was active in the “Never-Again-War” movement (“*Nie wieder Krieg*”-*Bewegung*) between 1919 and 1924 in post-war German Weimar Republic and wrote pacifist articles and poems, e.g., “The Trench” (*Der Graben*, 1924), “Three Minutes To Listen” (*Drei Minuten Gehör*, 1922), “War Against War” (*Krieg dem Kriege*, 1919). Tucholsky collaborated with Carl von Ossietzky as editor of the weekly “*Die Weltbühne*” and authored numerous satirical poems and polemics against the German system of militarism. Already during the early stages of Germany’s fragile first democracy, Tucholsky warned against the danger of a second world war. Hitler would never have succeeded, had Tucholsky’s prophetic visions been heard.



## **The Trench**

Mother, why have you brought up your fellow,  
Taught and tended him for twenty years,  
waited anxiously to hear his “hello,”  
whispered little stories in his ears?

Till they hauled him from his bed and bench  
To the trench, good woman, to the trench.

Sonny, do you still remember Daddy?  
How he used to take you on his arm,  
how he gave a penny to his laddie  
and he chased with you around the farm?

Till they sent him out to fight the French  
in the trench, young fellow, in the trench.

France’s comrades over there were lying  
side by side with England’s workingmen.  
Old and young ones, even boys, fell dying  
where the bullets hit them, there and then.

As their lifeblood ebbed, the soil to drench,  
they were buried in that common trench.

Don’t be proud of chevrons and citations!  
Don’t be proud of medals and awards!  
You stood guard for greedy corporations,  
pseudo-statesmen and the feudal lords.

Yours was just the squalor and the stench  
of the tomb, companions, and the trench!

Dump those flags! A dance of death they’re casting  
to the music of an army band.

When you’re gone – a wreath of everlasting,  
that’s the thank-you from your fatherland.

Think what agony you cause to others:  
 Over there stand fathers, sons and mothers,  
 struggling hard, like you, for meager living –  
 won't you turn to them without misgiving?

Stretch your hand out, let your fist unclench,  
 Across the trench, my friends, across the trench!

—Kurt Tucholsky

The eleventh exhibition shows the anti-war propaganda of the Austrian journalist, performing artist and writer Karl Kraus, whose aphorisms written after the First World War demonstrate his pacifism: “War: first, one hopes to win; then one expects the enemy to lose; then, one is satisfied that the enemy too is suffering; in the end, one is surprised that everyone has lost.” In his unique tragedy “The Last Days of Mankind” (1915-1922), consisting of 200 scenes, Karl Kraus unfolds the dynamics of war propaganda affecting different strata of society. Kraus, in his post-war lectures in Berlin, highly influenced Kurt Tucholsky and so many other contemporaries such as Walter Benjamin and Elias Canetti. Most significant is the poem “The Dying Soldier” which the eminent actor Oskar Werner publicly recited as part of his anti-war poetry readings:

### **The Dying Soldier**

Captain, go and fetch the court martial!  
 I do not want to die for an emperor!  
 Captain, you are the emperor's jerk!  
 Once I'm dead I will no more salute!

When I've gone home to my Lord,  
 I will see the emperor's throne far below  
 and I will laugh at his orders!  
 Where is my village? My son is playing there.

After my Lord has taken me away  
 my last field post letter arrives.

Oh, how they called and called and called!  
 Oh, how deep is my love!

Captain, you are out of your mind  
 for sending me out to this place.  
 My heart has been burnt in the fire,  
 I do not die for a fatherland!

You cannot force me, no you can't!  
 Watch how death breaks those chains!  
 Try to court-martial death!  
 I surely will not die for the emperor!

—Karl Kraus

The twelfth exhibition combined anti-war poetry (from the Thirty Years' War until the Second World War) and anti-war paintings (from Pieter Bruegel the Elder until Pablo Picasso, between 1562 and 1937). Among the exhibition's highlights were three facsimiles: Arthur Rimbaud's poem "The Sleeper in the Valley" (*Le dormeur du val*), Wilfred Owen's poem "*Dulce et decorum est*," and Matthias Claudius' most famous anti-war poem ("*Kriegslied*"):

't is War! 't is War! O God's Angel, keep it away  
 and intervene to stop it!  
 Sadly, it is War—and I do not want it to be my fault!

What could I do if the ghosts of the slaughtered  
 came to me sorrowing in my sleep, bloody, white and pale,  
 and wept before me—what?

If hearty men who went looking for honor,  
 Maimed and half dead, waltzed before me in the dust  
 and cursed me in their dying need?

If a thousand thousand fathers, mothers, brides,  
 So happy before the war, now all miserable, all poor people,

Cried out in grief over me?

If hunger, illness and dire need gathered friend,  
friend and enemy into the grave  
and crowed to me in my honor sitting on a corpse?

What help would crown and land and gold and honor be?  
They could not be delight to me!  
Sadly, 't is War—and I do not want it to be my fault!

—Matthias Claudius

The thirteenth exhibition commemorated the anti-war lyrics and prose of the German writer Wolfgang Borchert, who died from the consequences of the Second World War at age 26 in the year 1947. Facing death, Borchert wrote his last will and testament in a Swiss hospital – his prose poem “Then There’s Only One Thing To Do” (“*Dann gibt es nur eins*”):

You. Man at the machine and man in the workshop. If they order you tomorrow to stop making water pipes and cook pots – and start making helmets and machine guns, then there’s only one thing to do:

Say NO!

You. Girl behind the counter and girl at the office. If they order you tomorrow to fill hand grenades and mount scopes on sniper rifles, then there’s only one thing to do:

Say NO!

You. Factory owner. If they order you tomorrow, to sell gun powder instead of talcum powder and cocoa, then there’s only one thing to do:

Say NO!

You. Researcher in the laboratory. If they order you tomorrow, to invent a new death to do away with old life, then there’s only one thing to do:

Say NO!

You. Poet in your room. If they order you tomorrow not to sing love songs, but songs of hate, then there's only one thing to do:

Say NO!

You. Doctor at the sick bed. If they order you tomorrow to certify men as fit for war, then there's only one thing to do:

Say NO!

You. Minister in the pulpit. If they order you tomorrow to bless murder and praise war as holy, then there's only one thing to do:

Say NO!

You. Captain on the steamer. If they order you tomorrow not to transport wheat – but cannons and tanks, then there's only one thing to do:

Say NO!

You. Pilot at the airfield. If they order you tomorrow to carry bombs and incendiaries over cities, then there's only one thing to do:

Say NO!

You. Tailor at your table. If they order you tomorrow to start sewing uniforms, then there's only one thing to do:

Say NO!

You. Judge in your robe. If they order you tomorrow to report to the military court, then there's only one thing to do:

Say NO!

You. Man at the train station. If tomorrow they order you to give the signal for the ammunition and the troop trains to depart, then there's only one thing to do:

Say NO!

You. Man in the village and man in the city. If they come for you tomorrow and with your induction papers, then there's only one thing to do:

Say NO!

You. Mother in Normandy and mother in the Ukraine, you, mother in Frisco and London, you, on the banks of the Huang Ho and the Mississippi, you, mother in Nepal and Hamburg

and Cairo and Oslo – mothers in all regions on earth, mothers  
all over the world, if they order you tomorrow to bear children  
– nurses for military hospitals and new soldiers for new battles,  
mothers all over the world, then there's only one thing to do:  
Say NO! Mothers, say NO!

—Wolfgang Borchert<sup>44</sup>

Finding Gandhi's Glasses:  
The Unexpected *Satyagraha* of the  
Occupy Movement

DAVID H. WOESSNER

*In this paper, I present the claim that ahimsa can be discovered and pursued by a community without any direct intention to pursue that end. I recount and analyze the specific case of my experience serving as a Protest Chaplain at Occupy Wall Street and Occupy Boston to support this claim, using Gandhi's formulation of satyagraha as a standard.*

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**I. The Community Built on *Ahimsa***

If one were to imagine a community built on the principle of *ahimsa* – a deeply lived commitment to nonviolence toward self and others – what would it look like?

*Who would be welcome?* All would be welcome to join and stay, so long as they were not violent toward their neighbors in word or deed. Even a certain amount of violence in the

community would be accepted and absorbed, if a community member were suffering from an affliction that caused her/him to lash out. The community itself would actively function as a place of healing for such people, working through ailments great and small. There would be no impediment to full membership and participation. One's race, age, gender, gender expression, religion, sexuality, ability or disability, nationality, ethnicity, appearance, customs, history of illness or incarceration would be irrelevant to full acceptance. Such differences would be embraced and celebrated by the community.

*How would such a community make decisions?* All decisions would be made in a radical democracy, a General Assembly, built on the full participation of its members. Procedural rules would be enacted to ensure that all voices were heard and considered, even though such a process would be lengthy and unwieldy. Individuality would be respected. Special deliberation would be raised for those most marginalized, and concern focused on those directly impacted by the choices of the assembly. Complete unanimity in decisions, while desired by many, would not be necessary in all matters, as personal conscience and expression of values and culture would be held sacred and supported within the community. Disputes would be handled peacefully, publicly, and fairly, with the support of the community.

*How would goods and services be shared?* The community would rely upon an economy of generosity. Food, clothing, shelter, basic supplies, and medical care would be available in a "Really Free Market" open to all, and the sharing of these resources would be a joy to all members. Whenever the community received a benefit, this would be considered a resource for everyone. Personal profit would have no meaning, as generosity and giving would be the primary source of common value. The community would be labor intensive, requiring a serious commitment of time and effort to keep the community clean, healthy, and orderly. Every member



would devote some of her time to helping to support the community.

*What would people in this community value and how would they spend their time?* Abundant space would be made for music, art, and cultural expression. A sacred space for the use of all religions would be preserved. A well-stocked library would be a must. Particular honor would be given to the many past figures who have lived and taught *ahimsa*, across cultures and times.

Perhaps more crucial than the formal General Assembly, the community would be radically committed to personal interaction: sharing chores, comparing ideas, telling and listening to stories, debating plans, praying and meditating, creating art, and bursting into song. In these interactions, attention would be paid to *supporting* each other, helping each other to *flourish* by slowly processing and letting go of internal *himsa*, while also *preserving* the mechanism of that support and flourishing. Because of this, ego projection would be unhelpful. This is how *ahimsa* would be most often – if innocuously and inadvertently – practiced: in everyday projects and conversation. While a person's right *not* to interact would be respected, it would be an impediment to the health of the community. The community would make every attempt, both in General Assembly and in everyday life, to engage the un-engaged and welcome them into the community.

But what would it *look* like? With the aims above in mind, we can imagine that such a community would be simple, by design. The shelters would be fairly small and basic, encouraging members to interact in the abundant shared space. While ornament and expression might vary, the general size and footprint would not, allowing for both individuality and equality. Members would *actively choose to live close together*. Contrary to a typical, contemporary, consumption-driven model of community and economy, the primary sources of value would be found in community interdependence and sharing abundantly. Because the very framework of the

community would support these values, it would be *helpful* to be closer, to *share more*. In addition to personal health and well-being, this would also vastly increase efficiency.

*Ahimsa* can be practiced not only in human relation, but also in relation to the Earth and the other animals that inhabit the planet. Thus, the community would value small footprints, efficiency, and sharing. Personal acquisition would be an obstacle to *ahimsa* and devalued as a priority. Of course, given these commitments, the community might also appear to be rather poor, by many standards: people huddled together, almost on top of each other, sharing in common rather than consuming from individual stores. In a community focused on demonstrating and cultivating *ahimsa*, interpersonal conflict is not to be avoided, as it is an opportunity for confronting and working through internal, emotional *himsa*. Thus, avoidance of interaction also would be an obstacle to pursuing *ahimsa* and likewise devalued as a priority.

Scale would be important. Because of the value of interdependence and sharing, the community would work best if it were rather small: a few hundred people at most. The slow work of fostering *ahimsa* through interdependent relationships requires an intimacy, a familiarity, a recognition of faces, and a sense of shared purpose. Should the immediate community become too large, these requisite features would be hard to obtain.

*How would this community interact with other communities?* Given that the *ahimsa* community has these features, it would be an elective community living beside and inside larger communities with divergent values. The *ahimsa* community would engage these other communities first and foremost by their presence, by their very being. *Ahimsa* teaches by example, by demonstrating and abiding by the values for which it stands.

However, members of the community might engage more directly, in marches and vocal demonstrations, giving witness to their values. More than shouting slogans, such

demonstrations would be calls for awareness, calls for the members of the larger community to wake up, to break out of the patterns of their daily lives, to see the various systems of *himsa* in which they intentionally and unintentionally participate. The tone wouldn't be accusatory. After all, everyone faces *himsa*, and those who are enmeshed the deepest are suffering the most. Rather, such demonstrations would be an invitation to join the *ahimsa* community, or to encourage the building of another.

By now, you may be wondering how such a community would even be possible. This description reads more like fantasy than a practicable plan. Yet, if you are reading this in a moderately large city in North America or Western Europe, then chances are that you lived pretty close to just such a community. In the fall of 2011, the Occupy Movement, inspired by the Arab Spring and inaugurated by Occupy Wall Street, gave birth to dozens of these communities around the globe. Thousands of people – most of them completely unfamiliar with living in intimate community, unfamiliar with *ahimsa* as a principle of life, and unfamiliar with each other – came together and created communities according to these principles. How did this happen?

## II. Occupy as Experiment

At the Occupy Boston camp in Dewey Square, the entrance was protected by an eight-foot tall statue of Mahatma Gandhi, on loan from the Peace Abbey in Sherborn, Massachusetts. Gandhi was honored, draped with scarves, covered with flowers, bedecked with posters and prayers, and had his photo taken with hundreds of Occupiers and visitors. It felt like he was part of the community, blessing us and standing a vigil of *ahimsa*. Day after day I passed that statue, sometimes stopping for a chat or a prayer or a fist-bump of solidarity. As I look back on my time living and serving in Dewey Square, his face always comes to my mind. It is only years later that I have begun to consider the reasons for this.

Gandhi entitled his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. This title alone teaches a lesson: finding and living moral truth is not a matter of accepting preconceived notions or attaining instant enlightenment, but is instead a process, a series of attempts, discoveries, and even occasional mis-steps. I had the privilege to serve as a Protest Chaplain, briefly at Occupy Wall Street in its very first days, and then at Occupy Boston, much closer to my home.<sup>45</sup> As I reflect on this time, I am struck by how these communities managed – almost completely unintentionally – to become vibrant hubs that radiated *ahimsa*. They – we – discovered *ahimsa* by experimenting, much as Gandhi’s own work, seen from his own perspective, developed from trial and error.

This is most important to observe: Occupy was an experiment. When one examines Occupy retrospectively, it is easy to misunderstand the movement. What was the plan? What were the goals? Who was the leader? Where was the strategy to transition into a real political party? These criticisms are voiced from the political left and right, sympathizers and antagonists, professional political analysts and casual observers. These criticisms arise from hopes, expectations, and presumptions, but each assumes that Occupy should have followed a script: organizing communities/special interest groups, building consensus, forming alliances, fundraising, power-brokering, etc. All of these efforts should then result in direct, platform-based political participation at local, national, and perhaps international levels. In short, many critics presume the whole process *should* have aimed at the creation of the “Occupy Party” in some form or another. Commentators then enfold the “failure” to reach this presumed conclusion into the narrative of their choice: the hopelessly fractured political left, the inability of moochers to build a sustained movement, the ineffectiveness of grassroots activism, etc.

From this point of view, the encampments and tent cities – the “occupying” of public space – functioned primarily as

an attention grabber for cable news. Living together in public protest was supposed to serve as a great public relations tool to launch a political campaign. However, all of these analyses share a common false premise: that the purpose of Occupy was to unite a coherent party for future political action. Instead, in my experience, Occupy was first and foremost an experiment with truth: a collaborative, piecemeal process of discovery.<sup>46</sup>

For many of us, the primary question wasn't one of political expediency, but rather, "How do we create the kind of community in which we hope to live?" This question provides the starting point that guides any political action: the hope to change the community in which we live. However, most traditional organizing and strategizing instantly moves on: what are our specific issues?, how do we gain political leverage?, etc. But what if one simply stayed with the primary question: "How do we create the kind of community in which we hope to live?" What if we then *tried to create it by living in a small model of it?* What if we kept *developing the community as we went?*

At its heart, this is the truth to which Occupy was committed: the camps were *models*, not political theatre; *real communities* supporting people, not a step on the way to creating savvy talking points. The camps were experiments, showing the world a radical disjunction between the way we live in consumption-driven capitalism and the ongoing shadow of imperialism, and on the other hand a life of peace, generosity, mutual support, and interdependence. To state it more concretely: we sought to model a community in which nobody was hungry, cold, homeless, or alone; where each person was cared for and valued; where community was built on inclusion rather than exclusion; where sharing was the norm rather than hoarding; where violence was not glorified. In short, the community found *ahimsa* as a foundation, though not many Occupiers would have specifically characterized it that way. The community arose out of a series of communal

choices, rather than a predetermined vision. Occupy was a series of experiments in human community.<sup>47</sup>

But why was the experiment important? Wasn't it still a failure in some way? After all, these communities no longer exist. These questions and concerns were answered in the many times I spoke with Occupiers and heard statements like this: "This is the first time I've felt like I'm a part of something," or "It feels good to be next to people, to be in a real community," or "It is nice to remember that people are real, and not just online profiles" or, perhaps most powerfully, "I just want to show everyone that another world is possible." In a social-political context that blithely dismisses nonviolence, communal sharing, and interdependence as farcical and utopian, the simple experiment demonstrating, "Yes, this is possible!" was revolutionary indeed. Equally powerful to witness and remember was the *inability* of the existing external communities and governments to accept the Occupy communities. One need only recall the police-inflicted violence in New York, in Oakland, and the infamous pepper-spray assault at University of California-Davis. For a community living together nonviolently on public space, the response of many public authorities seemed to be charged and disproportional. Viewed from the outside by citizens of capitalist economies and corporatist democracies, the possibility of another world – a communal life founded on completely divergent values – constituted an existential threat. The fear arising from this threat was often embodied and enacted through institutional violence and suppression.

On a personal level, for many Occupiers, this *was* the first real community of which they'd been members. Those disaffected by various combinations of unemployment, urban anonymity, families torn apart by failed justice policies, political disenfranchisement, broken neighborhoods, struggles with addiction, failed re-integration after military service or incarceration, or even those young people who simply grew up completely attached to social media: each

found a place at Occupy. That sense of belonging was palpable. I can remember one television interview with Dr. Cornell West in which he bobbed from side to side, shouting to a far away news anchor, "You've got to come down here and feel the love!" Manic though it may have seemed, this was true. This sense of connection, support, and hope drew many people who had seldom experienced those things in their lives. When many of my friends and colleagues asked why I found Occupy Boston to be so amazing, I was often reduced to responding with one of my favorite, deceptively simple lines from the Gospel of John, in which Jesus says, "Come and see."

### III. Discovering *Satyagraha*

But what was the power of Occupy, that undeniable buzz that so many felt, the sizzling urgency that drew hundreds of thousands to visit but also elicited violent scorn, counter-protest, and armed police response? The more I reflect on it, the more I realize why it is Gandhi's face that comes to mind as I recall Occupy. Gandhi's notion of *satyagraha* is the most fitting explanation of the spirit of Occupy.

Gandhi developed the term *satyagraha* to describe the power of people who stand together to embody nonviolent change.<sup>48</sup>

*Satyagraha* is literally holding on to Truth and it means, therefore, Truth-force. Truth is soul or spirit. It is, therefore, known as soul-force .... Its root meaning is holding on to truth, hence truth-force .... In the application of *Satyagraha* I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one's opponent but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. For what appears to be truth to the one may appear to be error to the other. And patience means self-suffering. So the doctrine came to mean vindication of truth not by infliction of suffering on the opponent but on one's self.<sup>49</sup>

At Occupy Boston, after the first few weeks, it did feel as though we had discovered a precious truth that must be held dear, as though we were living in the midst of something that was pro-

foundly right, good, and fairly simple. Yet, there was also a palpable sense of fragility, an elusive and ephemeral quality: turn your head and it seemed to be a sea of dirty tents filled with malcontents. One could even feel this shift in perception within oneself from one moment to the next: a profound sense of experiencing a lived truth suddenly transformed into fear and despair. Sometimes coming back to the camp after a day or two in the “real” world was hard.

The quote above also refers to the need for patience and sympathy, qualities we attempted to embody, if imperfectly. As just mentioned, this patience was necessary for ourselves: patience with our own *himsa*, our own confusion and conflicting desires. This patience was also required within the camp: many who sought refuge in this open and embracing community brought their issues with them, their *himsa*, their internal violence, which the community had to absorb and attempt to slowly, gently transform. Thus, patience and sympathy were the glue holding the community together.

But, turning our gaze outward – to the world, to the unflappable workaday millions who couldn’t be bothered, to the angry counter-protesters across the street who held signs reading, “Take a shower and get a job” – we also needed to cultivate a relation of patience and sympathy. Those who were threatened by our presence or those who simply ignored this movement also needed to be educated and “weaned” from their blind reliance on systems that are so harmful to humanity and the planet. Patience was a guiding principle that formed Occupy’s message to the world: we occupied public space precisely because we wanted our message to “occupy” more than one news cycle.

Many of us were veterans from past peace protests, including those against the second Iraq War. Numerically, those protests were some of the largest in the U.S. history, but we watched as the news media gave a brief nod and then cut to weather and sports. The culture of militaristic capitalism could easily deploy the weapons of mass distraction to absorb



the impact of massive protests: they only lasted for one day. In contrast, Occupy was intended to have staying power, to keep these issues and hopes in people's minds, to morph from a single event into a larger happening that couldn't be ignored. This was a testament to patience.

Sympathy was also crucial to our approach: these were systemic issues that we all faced, whether as victims or perpetrators. When a system is thoroughly bound and interwoven with *himsa*, everybody suffers, even the benefactors of such systems, because the rewards they receive come at such a great and unwholesome cost to others. This fact and the potential for its discovery renders the benefits of systemic *himsa* to be perilous pleasures, ethically and pragmatically. Thus, even the bankers who looked on quizzically or with derision (Dewey Square sits in the middle of the Financial District in Boston) deserved no less sympathy, and perhaps more, because they were so deeply entwined and dependent upon a system of unchecked predation and harm. It was easy to feel ire toward the people who were prime contributors and organizers of such a system, but to them our "truth appeared to be error." Thus, patience and nonviolence were both necessary to teach and invite them into a new way of looking at the world. "We are the 99%," a common chant of Occupy, raised consciousness of the vast inequality in the economic system. But it is true that 100% of the world was invited to join. I actually had some great conversations with bankers and business folks who dropped by.

Further developing his thoughts on *satyagraha*, Gandhi later wrote:

It is a fact beyond dispute that a petition, without the backing of force, is useless .... A petition of an equal is a sign of courtesy; a petition from a slave is a symbol of his slavery. A petition backed by force is a petition from an equal and, when he transmits his demand in the form of a petition, it testifies to his nobility. Two kinds of force can back petitions. "We shall hurt you if you do not give this," is one kind of force; it is the force of arms .... The second kind of force can thus be stated: "If you do not concede

our demand, we shall be no longer your petitioners. You can govern us only so long as we remain the governed; we shall no longer have any dealings with you.” The force implied in this may be described as love-force, soul-force .... This force is indestructible. He who uses it perfectly understands his position .... The force of arms is powerless when matched against the force of the soul.<sup>50</sup>

Here, Gandhi underscores the sheer power, the “force” of *satyagraha*. At first, this term may seem incongruous with the aims and methods of *ahimsa*. Yet, in the experiment that was Occupy, we became aware that we were indeed relying upon a force: the force of radical non-compliance and non-participation in economies and governments completely dependent upon *himsa*. We were “no longer petitioners,” acknowledging the brokenness of the democracies in which we lived. Marching, protesting, writing letters to our representatives, even organizing according to “traditional means” didn’t address the large scale and systemic violence and disenfranchisement we saw in everyday life: for-profit prisons, big bank bailouts, subsidies for oil companies already making record profits, the examples of the radical absurdities are many. It was evident that little recourse could be found in a political system reliant on these same systems. Thus we discovered the force of *satyagraha*, the decision not to “play along,” publicly and inconveniently for a prolonged time. The force of this decision was evident, not only to those who visited, but to those who opposed us. The visibility and viability of any alternatives are threatening to systems reliant on *himsa*, systems that posit inevitability as a means of coercion: “another world is *not* possible.”

Occupying a public square, attempting to be as safe and self-reliant as possible, the city nevertheless sought to remove us, violently if necessary. Why? Arguments were made: we were dangerous to ourselves, despite following health codes and fire codes and having several trained medics on site; we were an undue cost to the city’s municipal budget, due to the fact that police were “compelled” to actively surveil us; we were

displacing other citizens, disrespecting their rights to use this space in the ways they wished. Aside from the fact that the occasional jogger could not enjoy her usual route through a small, empty green space, what threat did we pose? The visible and enduring presence of an incongruous community pursuing *ahimsa* in the midst of towers of privilege and profit was a threatening force. By our non-participation in our given stations, by our visible option of another experimental way of life, we were “forcing” those watching to acknowledge the *himsa* caused by the unsatisfactory systems of our lives. We were “forcing” them to confront the natural discomfort one feels when beholding unnecessary suffering. Gandhi’s subtle wording surprises: “He who uses [*satyagraha*] perfectly understands his position.” That is, by living into the promise of *ahimsa* alongside others, one comes to understand *why* one is choosing this method. *Satyagraha* is self-disclosing and the method is inseparable from the content of the message. To live it is to comprehend its force and necessity: any cause that would “use” *satyagraha* as a method will discover that their cause must then be shaped by *satyagraha*. *Satyagraha* is the larger force, the more profound truth. It was this we discovered in Dewey Square. The truth, lived, is a strong force indeed.

#### IV. Finding Gandhi's Glasses

By December, the situation was tense. For weeks the city had been pressing for an eviction of the square, by force if necessary. The police presence had been constant, and there had already been many confrontations. The Boston Police had, on the whole, been quite professional and courteous in the execution of their orders. Moreover, many of them had expressed open support for the Occupy Boston community. But on December 7, 2011, after a long series of legal battles, Suffolk Superior Court Judge Frances McIntyre lifted the temporary restraining order that had been protecting the Occupy Boston community at Dewey Square. With an eviction notice to serve, and hundreds of people to be removed against their wills, the chance for violence presented itself alarmingly.

Faced with these pressures, the General Assembly was tense. No immediate plan reached strong consensus. Some were absolutely committed to remaining until removed, practicing active *satyagraha*. Others believed that the community, having shown that it could survive and thrive, should willingly vacate the square with celebration and fanfare. After all, it had been an amazingly liberating time, colder winter days were coming, and there was hope for a new phase of Occupy Boston. Still others were apprehensive and would not promise to remain nonviolent and non-retaliative, should the police lose control and harm people directly, as we had seen in Oakland, New York, and countless other sites. Though nonviolence had bound our community, many were not mentally and emotionally prepared for potentially violent opposition from a well-armed force.

Emotions ran high. Some began celebrating and dancing. Others took down tents and cleaned up. Still others barricaded themselves in, obstructing the eviction as much as they could. When the news of the imminent eviction went public, hundreds more came to Dewey: some to help, some to celebrate, some to gloat in counter-protest, some to fight the eviction. A barely contained and manic chaos emerged. As Protest Chaplains, we donned our albs and clergy attire, signaling our solidarity with this community that had become our own home. We were prepared for the struggle to come. In the midst of these preparations, one point was clear: all valuable items should be carefully packed and removed. The sacred space, the library, the artworks, the kitchen, the supply tents: each was carefully dismantled and prepared for transport off-site. One sacred object demanded special attention: Gandhi. On that chilly night, as dozens of police lined up, it was clear that the statue should be moved to safety, and that Gandhi's spirit was needed now more than ever.

It took many hands to delicately carry our benefactor. We planned to place him in the midst of our General Assembly area, next to a wall and abutting the library, under the bright,

shining projection that read, "You can't evict an idea!" We hoped this would be the safest place in the camp. Soon, a moving truck would arrive to return him to the Peace Abbey in one piece, but for now, he would reside in the heart of Occupy. If the police came quickly, many of us had envisioned clinging to the statue for safety, support, and inspiration.

All of the extra people crowding the square made our progress difficult. The statue was unwieldy, and we almost dropped him a number of times. We wove through brass bands; Quaker activists; full-dress Marines holding posters of the First Amendment, standing as peaceful sentries in solidarity; as well as the sad remains of many beautiful, beloved tent homes. In time, we arrived at the General Assembly wall. As we stood Gandhi upright, it became clear that there was a problem. Gandhi's glasses, thought to be attached to the rest of him, had gone missing. In the thrall of the high emotions, this situation created another small panic. Gandhi had stood whole in our midst for so long, and now he was broken. On this evening that tasted sour with defeat, with the threat of real violence, and some of our community unable to commit to *ahimsa*, the damage to Gandhi began to feel unbearable. The symbolism was palpable.

We retraced our steps, but even more people were flooding the camp, and building materials, tents, plywood, and garbage bags had filled our path behind us. The search took on a frantic urgency as more police began to arrive. Suddenly, in a small miracle, they were found. John Dwyer, an Occupier and journalist chronicling Occupy Boston, and Kate Layzer, a minister and Protest Chaplain, found the glasses lying in the mud, not far from where Gandhi had long stood. I soon met them, barely able to hear their shouts of joy over the din of the crowd. We had fun, each putting the giant, oversized glasses on our faces. Charged with the bittersweet joy of the moment, I bounded across the camp, alb billowing and cross bouncing, back to the statue, where the movers were still waiting in anxious anticipation. Tipping Gandhi down

and boosting the glasses up, we fit them on again. Our spiritual guide was bespectacled again, looking more fragile and bookish, and thus more himself. The cheers resounded with real, true exuberance. Though ramshackle and often unsure of ourselves, we hadn't broken Gandhi after all. In spite of ourselves and almost accidentally, we had come to view the world as he did, we had stumbled backward over *satyagraha*. We had shown ourselves and everyone watching that another world *was* possible, and unwittingly we had followed the same path Gandhi prescribed, memorialized in words that are perhaps apocryphal, but nonetheless true to his spirit: "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win." In these last few hours of Occupy as we had known it, feeling afraid and defeated in some ways, most of us still felt that we had won.

A Three-Dimensional Model  
of Living with *Ahimsa*:  
The Life-Story of a Chinese Farmer  
LIU BANGCHUN

*This paper presents the life-story of a Chinese farmer who has been practising living with ahimsa by following the wisdom of Confucius. The narrator extends his peaceful way of life in a three dimensional frame: etiquette (a marital dimension), forgiveness (a political dimension), and benevolence (an inter-personal dimension).*

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### **Introduction**

This paper presents the life-story of a Chinese farmer in his seventies. He has been practising living with *ahimsa* by following the wisdom of Confucius as seen in these words:

The ancient people who desired to have clear moral harmony in the world would first order their national life; those who desired to order their national life would first regulate their home life; those who desired to regulate their home life would first cultivate their personal lives; those who desired to cultivate

their personal lives would first set their hearts right; those who desired to set their hearts right would first make their wills sincere; those who desired to make their wills sincere would first arrive at understanding; understanding comes from the exploration of knowledge of things. When the knowledge of things is gained, then understanding is reached; when understanding is reached, then the will is sincere; when the will is sincere, then the heart is set right; when the heart is set right, then the personal life is cultivated; when the personal life is cultivated, then the home life is regulated; when the home life is regulated, then the national life is orderly; and when the national life is orderly, then the world is at peace. From the Emperor down to the common man, the cultivation of personal life is the foundation for all. It is impossible that when the foundation is disorderly, the superstructure can be orderly. There has never been a tree whose trunk is slender and whose top branches are heavy and strong. There is a cause and a sequence in things, and a beginning and an end in human affairs. To know the order of precedence is to have the beginning of wisdom.

These words of Confucius can be graphically presented in terms of the following three-dimensional model of living with *ahimsa*.

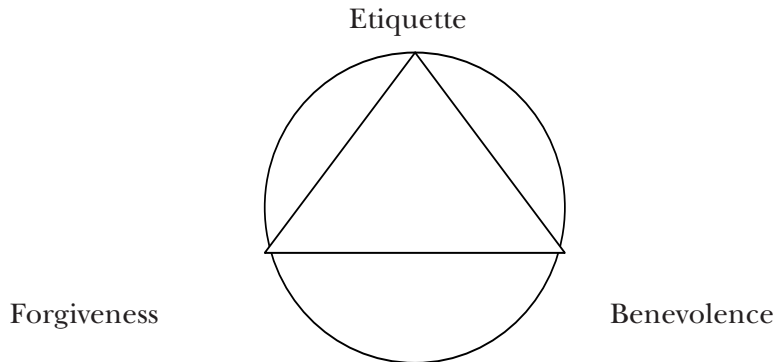


Figure 1. The three-dimensional model of living with *ahimsa*

### The Story

I was born in 1938, in a small Chinese village. As the first boy among my siblings, I gained great honor from my parents because of the son-preference tradition in Chinese culture.



Being the first son brought me much responsibility for the family. My father's elder brother didn't have any children, so I was adopted into my uncle's family. From then on I called my uncle and his wife Father and Mother, while I called my biological parents Uncle and Aunt. My father was a diligent farmer; he saved money to buy some land, and later became a wealthy landlord. His fortune brought me a happy childhood, but almost brought me disaster in my later life. As he could afford it, my father had me homeschooled by a private tutor.

My village is near the hometown of Confucius and his teaching has had a profound impact on the people in my hometown.

### **I. Etiquette – A Marital Dimension**

Confucius thought that proper etiquette was essential to help people know how to behave well and to keep the society peaceful and in good order. My marriage was decided by my parents as part of the etiquette of the 1940s. When I was a little boy, I was engaged to a girl almost as old as me whom I had never seen. But I was told by my parents that her family status was almost at the same level as ours. The first unlucky event that happened to me was that this very lady became ill and died at the age of 15. When this sad news was sent to my family, my father decided that my "fiancee" (who I had never seen) would be buried in our family vault. This implies that she obtained moral and legal membership in my family. A very important funeral ceremony was held between my family and the girl's family. Our acceptance of the girl greatly relieved her family, because in the traditional cultural belief system, her spirit would never become a lonely ghost because she had a "husband" to accompany her whenever he died. So her family was very grateful to my family.

Later on I was engaged to another woman who was four years older than me. I married her when I was 18. I have to say that the so-called traditional etiquette was not fair to my wife. Because of the death of my first fiancee, my wife would

be treated as a concubine and would be assigned the second position when she was buried in the family vault. Fortunately, the role of this etiquette has been declining in my hometown for many years, so my real wife has been recognized as my first wife. We have four children and are now living a happy life in our seventies.

I cite this as an example of practising *ahimsa* in the context of marriage. We were able to solve a potentially unhappy marital situation in a peaceful way that recognized the dignity of every party who was involved.

## **II. Forgiveness – A Political Dimension**

Confucius understood forgiveness in two ways. In a positive way, he advocated the point: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. In a negative way, he insisted, “do not do to others what you would not have them do to you.” His words have been carved in a plaque at the United Nations in New York.

My life has been full of ups and downs; the difficulties I encountered were deeply related to political developments in China from the 1940s to the 1970s, and my ideas on forgiveness have brought both strength and calm to my inner heart.

I was one of the top students in my village and later got the chance for a college education in engineering in 1955. The early spring in 1957, during my last semester in college, was a dramatic turning point in my life. I stood a good chance of getting a stable job in a city as a talented engineering graduate. But just at that time, my family encountered great difficulty.

In 1957 my father was a landlord so he was deprived of his political rights. All the land and houses of my family were confiscated by the new village leaders, who used to be poor and who hated the wealthy villagers. Therefore my family's land was taken away, and our big and comfortable house was overtaken by the village leader committee. My family was almost homeless and in the lowest political status in our village.

In such a political environment, I couldn't continue college and had to quit and return to my hometown to support my family. I had to start doing farm work in my village. My working skills were so poor the villagers all laughed at me. So I got the lowest work allowance in my village.

In the nation-wide famine of 1958, both my biological parents died of hunger. My family members struggled against hunger, eating dried leaves, grass roots, almost anything edible. At the same time, my family had to suffer from numerous political persecutions; I had to find a cave to live in with my family members. Then in the next several years, I started to build new houses in a deep hole in my village. I led my family members to carry soil and stones from a hill nearby to fill up the deep hole, and then we began to construct new houses with our bare hands.

1966 to 1976 was the time of the "Cultural Revolution." My father suffered numerous inhuman treatments in my village as he bore the title of landlord. He was frequently denounced in struggle sessions in the village and was assigned to clean the streets every day. He became so nervous at those inhuman treatments, sometimes he could not stop wetting his trousers the moment he was informed that he was to attend another struggle session.

Because of our low political status, almost every member of our family was a victim of the "Cultural Revolution." My youngest brother and my first son both suffered great difficulty in getting married, because few young ladies were willing to risk marrying a young man with low political status. Happily they did get married eventually. My children suffered being looked down upon by others. But on the other hand, they learned how to work harder than most other kids in the village and to exert every effort to live a better life. So today, two of my children have obtained Ph.D. degrees and they now have positions in universities, and the other two have happy lives as successful farmers.

The year 1979 was a political turning point in my life because my father's earlier condemnation was reversed, and

he recovered his political rights. My family got equal political rights in my village. A new village leader committee was formed and I got a chance to work in the town government in the engineering section for several years.

I was encouraged by some neighbors to make accusations against the evil deeds of the former village leaders who had wronged my family. But I thought they were also victims, victims of the structural and societal violence of that time. I therefore forgave them. I also reminded my children to get along well with the children of the former village leaders. I am trusted by almost every village member, and have a good reputation. I have been invited to resolve conflicts among families or neighbors in a nonviolent and non-governmental way. I have become the grassroots village president to host both weddings and funerals in my village.

I feel it is my great honor to serve my village in my own nonviolent way. All the difficulties in my life ultimately became a source of calm and great power in my heart.

### **III. Benevolence: An Inter-Personal Dimension**

In Confucius's theory, benevolence means love from a wide perspective. A man can love not only his parents, his family members, but also neighbors or even strangers. The stress is on love at the interpersonal level. As a son, I behave filially to both my biological parents and my own parents. It is required that I come to greet my parents twice a day, in the early morning and at night when I am home. As an elder brother, I take it as my responsibility to care for my brothers and sisters. Because my parents died at an early age, I actually behaved as a father to my brothers and sisters. I financially supported them to get married and gave them suggestions on family developments. As a father, I love my children and save every penny to support them to go to school. As a neighbor, I am friendly and honest to my fellow villagers and thus I gain great respect from them, as mentioned above.

I have to say that my benevolence to a stranger turned a disaster into a miracle and gained me the greatest happiness in my life.

In 1975 my fourth child, a lovely two-year-old girl, lost her life when she stepped too close the edge of a cliff. My family felt terribly sad but could do nothing to save her. At that time, a lady who was assigned to be a knitting teacher stayed at our shabby cave. This stranger soon became my wife's best friend. Witnessing my wife in such deep sorrow, the lady decided to bring her sixth daughter, a two-month old baby, to comfort my wife, a poor desolate woman. This decision actually benefitted two families. On one hand, the knitting lady was torn between nursing and caring for her baby at home and going to make money by selling products in the market. The baby girl would have died if she was left alone half of every day. So this decision really offered the baby girl a better way to survive. And at the same time, the baby girl was a great consoling comfort to my wife. She had to contribute almost every minute of care for the new comer, the baby girl, so she didn't have any time to dwell on her sadness over her dead daughter. I have to say that this baby girl is an angel in my family. My family has led a better life since she came to us. Moreover, my adopted daughter is very smart and became the first Ph.D. in peace psychology from my village.

As a common farmer in my seventies, I feel so happy and calm when looking back on my life. All the difficulties I encountered never destroyed me but made me spiritually stronger. My individual *ahimsa* way is deeply influenced by Chinese Culture, the culture of Confucius, and I will feel blessed if any reader benefits from my life story.

### **Acknowledgment**

I would like to thank my father, Liu Huairan, who allows me to write this paper in his narrative voice; I would like to thank my mother, Huang Yuanying, for telling me the story of her life. I wish that my parents will be happy forever.

## *Ahimsa: The Life Force of Humanity*

SULEKH C. JAIN

*The concept and practice of ahimsa is the most profound contribution of the Jains. Its idea of unconditional reverence for life in all forms, and its commitment to the progress of human civilization and to the preservation of the natural environment, continue to have a profound and pervasive influence on life everywhere. In India the ahimsa of the Jains has played a significant role in shaping many customs and traditions, one being vegetarianism. This essay discusses in detail the foundation of ahimsa; its basic types, forms, and classifications; the causes of himsa; and how to practice ahimsa to bring internal and external harmony, peace and spiritual uplift.*

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I'd like to begin this chapter with a poem, "I want to be Jain," written by Ruthvi Shah, a ten-year-old Jain girl in San Diego, USA.

I want to feed the hungry  
I want to wipe the tears of the sad

I want to give to the needy

I want to be Jain...

I want to push all the anger out of my heart

I want to make room for forgiveness instead

I want to ask for forgiveness for bad things I may have done

I want to be Jain...

I want animals to live and be free

I want people to understand animals are like us

I don't want to use them for my needs

I want to be Jain...

I don't want to lie or cheat

I don't want to take advantage of others

I want to be honest and truthful

I want to be Jain...

I don't want to insist that I am correct

There is more than one right answer to a question

If I don't insist I am right, there will be not fights

I want to be a Jain...

Bhagwaan Mahavir

Let me walk on your path

The path that took you to liberation

Let it take me there too

Let me spread love, peace and joy

Oh how I want to be Jain... oh how I want to be Jain!

### **Jainism – A Living Tradition**

Jainism, an ancient religion originating in India – along with Hinduism and Buddhism – is an integral part of India. The Jain tradition, which enthroned the philosophy of ecological harmony and nonviolence as its lodestar, flourished

for centuries side-by-side with other schools of thought in ancient India. It formed a vital part of the mainstream of ancient Indian life, contributing greatly to its philosophical, artistic and political heritage. During certain periods of Indian history, many ruling elites as well as large sections of the population were Jains.

Although the eight to ten million Jains estimated to live in modern India constitute a tiny fraction of its population, the message and motifs of the Jain perspective, its unconditional reverence for life in all forms, and its commitment to the progress of human civilization and to the preservation of the natural environment, continue to have a profound and pervasive influence on Indian life and its outlook. Jainism, with its distinctive views on matters such as nonviolence and intellectual relativism, has relevance to the life and thought of not only of this century but also many centuries to come.

Jainism has succeeded in maintaining its integrity as a separate system in the midst of preponderant Hinduism. Jainism is a complete system with all necessary branches such as ontology, metaphysics, philosophy, epistemology, ethics, and rituals. It has its own scriptures, temples (architecturally, some of the most beautiful temples in India are the Jain temples) and deities, places of worship and pilgrimage, and its own festivals and fairs. The organized religious group consists of ascetics and householders of both genders.

Jainism was not founded by any one individual. It is a philosophy which developed over a long period of time and then acquired its own distinctive status within the broad Indian system. Its latest prophet, Lord Mahavira, was a contemporary of Lord Buddha and more than 2500 years ago he lived in the same Indian state of modern Bihar, as did Lord Buddha. Lord Mahavira's teachings exerted a very strong influence on Indian thought and way of life.

The Sanskrit word "Jain" means "the followers of *Jinas*" – those who conquered their selves by conquering their inner



enemies and passions of anger, greed, ego, deceit, attachment, aversion, and hatred, and thereby attained complete perfection and omniscience. Jainism is well known in India, but because of its non-missionary nature, it is relatively much less known outside India although its principles of nonviolence and intellectual relativism are quite well recognized. In the twentieth century, the most vibrant and illustrious example of Jain influence was that of Mahatma Gandhi, acclaimed as the Father of the Indian Nation. Gandhi's spiritual mentor and friend, Shrimad Rajchandra, was a Jain. The two great men corresponded, until Rajchandra's death, on issues of faith and ethics. The central Jain teaching of *ahimsa* (nonviolence) was the guiding principle of Gandhi's civil disobedience in the cause of freedom and social equality. His ecological philosophy found apt expression in his observation that the greatest work of humanity could not match the smallest wonder of nature.

The essence of Jainism is concern for the welfare of every being in the universe and for the health of the universe itself. To that end:

- Jains believe that animals and plants, as well as human beings, contain living souls. Each of these souls is considered of equal value and should be treated with respect and compassion.

- Jains are strict vegetarians and live in a way that minimizes their use of the world's resources.

- Jains believe in reincarnation and seek to attain ultimate liberation, which means escaping the continuous cycle of birth, death and rebirth so that the immortal soul lives forever in a state of bliss.

- Liberation is achieved by eliminating all *karma* from the soul.

- Jainism is a religion of self-help.

- There are no gods or spiritual beings that will help human beings.

– The three guiding principles of Jainism, also known as the “three jewels,” include right belief, right knowledge, and right conduct.

– The supreme principle of Jain living is nonviolence (*ahimsa*).

– This is one of the five *mahavratas* (the five great vows). The other *mahavratas* are non-attachment to possessions, not lying, not stealing, and sexual restraint (with celibacy as the ideal).

– Jains understand that 2600 years ago, Lord Mahavira gave Jainism its present-day form.

– The texts containing the teachings of Mahavira are called the *Agamas*.

– Jains are divided into two major sects; the Digambara (meaning “sky clad”) sect and the Svetambara (meaning “white clad”) sect.

– Jainism has no priests. Its professional religious people are monks and nuns, who lead strict and ascetic lives.

### **The Connection between *Ahimsa* and Jainism**

Nearly 2,600 years ago, Lord Mahavira laid down a very specific and detailed code of conduct for Jain laity in regard to the practice of *ahimsa* in their daily lives. He also, through his own self-practice, preaching and practical demonstrations, strongly objected and revolted against the prevalent practices of *himsa* (violence) in many customs and traditions of the day. These included animal sacrifices in religious rituals; slavery; societal discrimination on the basis of caste, gender, and economic status; and pollution and destruction of the environment. Lord Mahavira made *ahimsa* the centerpiece of his sermons and of his fourfold *Sangh* (community).

This concept of unconditional *ahimsa* toward all life forms is the most profound contribution of Jains to India and to the world. In India, the *ahimsa* of the Jains has played a significant

role in shaping many customs and traditions, one of them being vegetarianism.

As Atul Shah, chief editor of the London-based *Jain Spirit* notes:

For Jains, *ahimsa* is an everyday word. However, for many people, violence is an everyday experience. They would not think twice about arguing with someone or even having a fight. Many do not care how or where their food comes from – they seem to be angry all the time. A non-vegetarian diet is the norm and vegetables the exception. The message of *ahimsa* is quite remote from their day-to-day life. Many of these people have not experienced genuine love – ever. To them, it is normal to argue. And the modern world of greed and materialism exacerbates this violence.

As the centerpiece of Jainism – and *ahimsa* is the *aatmaa* (soul) – it is the only vehicle (means) to cross this ocean of *samsara* (worldly existence).

In reality, *ahimsa* and Jainism are two sides of the same coin. Jainism stands on the pillar of *ahimsa*. Gary Francione defines *ahimsa* as “staying in equanimity” (*samyaktvabhaav*) and notes that any step away from equanimity is *himsa* or can be understood as walking toward *himsa*. *Himsa* refers to any action accompanied by the giving of pain or rise of passions, whereas *ahimsa* is about not inflicting harm and pain to one’s self or others in thoughts, words, or actions.

#### **Four Stages of *Karmas***

Jains believe that *himsa* is the sole cause of the inflow, binding, and increasing of the *karmic* load and only *ahimsa* leads to the stopping and shedding – and thus the reduction of the *karmic* load. Now we will turn in earnest to *karma* and its mechanisms: *ahimsa* or *himsa*.

In Jain philosophy, significant emphasis is given to the four stages of *karma*. These include: 1. inflow (the incoming movement) of *karma*, called *Asrava*; 2. binding of *karma*, called *Bandha*; 3. stoppage of the inflow of *karma*, called *Samvar*, and 4. annihilation or destruction of *karma*, called *Nirjara*.

All un-liberated (mundane) souls are bound by *karmas*. The quantity and intensity of the binding and quality of *karmas* depend upon one's own actions in life.

*Karma* can be likened to a dust storm around a house. As soon as the window of the house is opened, the dust particles start coming in. This is *asrava* or inflow. The quantity, intensity, and quality of incoming dust particles is now controlled by the speed of the incoming particles, how much of the window is open, for how long and whether the window has some kind of wire screen on it or not.

Now the dust particles stick to and accumulate on the floors and walls of the house. This is *Bandha*, or binding or attachment. After a while the window is closed slightly or completely. Then, the inflow of the dust is either reduced or completely stopped. This is called *samvar* (stoppage). Now, the owner of the house takes a vacuum cleaner and removes all or some of the dust particles. This is called *nirjara* (annihilation or destruction), or reducing the *karmic* load of the particles.

*Himsa* is the cause of *asrava* (influx) of *papa* (bad or sinful) *karma* and *ahimsa* is the path to *samvar* (stoppage of inflow) of *karma*.

This world (*samsara*) is comprised of two major entities: living matter (*jiva*) and nonliving matter (*ajiva*). The latter has no life at all. In the act of *himsa*, the perpetrator and the sufferer are always the *jiva*, not the *ajiva*, though it is possible that nonliving matter (*ajiva*) may be used by the *jiva* as a means to perform *himsa*. However, it is certain that, on its own, nonliving matter (*ajiva*) does not commit *himsa*, except when assisted by natural forces such as gravity, wind, water, heat, or light, resulting in earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, fires, tornadoes, and hurricanes, for example, in which *jivas* may be harmed or killed. The difference between the two is that in natural calamities, the *jivas* are affected (and hence suffer), but the doer (the earthquake, for example) has no motive or intention to cause pain and suffering to others.

A soul attracts and binds *karmas* with other souls and living matter only, and not with non-living matter (*pudgal*). But in this binding, one may use the help of non-living matter as a means or mechanism to do *himsa* to one's self or to other souls.

Abstinence from harming or killing others must be observed in thought, word, and deed. The mere thought of hurting or killing is as immoral as actually killing. Hence, according to Jains, the principle of *ahimsa* implies purity of thought, word, and deed, actuated by universal love and mercy. There are 106 types of violence, as analyzed in Jainism. What is important to note is that Jain *ahimsa* is extended equally toward human and sub-human life. *Ahimsa* reverences not only mankind but all organic life. Indeed, Jains think that, in certain contexts, harmless biological existence is a supreme ethical value.

There are many terms that define *ahimsa* – not just nonviolence, but also compassion, not injuring, not hurting, not harming, not interfering, not disturbing, and not killing, as well as the Sanskrit words *karuna*, *anukampa*, and *dayā*. But none of these terms come close to defining the magnitude and full impact of *ahimsa*.

An eminent American professor once commented that the Hippocratic Oath, which medical doctors take during graduation, is based on *ahimsa*. Similarly, the Jain concept of *paras-prop-graho-jivanam* (all life forms are bound together and dependent on each other for their support) gave rise to the whole ecological movement.

Surely there are hundreds of similar practical, cultural, and philosophical examples showing how Jainism and its philosophy of *ahimsa* have shaped many traditions and practices in the conduct of business, justice, medicine, and other disciplines.

The spark of *himsa* starts in the mind that, if not controlled, becomes a fire in speech and, if still not controlled, becomes an inferno by the time it reaches the stage of action.

It is important to note that while mental *himsa* affects only oneself, verbal and physical *himsa* affect both one's self and others, directly and indirectly.

*Ahimsa* is not only the supreme religion or virtue but is also the only motto or identity of a spiritual person. Without the practice of *ahimsa*, one cannot be a practitioner of spirituality.

The one who follows *ahimsa* (including householders and mendicants, *sādhu*, *sādhvi*, *shrāvaka* and *shrāvika*) is called *ahimsak*. An *ahimsak* not only believes in *ahimsa* but also actively and proactively practices and lives by *ahimsa* in his daily living, moment by moment.

Some form of *himsa* in life is unavoidable. But an *ahimsak* is always mindful, practices *ahimsa* with utmost care and due diligence, and strives to find an alternative to minimize *himsa* continuously, in all circumstances and ways. For an *ahimsak*, *ahimsa* is the only way of life and he constantly strives to avoid harm to any living being by thoughts, speech, or actions. Such a code of conduct can then be called the *ahimsak* way of life.

All *jivas* (life forms) have in common four essential traits; these include hunger, reproduction, sleep, and fear. Only humans have the freedom to make a choice of what kind of food to eat (causing some level of *himsa*) or what kinds of clothing to wear (again, causing some level of *himsa*). All nonhuman life forms (*jivas* who have from one sense up to five senses) don't have as much freedom of choice. They operate in these four essential areas based on natural instinct and need.

An act of *himsa* by a *jiva* can be divided into two categories; the act is either a natural habit, or instinct, such as a carnivorous animal killing other *jiva* for food, or a choice, in which the chooser and doer of *himsa* is generally a human being.

In this *samsara*, human beings cause the greatest *himsa* because they choose to cause *himsa*. They are not required or

forced to commit *himsa* through either habit or natural predisposition. The reason human beings cause *himsa* for food is that they choose to kill other *jivas*. Humans also have choice to refrain from killing and thus to live a healthy life by consuming only plant-based foods. Generally, only humans hoard, enslave others, engage in wars, destroy the environment, kill and rape for pleasure, commit assaults, terrorize others, or participate in trafficking of other beings. No other species does such things and thus causes such massive amounts of *himsa*, all by choice.

### **History of Ahimsa**

The doctrine of *ahimsa* was founded by Eastern teachers several millennia ago. Almost all thinkers and founders of religious orders universally accept *ahimsa* as a core principle of human conduct. Though truth-seekers like Mahavira, Buddha, and Jesus Christ, philosophers like Laotse and Confucius, and stalwarts like Pythagoras were separated by geographical boundaries, their work speaks to the eternality of truth. In Jainism in particular, nonviolence is considered a supreme moral virtue (*ahimsa parmo dharma*).

An analysis of the different religions and philosophies of India and perhaps the whole world shows that the *sramana* tradition – of which Jainism and Buddhism are two religious expressions emanating from almost the same place and time in India – describes nonviolence as the heart of the doctrine to eliminate pain. A further analysis shows that Lord Mahavira, a few years senior to Buddha and the latest founder-maker of Jainism, experienced and envisioned the subtlest form of nonviolence and thus made it the very heart of all his doctrines, ethics, and spiritual practices. He defined nonviolence in the first limb of the Jain canons, known as *Acaranga*, as follows: “I so pronounce that all omniscient lords of all times state, speak, propagate, and elaborate that nothing which breathes, which exists, which lives, and which has any essence or potential of life, should be destroyed, or ruled, or subjugated, or harmed, or denied its essence or potential.”

He further said: “That which you consider destroying or disciplining or harming or subjugating or killing is [like] yourself. The results of your actions have to be borne by you, so do not destroy anything.”

The above doctrine, preached by Mahavira, is based on the eternal truth that “the nature of all living beings is to be happy, peaceful, and enjoy bliss.” Put another way, nonviolence is our very nature.

Later in his career, in the tenth limb of the Jain canons known as *Prasna Vyakarana*, Mahavira explained the practice of nonviolence in social activities by using sixty-four synonyms, such as kindness (*dayā*), compassion (*anukampā*), security (*rakṣā*), salutariness (*kallāṇa*), fearlessness (*abhaya*), non-killing (*amādhā*), equanimity (*samatā*), forgiveness (*kṣamā*), service (*sevā*), friendship (*maitri*), pity (*dayā*), tolerance, and so on. This wide variety of synonyms speaks to the many possible manifestations of *ahimsa* in daily life.

To further explain his doctrine of nonviolence, Mahavira, in an unprecedented way, classified living beings in two primary classes: pure/liberated soul (having no *karmic* load) and impure/mundane soul (having *karmic* loads). He further sub-classified impure souls into six subtypes according to their bodies. The two primary classes are: 1. *Sthavara*, or immobile, living beings that cannot move on their own to achieve their objectives, such as their need for air, water, or fire. This category includes one-sensed beings. All vegetation, plants, and trees belong to this category. 2. *Trasa*, or mobile, living beings that can move on their own to achieve their objectives. The beings in this category, from ants to humans, can have two-to-five types of sense-organs.

Today, scientific contributions to ecology and various conservancy policies and practices can be considered a direct corollary to Mahavira’s definitions of *ahimsa* and living beings. The self-rejuvenating nature of air and water, and their recovery from certain levels of pollution are based on the concept of these resources being living entities. Accepting



this definition of our natural surroundings is of immense use in achieving *ahimsa*.

At the spiritual level, Jains have equated violence with sin, which is considered the greatest cause of *karmic* bondage and which results in transmigration and the pains associated with it. Hence, when I commit violence against someone else, the first person to be hurt is me, as I bind bad (sinful) *karmas* immediately.

Further violence originates in and is committed at the mental level the moment we start scheming. Mental violence is manifested either through speech or bodily actions, or both. When we start planning violence, we experience its immediate effect in enhanced blood pressure, stress, and loss of control of our senses. It is then committed either directly, by our own activities of mind, body, and speech, or indirectly, when we condone and inspire others who are performing violent acts.

*Ahimsa* is the only golden thread that runs through all religions. Most religions differ from one another in all manner of doctrines and definitions, from the definition of divinity and question of who holds divine natures, to the question of whether life exists after death. Despite these disparities, all religions emphasize a strong, common thread: *ahimsa*, compassion, peace, and love. The details and degree of *ahimsa* may differ from one religion to another, but as a principle they all agree. Thus, *ahimsa* unites all religions.

### **The Basis of *Ahimsa* in Jainism**

Respect for the equality of every single living thing forms the basis of *ahimsa*. Because *ahimsa* is the highest attribute and the greatest religion, Jainism's most fundamental motto is: "live and help others to live."

Jains envision the broad and all-encompassing definition of *ahimsa* as follows:

Mentally, verbally, physically,  
Directly, indirectly, knowingly, unknowingly,  
Intentionally, and unconditionally,

Not by self, not through others (engage or ask others) and  
 Not condone or provide support to others in any shape or form  
 To injure, harm, abuse, oppress, enslave, insult, discriminate,  
 torment, persecute, torture or kill,  
 Any creature or living being (humans and non-humans) however  
 so small,  
 is *ahimsa*.

When seeking to define *ahimsa*, Tulsi, a Jain Acharya and 20<sup>th</sup> century social reformer, described three conditions that must be met:

First, do not kill or hurt any living being, mentally, verbally or by actions, even to the extent of not inspiring others who commit *himsa*. Second, extend equanimity toward all living beings. Positive values such as respect, love, kindness, and compassion toward all are included in this. Third, be vigilant.

The first two occur when another being is involved. The third is internal. Whatever the time of the day, whether living in solitude or in a group, whether asleep or awake, there must be self-awareness. Whatever we do, we should do knowingly, said Acharya Tulsi. All our actions, our words, and our emotions should be positive; this is *ahimsa*.

The first condition is a “do not.” The other two conditions are “do” commands. A combination of all three is a complete definition of *ahimsa*, or nonviolence. Being nonviolent is symbolized by inner harmony and is an accomplishment in itself. All other triumphs will naturally follow.

The definition and necessity of *ahimsa* is absolute, universal, unconditional, and eternal. There are no loopholes. The definition of *ahimsa* is not subject to different interpretations to suit the convenience and circumstances of a practitioner.

I consider the principle of *ahimsa* to be the principle of democracy of existence of all life forms. In my opinion, *anekantavada* – the Jain principle that no single point of view affords the complete truth – does *not* give us the freedom to

choose a different interpretation of *ahimsa*. *Ahimsa* has only one meaning.

According to Jainism, *ahimsa* is every person's *dharma* (duty). It is to be practiced all the time with all the energies of the practitioner. It is not only for sermons and preaching. It is for practice.

### **Three Ways to Commit *Himsa***

The first way to commit *himsa* is with mental (*bhava*) *himsa*. This causes mental harm primarily to one's self (*svabhava himsa*) and may also cause mental harm to others (*prabhavahimsa*). This violence in thought is always committed before action. Violence in thought, or psyche violence (*bhava himsa*), is true violence.

Mental violence to oneself can be done when someone is in an agitated state of mind, or during circumstances that foster such states of mind. For instance, when a person is on the verge of committing suicide, he experiences extreme mental turmoil, which destroys his inner peace, contentment, joy, and purity of soul.

Mental violence to others happens when a person, through his attitudes or actions, evokes feelings of anger, fondness, or greed (for a few examples) in another person. In other words, he intentionally disturbs the mental peace (*bhavaprana*) of the other person. When we intend to hurt or harm others, we give birth to *kashayas* (sins) such as anger, deception, pride, greed, love, and hatred. Thus we always commit violence to the self in the process. This mental *himsa* is like starting a fire. It always sparks further *himsa*.

A second category of *himsa* is *vaani*, or verbal *himsa*. Here, a little spark quickly becomes fire. What is in the mind comes out in speech.

The third way to perform *himsa* is through physical (*kaayaa*) *himsa*. Here, the fire becomes an inferno, destroying everyone in its path. Here, too, the mental and verbal *himsa* unite with the physical to become partners.

A Jain scripture, the *Dasavaikalika sutra* states: “No sin accrues to one who walks, stands, sits, sleeps, eats, and speaks with vigilance.” Since mental *himsa* is the most dangerous, because it can lead so quickly to other forms of *himsa*, a good rule is to control it so that it doesn’t spread to verbal and physical levels.

### **Classifications of *Himsa***

*Himsa* can be classified into several broad categories, in ascending order of severity and harm and also for binding of *karmas*:

1. *Anivaarya/swaroopi* is unavoidable *himsa*. This refers to *himsa* that occurs when living beings are doing such basic things as breathing, speaking, eating, walking, and sleeping. Here, the person should take care to avoid *himsa* and to reduce it as much as humanly possible. This kind of *himsa* is the least severe in terms of inflow and binding of *karmas*. Generally, Jain monks adhere to the observance of this kind of *ahimsa*.

2. *Aarambhi/uddiyogi* is *himsa* that is ethical for the purposes of earning a living. Every householder has to support life by earning a living and producing food, clothing and shelter. Here, one must look at all the alternatives and at doing the least possible *himsa*. One must question whether something is a want or a need. One must determine how to make a living with ethics, with morality, with the least harm to the environment and to fellow beings (humans and non-humans). Also, one must limit and exercise control over one’s needs and wants with *aparigraha* (fewer attachments and accumulations). Obviously, the level of *himsa* committed here is more than that of unavoidable *himsa*.

3. *Rajkeeya* is *himsa* done in performing duties to and for the state or the country. This is *himsa* that is mandated by society and the government to maintain law and order in the society. It includes the sentencing of convicted criminals by the courts and by police and other law-maintaining authorities. Here, the individual exercising *himsa* must take precaution

to minimize its level. He should not do *himsa* to others with a motive of a personal vendetta, revenge, prejudice, hate, a show of power, greed, or for personal benefits and gains. The practitioner is obeying the just laws of the land. However, unjust laws should be resisted and opposed. One must make sure that innocents are not punished or otherwise harmed. The intensity of this *himsa* is greater than the previous two.

4. *Virodhi himsa* is *himsa* done in defense and protection. It could be in defense of the culture, community or country, or of innocent people. This kind of *himsa* generally refers to serving in the military. The practitioner should not hate the enemy or be motivated by self-interest, personal gain, or retribution. In other words, he commits *himsa* without any desire to harm the opponent. He should observe all precautions to minimize the level of *himsa* while still striving to achieve the goals. This *himsa* is acceptable but the level and intensity of *himsa* is much higher than in the types of *himsa* mentioned above.

5. *Sankalpi himsa* is premeditated *himsa*. This is an action planned and executed with full force of all the senses and the mind, speech, and body. *Sankalpi himsa* includes all deeds involving intentional, pre-meditated violence. For example a murderer clearly sets out to end the life of his victim, hence he commits *sankalpi himsa*. Other examples would include incidents of terrorism such as the 9/11 attacks and the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. This is the severest kind and highest level of *himsa*, since all the faculties of the practitioner (mental, verbal, and physical) are fully engaged. The doer of this type of *himsa* binds to himself *anootaanbandhikarmas* that cannot easily be washed away or obliterated (a helpful metaphor is to imaging marking a line in stone or in steel). These kinds of *karmas* cannot be shed or destroyed by the doer without him suffering the results. Such *himsa* must not be condoned under any circumstances and must be avoided at all costs.

### **Intensity, Degrees, and Level of Inflow of *Karmas* Due to *Himsa***

*Himsa*, and hence inflow of *karmas*, depend upon the levels with which the faculties of mind, speech and physical actions to commit *himsa* are engaged, as well as the timing, intention, circumstances, and the intensity and duration of engagement of the aforementioned three faculties in doing the action.

Based on the above, the results of action and binding (*bandh*) of *karmas* can be of following types:

– Like drawing a line in air. This “mark” lasts only a few milliseconds. Here the level of *himsa* is very low (mostly momentary and held in one’s mind) and its effects can be much reduced or completely eliminated by contemplation, realizing the mistake and expressing repentance, and asking for forgiveness genuinely.

– Like drawing a line in water. Here the effect of *himsa* may last a little longer but its intensity, results, and the level of inflow of *karmas* can be reduced by realizing the mistake, taking responsibility, and doing some repentance and penance.

– Like drawing a line in sand. The effect of this *himsa* is much longer lasting but its results can still be reduced by observing sincere penance and repentance.

– Like drawing a line in stone or steel. This is also called *anootaanbandhi* and is the severest type of *himsa*. This is a permanent line and cannot easily be eliminated. The doer must bear its fruits and suffer punishment.

The following metaphor illustrates the level or degree of *himsa* situations that we all come across in life. Imagine an apple tree and a hungry man. He has many choices:

– He can pick up only those apples that are already fallen on the ground. By doing so, he commits the least amount of *himsa*, if any.

– He can raise his hands, grab a branch of the apple tree, and pluck however many apples he needs to satiate his hunger. Here the degree or level of *himsa* is slightly greater.

– He might shake the whole apple tree. Many apples fall on the ground whereas he needs only a few. The level of *himsa* has increased significantly as he has expended energy against the tree beyond his needs.

– He cuts a branch of the tree, from whence he picks a few apples for his needs. Obviously this level of *himsa* is unnecessary.

– He cuts down the entire tree, so that no one can ever pluck apples from it again. This is a case of extreme *himsa*.

This division allows us to reflect upon whether the amount of *himsa* being done is necessary, moral, and unavoidable, or whether it can be reduced, minimized, or avoided entirely. In life, there are always such choices.

The level and intensity of suffering can best be described by asking the following question: “Is the level and intensity of suffering inflicted on a living being the same no matter how many senses that being possesses?” The answer to this question is, simply, “no.” The level of pain and suffering experienced by a *jiva* is not the same for all *jivas*. It depends upon the number of *pranas* (life forces) in various life forms. Thus, there is a hierarchy of various life forms.

An *ahimsak* respects the hierarchy of one-sensed through five-sensed life forms. He knows that all life forms are not equal in terms of the degree of *himsa* (pain and suffering) felt. Thus he bases his daily actions and living on this hierarchy. An *ahimsak* seeks to exclude, as far as possible and practical, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, all living beings for food, clothing, or for any other purpose.

Shown below is a summary of the number of *pranas*, and the pain and suffering experienced by a *jiva*:

– One-sensed beings have four *pranas*; these include: life span, physical power, respiration, and sense of touch.

– Two-sensed beings have six *pranas*, including: life span, physical power, respiration, sense of touch and taste, and vocal power.

– Three-sensed beings have seven *pranas*, including: life span, physical power, respiration, sense of touch, taste and smell, and vocal power.

– Four-sensed beings have eight *pranas*, including: life span, physical power, respiration, sense of touch, taste and smell, seeing, and vocal power.

– Five-sensed (nonsentient *jiva*) beings have nine *pranas*; these include: life span, physical power, respiration, sense of touch, taste, and smell, seeing and hearing, and vocal power.

– Five-sensed (sentient *jiva*) beings have ten *pranas*, including: life span, physical power, respiration, sense of touch, taste, and smell, and seeing, hearing, vocal power, and mental power.

The above hierarchy of existence and the levels of suffering tell us that the level of pain inflicted in a plant-based diet is much less than in an animal-based diet.

### **A Broad Landscape of *Himsa***

*Himsa* caused by humans creates a large and vast landscape and is done in many shapes and forms, with or without motives. It encompasses *himsa* committed for basic bodily needs for food, clothing, shelter, and medicine; for secondary needs and desires for physical beauty, for sports and entertainment, for furnishings, for transportation, for societal and religious customs; and from ego, anger, hatred, greed, control, power, and dominance over others.

Likewise, the practice of *ahimsa* applies to practices regarding our food, clothing, furnishings, medicines, sports, entertainments; decisions made regarding gender, race, and species relations, and interpersonal relations; and practices around business, investments, professions, faith traditions, viewpoints on the world, and regarding the environment.



If one is striving to be an *ahimsak*, he needs to be aware of whether, in satisfying his personal needs, he is involved in actions that lead to the suffering of any humans, animals, birds, fish, or insects. Specifically, when he eats and drinks, he needs to know if the items he consumes contain or are derived from meat, fish, milk, or eggs. He also needs to ascertain whether his clothing or footwear is made of silk, wool, leather, or fur, and whether his cosmetic and personal hygiene products involved animal experimentation or contain animal products. He must find out whether his home furnishings and flooring materials were made using child labor, sweat shops, or animal products (skins, fur, tusks, horns, antlers or bones from animals, or feathers from birds).

Additionally, he needs to know whether the medicine he takes and the delivery system and personnel who provide the medicine were involved in the use of animals and plants. Does he have firearms in his home? Is his car or boat furnished with leather, silk, or fur? What about his wallet or handbag? Does he hunt, shoot, or fish? Does he attend cockfights or bullfights, dog racing or horse racing events? Does he go to the circus or the zoo? Similarly, an *ahimsak* must ask: How many miles per gallon does his car get? How much pollution does his company discharge into the air, land, and water? Does he use chemicals on his lawn? Does he buy organic produce? How much paper does he use? How often does he use trains, airplanes, and other fuel-guzzling forms of transport? Does he participate in animal sacrifice, in the stoning of humans or animals? Does he smoke cigarettes or cigars? The *ahimsak* must examine all his relationships, direct and indirect. He asks whether he is involved in any form of discrimination, racial profiling, unjust and discriminatory laws and regulations, in apartheid or slavery or untouchability, in crimes, terrorism, riots, unjust wars or any other conflicts. He looks at his investments, to see if he is profiting from the exploitation of humans or animals, in the destruction of the environment, or in activities that endanger human health and safety.

He considers all aspects of his personal life and family life, his religious life, his business and social life. He asks whether he is involved in any religious intolerance, whether he possesses anything that by law belongs to another, whether his workplace supports discrimination based on sex, gender, skin color, ethnicity, religion, beliefs, age, size, or disability. He evaluates his company's hiring and firing policies, its promotions and demotions, and compensation and rewards policies.

In short, one who follows *ahimsa* leaves no stone unturned in the pursuit of love, respect and compassion for all, in thought, speech, and actions. *Ahimsa* eliminates all forms of hatred, malice, and jealousy. It welcomes all with equality and equanimity. It is free of ego, anger, greed, deceit, and hypocrisy. It results in relaxation, joy, tranquility, and inner peace.

To aid in this close, multi-faceted examination of the possibilities for *himsa* in their daily lives, many Jains observe the ritual known as *Pratikraman*. Some Jains practice this daily and some only few times a year. During *Paryushana* and *Das Laxan* (holy days the Jains observe over a period of eighteen days around August and September), *Pratikraman* is obligatory for both *Svetambaras* and *Digambaras*.

*Pratikraman* is a systematic and thoughtful process designed to focus on one's life (over the past twenty-four hours, six months, year, or whatever period of time is the subject of reflection) and to engage in an honest self-assessment of what, where, and when acts of *himsa* have been committed. In this process, the aspirant repents of his actions of *himsa* and asks for forgiveness from those who have been harmed. He also takes a vow to not repeat the *himsa* or engage in further *himsa*. The *Pratikraman Sutras* include the following eighteen ways *himsa* can be committed. By reflecting on these eighteen *papas* (acts of *himsa*), one is then on a path to minimize *himsa* in one's life.

The eighteen *papas* include: violence, lying, stealing, sensuous indulgence, accumulation, anger, ego, deceit, greed, attachment, resentment, disputation, making false allegations, talking behind the backs of others, affection and disaffection, gossiping, lying, and wrongful perception.

### **Jain Code of Conduct**

The Jain code of conduct lays down certain parameters for an *ahimsak*. The code states:

1. I will not kill any innocent creature intentionally nor will I commit suicide.
2. I will not subject any employee or worker to overwork nor will I overload animals and beasts.
3. I will not propagate misleading ideas or falsely implicate anyone.
4. I will not enroll as a member of an organization or a party that believes in violence and vandalism nor will I indulge in these activities.
5. I will not use products that are made from or tested on animals.
6. I will treat everyone as equals and practice tolerance toward all faiths.
7. I will practice physical, mental and intellectual nonviolence.

By following this code, one attains self-control, friendliness, and compassion as well as freedom from greed. This is imperative for the salvation of every individual.

### **Who Am I?**

Mahapragya, a Jain Acharya, describes the answer to the existential question, “Who am I?” with the following:

Soul is my God.

Renunciation is my prayer.

Amity is my devotion.

Self-restraint is my strength.

Nonviolence is my religion.

The Jain scripture, *Acharanga Sutra*, goes further, by reminding us that:

Some kill living beings for sacrificial purposes,

Some kill for their skins,

Some kill for their flesh,

Some for the blood, heart, liver, fat, feathers or teeth....

Some out of fear.

He who is disinclined to kill the smallest living thing, knows what suffering is, because he who sees and understands the real cause of his own happiness and pains, knows others' too. And he who sees and understands others' feelings also knows his own feelings.

This is the way one must compare oneself with others.

Knowing what is bad, he who knows it with regard to himself knows it with regard to the world;

And he who knows it with regard to the world outside, knows it with regard to himself.

This reciprocity between oneself and others (one should mind).

Thus we enjoin on you, thus do we say,

Thus we believe, thus we proclaim to all:

No living things should be slain anywhere,

Nor ordered forcibly this way or that.

Nor put in bonds, nor tortured any way

Or treated violently otherwise:

Because you are the same which ye would slay

Or order here or there against his will.

Or put in prison, or subject to pain,

Or treat with violence: ye are the same;

The Self-same Life doth circulate in all.



Similarly, the *Uttaradhayan sutra* shares the following: “Seeing the self in every one and everywhere, knowing that all beings love their life, we, having made ourselves free from fear and enmity, should not kill other beings.”

The *Acharanga Sutra* reminds us: “All living beings love their life. For them happiness is desirable; unhappiness is not desirable. Nobody likes to be killed. Everybody is desirous of life. Everyone loves his own life.”

Finally, Lord Mahavira preaches the following precepts:

Nonviolence and kindness to living beings is kindness to oneself. For thereby one’s own self is saved from various kinds of sins and resultant sufferings and is able to secure one’s own freedom.

Our cup of compassion must become our perpetual mindset. The mindset of compassion makes us sensitive and motivates us not to accept pain, poverty and injustice to others. He, who is disinclined to kill the smallest living thing, knows what suffering is, because he, who sees and understands the real cause of his own happiness and pain, knows others too.

There is nothing so small and subtle as the atom or any element as vast as space. Similarly, there is no quality of soul subtler than nonviolence and no virtue of spirit greater than reverence for life.

I will end this section with some Jain prayers and thoughts for contemplation.

*Khamemeesavvejeeva, savvejeevakhmantume, mitte me savvebhooyesoo, verammajjhamnakenayee.* (I ask for forgiveness, for any harm I have done, from all living creatures, and I treat them all equally. I have friendship toward all and hatred toward none. I wish no one any harm.)

*Jam jammanenvaddham, jam jamvaayenbhaasiyampaavam, jam jamkaayenkadam, Tasmicchhamidukkhadam.* (Whenever I have thought ill of others, whenever I have uttered bad and violent words, whenever I have physically caused harm, pain and suffering to others, I sincerely repent and ask for their forgiveness.)

*Shivamastu Sarvajagtah, Parahitaniratabhavantu bhutaganah Dosah prayantu nasham, sarvatrasukhibhavatu lokkah.* (May the entire universe be blessed; may all beings engage in each other's well-being; may all weakness, sickness and faults vanish, may everyone and everywhere be healthy, peaceful and blissful.)

*Sarvebhavantu sukhina, sarvesantu niramaya. Sarvebhadrani pashiyantu, ma kashchitdukkhabhagbhavet.* (May there be always happiness. May all see and feel good thoughts. May no one suffer pain and misery.)

Let me conclude with the “Thoughts on the Practice of *Ahimsa* by a School teacher After the Newtown, CT, School Shooting,” by Jessica Rubin, a teacher at Rocky Point High School, Middle Island, NY (who originally shared this as a blog post on December 17, 2012):

Tomorrow is my first day teaching after the tragedy in Connecticut, and tonight I cannot sleep. I am obsessively thinking about how to talk to my students – five full classes of sensitive, vibrant, unpredictable teenagers – about violence and tragedy, about life and death and love and humanity. The easiest thing to do would be to move forward with the lessons I have planned about the books we are reading, books whose themes are relevant and important in moments like this. It is easier to talk about tragedy through the abstractions of fantasy and character. But, I know I must face the difficult reality of our world at this exact moment in time, even though it terrifies me. I will tell my students I love them, and that the brave actions of the teachers who were killed protecting their classes did not surprise me. As teenagers, they need more than love and reassurance, more than someone to promise that the dark is nothing to be afraid of. They are sophisticated thinkers, many of whom are on the precipice of great understanding and deep connections with themselves and the universe. I want to empower them to be forces of peace in a turbulent and violent society. I want hope to permanently illuminate their worlds, even now.

This summer, I studied nonviolence with a group of American teachers in India. Nonviolent philosophy has permeated my thinking since then, and I have become painfully aware of the levels of violence that exist in my everyday life.

It is unnerving and uncomfortable to admit how much violence exists around us, and the quantity of violent acts that each of us is complicit in by participating as spectators or non-objectors. By purchasing music that glorifies a violent lifestyle, clicking “like” on a hateful Facebook post, or choosing to ignore hurtful words in the hallway, otherwise “nonviolent” people accept and excuse violence in their environment. *Ahimsa*, the Sanskrit term for the traditional philosophy of nonviolence, requires abstaining from harmful actions, harmful speech, and harmful thoughts. It also requires practitioners to avoid celebrating the harmful acts of others, and to avoid being harmful to oneself and one’s surroundings.

We see a massacre of innocent children and know that it is violent, but we must learn to recognize the smallest acts of violence in our society before we can begin to rehabilitate our thoughts, speech, and actions toward a more peaceful existence.

It starts in calling things by their proper names, by using clear language instead of euphemisms. Violence of any kind causes suffering, and suffering will only lead to more violence. Hateful speech is violence. Bullying is violence. Laughing at the misfortune of others, even when they can’t hear you, is violence. Wishing for the suffering of others, even those who have done terrible things, is violence. If we want to have any hope of living peacefully, we must confront the volume of violence in our everyday lives and stop participating as perpetrators, observers, and consumers.

As human beings living in a violent culture, our violent reactions often feel justified. It takes bravery and self-awareness to acknowledge fear and anger and then react without hatred. The deeply rooted violence of culture cannot be stopped by more hatred, and reactive solutions will only delay the next tragedy. Yes, laws may change, and many laws probably should. But, the entrenched violence of a culture cannot be stopped by changes in legislation or harsher, more violent punishments for criminals. We cannot depend on politicians or celebrities to make our world what we want it to be; each one of us must take positive action to do that every day.

In order to turn the tide of violence in our country, we must commit to start with ourselves, our own thoughts, words, behav-

iors, and reactions, and we must hold ourselves honestly accountable. In order to stop the violence in the world around us, we must confront the violence we are a part of. And when we make mistakes, we must forgive ourselves as readily and truly as we will forgive others, and move on, and do better.

Although we may feel inundated by the helplessness that tragedy creates, each of us has tremendous power already within us. Lao Tzu said, "He who controls himself controls the world." Each moment we are alive is a chance to make the world more peaceful, and make ourselves more free.



## The End of Violence: An Illusion or a Feasible Aim?

MAJA MILČINSKI

*In this essay the author contrasts contemporary views on violence with ancient Asian wisdom. She draws on her own experiences working and living in Europe and Asia, where the cultivation of self-awareness and the use of methodical meditation in understanding the essence of the human condition are important.*

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In 1981, I took up a position as a philosophy and sociology teacher at one of the best high schools in Ljubljana (Slovenia, at that time still Yugoslavia). The curriculum also covered ethologist and the animal psychologist Konrad Lorenz and the behaviourist and social psychologist B.F. Skinner and their theories of aggression and violence. In contrast to Lorenz and Skinner's thesis, that violence is inherent to human nature, I inclined instead to Erich Fromm's position, that destructive behaviour is the product of deviant and pathological tendencies in society.

At the end of the school year, freshly graduated students, like all the generations before them, pulled a prank. Their act was a rite of passage, a farewell gesture to the school and the faculty that had disciplined and oppressed them for four years. That particular year, their plan on that last school day was to remove the valves of all the bicycle tires from the bicycles parked in the school vicinity. I was one of those people who, upon arriving at work, parked their bicycle near the school. After work I returned to my bicycle to find no air in the tires. While trying to fix the problem, one of the students approached me and started to apologise, saying that he hadn't known that the bicycle was mine and he offered to fix it immediately.

While we were leaning over the tires attempting to replace the removed valve, I noticed the school doorkeeper observing us from a distance before sneaking off. He went straight to the principal and told her that it was I who had proposed that the students remove all the bicycle valves and who had also helped them to do this. This was how he interpreted what he saw. An emergency meeting of the entire school faculty was called in which the principal finished her accusation with the crescendo: "How can we expect our students to be better if the professors are like Professor Milčinski No wonder, when she has taught them about freedom, etc." There was absolutely no way that my voice would be heard. The faculty was united in their accusation of my "crime." This was a "Larry David moment," a moment of undeserved glory. My astonishment, that everybody perceived me as a law-breaking Bonnie whose Clyde was waiting for her at the next corner, was all the greater for the fact that I had never had any conflict or quarrel with any member of the faculty or indeed anybody at the school (including the doorkeeper) and had always regarded myself as a good (decent taxpaying) citizen.

Throughout my working career, I have experienced varieties of aggression and violence, but much less than the average American child, who, by the time she has reached

adulthood, will have seen 200,000 violent acts, including 40,000 killings, on television alone – which is to say nothing of film or the countless enemies she may have personally slaughtered in video games.<sup>51</sup> The view of Jonathan Gotschall<sup>52</sup> in his *The Storytelling Animal*, that “People have been pretty nasty throughout history, and over the past half millennium or so, Westerners have just been better at being nasty than anyone else,” was extended to other geographical areas when, shortly after this incident, I found myself with all my belongings on the Trans-Siberian railway, starting my four-year life in China.

As soon as I got off the train in Beijing, I was greeted with the sight of a man with a living bird attached to his bicycle where there is normally a bicycle bell. To my astonishment, he explained that he had fixed this bird, tied its legs to the handle bar, just for “*wan y wan*” (just for fun, for his own amusement). This and the many other sights that I witnessed during my many years in Asia could be described as “empathy erosion”; in degree of aggression and violence, it transcended the degrees of violence presented in the film “Earthlings.”

This prompts the question: what degree of violence do we permit ourselves for the sake of our own survival? I remember my academic feminist sisters who wanted to have it all: a glorious academic career (part of which entailed preaching on sisterhood), equality, freedom and many children, whom they entrusted to poorly paid and unprivileged nannies. They did not fight to help the nannies obtain the sort of education which might have enabled them to break free from their poorly-paid exploitation; rather, they used these women to help advance their own career and to better their own income. Is it ethical to let the underprivileged caste, *burakumin* or peasant, carry out the dirty work while one is advancing along the path of spiritual advancement and good *karma*? Is it ethical to impose certain rules or beliefs on the pretext of educating, socialising, or implementing religious dogmas? Even nonviolence can be a religious dogma

and might in certain circumstances be perceived as violent behaviour.

Steven Pinker<sup>53</sup> reminds us that we are very lucky global citizens, because the degree of violence that we experience is in decline, and never in human history has it been as low as it is now. There is no data that I know of which measures the degree of aggression towards us, or other earthlings, or the healthy aggression that is required for the betterment of the world or ourselves. While science progresses in its discovery of the various neurochemicals of emotional experience and expression, or empathy in apes, there is still no clear evidence of the categorisation of auto-aggressive behaviour. The latter can also be labelled as an artistic practice.

Such ponderings attain particular relevance when contrasting the various Asian and European ways of approaching Truth, and the different ways of achieving freedom through nonviolent means that these philosophical methods presuppose. My aim is to raise decisive questions for those who address different cultures. In this regard, the ancient Chinese philosopher Mo Zi demonstrates multiple ways to construct a coherent sense of one's own Selfhood through a possible dialogue and to recognise the necessary limits of love and tolerance. Through transcending the Self for the sake of creative living and an attitude of love to others and to oneself, special emphasis is placed on the mind-body continuum which leaves no room for the devaluation of emotional (bodily) aspects. This topic is particularly important for the possible construction of multicultural societies and can provide us with some methods of self-knowledge that may prove helpful for practising love, nonviolence, respect, autonomy and dignity together with various methods of self-empowerment.

When contrasting European and Asian traditions of philosophising, we see that while European philosophy has mainly been concerned with the conditions of moral practice, the various schools of Asian philosophy have developed the

very means of attaining this goal. European philosophy developed logical argumentation and discursive pyrotechnics almost to the level of cultivated autism, placing itself above moral practice – that is, not obliged to undertake any real moral act. By contrast, the Chinese and Indian paths to truth perceived themselves as the science of truth as it is expressed in life and in everyday moral practice and in the process of liberation. However, the condition for any advancement in the process of liberation is a thorough self-purification, which enables access to the subtlest levels of mind-body-soul.

Simon Baron-Cohen describes it thus in his work, *The Science of Evil*:

The challenge is to explain, without resorting to the all-too-easy concept of evil, how people are capable of causing extreme hurt to one another. So let's substitute the term "evil" with the term "empathy erosion." Empathy erosion can arise because of corrosive emotions, such as bitter resentment, or desire for revenge, or blind hatred, or a desire to protect. In theory these are transient emotions, the empathy erosion reversible. But empathy erosion can be the result of more permanent psychological characteristics.

I propose that his insight, that empathy erosion arises from people *turning other people into objects*, should be extended to mean people turning other *beings* into objects. How can we treat empathetically those whose only sensitivity is their own hypersensitivity?

It was difficult for me to reconcile all the cruelty that I witnessed during my four years in China with what I have learned about Chinese philosophy, in which the cultivation of self-awareness and the use of methodical meditation in understanding the essence of the human condition are so important. At that time in China, one could still witness the executions of so-called "criminals" and "delinquents." This was evidence that no philosophy and cultivation techniques had been considered in their attempt to solve the problems of their society through different religious and philosophical

streams. Yet, this is supposed to be one of the main characteristics of Asian philosophies.

Two particular motivations or pressures are always present when solving problems and regulating relationships within social groups: firstly, external specific material demands; secondly, subjective motivations from within. Buddhism, as well as the two autochthonous Chinese philosophical traditions, Confucianism and Daoism, and their distinct ways of cultivating personality, presuppose the elimination of aggression and violence on the level of thought and deed, and at a certain level might also raise the practitioner to the level of liberation of oneself from oneself, since violence also includes ways of being self-aggressive.

Various traditions have in their own ways attempted to explain the role of man. The Talmud, for instance, placed into the mouth of R. Simeon B. Eleazar the argument that all the animals “were created only to serve me.” I would however propose the view of nature and existence that is often used in Chinese Hua Yan Buddhism. With its cosmic ecology, it developed the concept of interdependence and the interrelatedness of all beings with everything in the Cosmos. The symbol of Indra’s net is based on the legend that the God Indra ordered his craftsman to make a net that would be infinite and stretch across the entire Cosmos. The net is covered with an infinite number of diamonds, and each diamond is reflected in all of the other diamonds. It is a limitless process of reflection which symbolises the interdependence and interrelatedness of each small part of the Cosmos with the greater universe. Whatever affects the smallest part also affects the entire process.

Self-cultivation is the central aim of Confucian philosophy. Self-cultivation and self-transformation lead to a state of moral consciousness and social integrity characterised by the absence of violence toward others and oneself. The character of the superior man is shaped by the three primary Confucian virtues: *ren* (benevolence, humanity); *li* (proper conduct, ritual); and

*yi* (sincerity). The forty-fifth chapter of the fourteenth book of the *Analects* describes the superior man as follows:

Tsze-lû asked what constituted the superior man. The Master said, "The cultivation of himself in reverential carefulness." "And is this all?" said Tsze-lû. "He cultivates himself so as to give rest to others," was the reply. "And is this all?" again asked Tsze-lû. The Master said, "He cultivates himself as to give rest to all the people. He cultivates himself so as to give rest to all the people – even Yao and Shun were still solicitous about this."<sup>54</sup>

Confucius understood the process of self-cultivation as being related to the process of becoming a superior man (*junzi*). From the soteriological aspect, it is the awakening of that special attention which leads to the concentration and focus on that realm of the human state of mind which also gradually enriches one's spirituality. In this context, Confucius' practical philosophy can be said to represent a turning point toward something new and reverent. It represents the initial cleansing process that focuses the scope of interest and helps to free us from the whirlpool of everyday life in which we are caught up, and also to diminish the degree of violence in our behaviour, words and thoughts.



The Master said, "Without recognising the ordinance of Heaven, it is impossible to be a superior man... Without an acquaintance with the rules of Propriety, it is impossible for the character to be established... Without knowing the force of words, it is impossible to know men."<sup>55</sup>

One can only proceed in the way of self-cultivation with proper manners and in accordance with one's place and destiny (*ming*) in certain social practice, which, if perpetuated, becomes the habit and pattern of behaviour. The Confucian creed proclaims that: "The wise are joyful; the virtuous are long-lived."<sup>56</sup> As for his own life, it is said that Confucius practised what he taught and, as he described his life-process, his attitudes also brought him into a state of liberation and bliss.

The Master said, "At fifteen, I had my mind bent on learning, at thirty, I stood firm, at forty, I had no doubts, at fifty, I knew the

decrees of Heaven, at sixty, my ear was an obedient organ for the reception of truth, at seventy, I could follow what my heart desired, without transgressing what was right."<sup>57</sup>

Confucian philosophy is based on the experience of the world that is offered to us in our everyday reality, or reality as it is philosophically determined by Confucians. Confucius' main concern was social and ethical. He pursued his questioning of these motives as far as was possible. Relationships among people are based on the premise of self-cultivation. We have to strive to be good, not only to do well. In the *Analects*, the basic virtue of *ren*, which can be translated as benevolence, love, goodness, is the fundamental characteristic of the soul, which enables each human being to love each member of society according to the status one occupies and the position one holds in respect to the person one loves. Confucian love is conditioned on the position in society; benevolence is defined in relation to ritual and the rules of propriety (*li*). In Confucianism, self-realisation can be achieved and wishes should be fulfilled within this specific ethical context.

Mo Zi's criticism of Confucianism targeted this fact that people love one another selectively and partially. One of the main philosophical themes in Mo Zi's philosophy is the concept of universal love that deserves inseparable unity between philosophical insight and meditation. It brings us into the state of loving all others as oneself, equally and impartially. Such a philosophy is not developed only on the intellectual level but also on the physical level, since the truth is not only a way of thinking about the world but rather a way of practising the truth in our everyday lives and a way of existing in the world. Discovering the truth is an activity beyond the pure intellect; it requires us to attain a psychophysical awareness in which all instances of knowledge are simultaneously practical and theoretical. The result of such a practice is altruistic love.

For over two thousand years, the Confucian notion of being human, practising benevolence and other virtues, provided the main direction of Chinese philosophy. When



philosophers emphasise some notions in their theories so strongly, this could be assumed to indicate a general lack of agreement or consensus in society. It was quite a shock for me when I heard that, during a certain period of Chinese history, children didn't even bury their dead parents. Rather, they just threw them through the window in spite of all the lamentation and the philosophical theories of filial piety; or maybe precisely because of them. These theories were in such demand because the social practices lacked these dimensions.

Mohism rejected the Confucian notion of selective love and filial piety that stressed the exclusive care and affection for one's own family. Such a position is closer to my plea not to turn other human beings into objects. My plea might be an impossible aim, since merely preserving one's own life demands a certain degree of violence, unless we selfishly entrust this part to others and pursue our own spiritual path. In defending the doctrine of love without distinction, Mo Zi invokes a variety of arguments: that practising the doctrine will profit (*li*) the public, that it is the will of Heaven (*t'ien*), and that the doctrine is advantageous to someone who practises it. In response to the suggestion that the doctrine cannot be put into actual practice, he insists that it can be, and that it has been practised previously.<sup>58</sup>

What is the minimum degree of violence that is the necessary precondition for one's self-preservation? I knew a poet who starved himself to death because he did not want to hurt any other human being. From the Buddhist perspective, suicide and other forms of escape resolve nothing because they create an even greater burden for the next incarnations. Conversely, maintaining a balance between the inner and outer realities and the consciousness is a prerequisite for liberation. The condition for this balance is the absolute absence of violence on the basis of thought, word and deed. The desire for freedom is born of our feelings of being limited and trapped in undesirable circumstances, which cause pain and suffering. Suffering, however, is always focused on the self; it is the self that suffers and wishes health and freedom.

This recognition is the foundation for achieving emptiness and the transcendence of the self, which link Daoism to Buddhism. Lao Zi, the founder of Daoism, noted that the existence of the body as the seat of the self and the awareness of the self enables us to experience pain and misfortune. Accidents and shocks are the result of our attachment to the body and its consciousness. The source of all suffering is therefore a person's misidentification with the continuum of his or her spirit-body. Liberation, which in a sense involves radical healing, therefore includes the elimination of cognitive errors and the subsequent entrance to alternative ways of experiencing the world and our place in the world.

It is this selfhood that poses an obstacle on the path to liberation, and Chinese Daoist philosophers, Zhuang Zi and Lie Zi, help us grow up and accept the responsibility without resorting to any of the numerous techniques of withdrawal; they help us to perceive within ourselves the mechanisms that drive us to various actions. It is easier to blame others for erroneous assessments, judgments, even thoughts and emotional investments, and to point accusingly at the dirty and corrupt world around us. Lie Zi reminds us that we too are part of this world; we co-create it and it is up to us to find the best way to survive and reach our salvation.

Employing many different parables and paradoxes, he confronts us with the risks of the intellect which is not a virtue in its own right when it is not in harmony with the other elements of the spiritual and physical continuum of the human constitution. On the contrary, the intellect may even become a tool of suffering. At the same time, he explains that thoughts should not be discarded either, for they represent an important tool for overcoming the lack of knowledge or the absence of knowing. Valid realisations form part of the path toward liberating insights. This requires the realisation of the transience of life, or selflessness. And these two realisations need to be reached by way of direct perception, so that the only right way is the one based on words and conceptual thinking, i.e., the tools of reason.

The lucidity with which Lie Zi and other Daoists make us face the unavoidability of death and the necessity of accepting one's own transience as well as the transience of the universe itself is worth consideration. Such an attitude can be attained only through the methodical cultivation of transcendental thinking, by sensory deprivation and spiritual consciousness as a means of achieving the highest spiritual goals, a process in which our physical consciousness undergoes gradual transformation. Achieving a higher (or different) state of consciousness is described by some authors as a mystic consciousness. The long path of ridding one's spirit of all conscious and disturbing unconscious content, such as desires, anger or self-deception, can only be successful when the spirit attains a high degree of attention, focus and peace, so that knowledge can be anchored, stabilised and assimilated. In this way, we may arrive at a new understanding of ourselves and of the world, reaching the liberating insight that what actually liberates us (and what tends to enslave us) is the correct way of understanding ourselves and the world.

This stage is described as an uninterrupted joy that is reached when one is no longer separated from one's core. Although the preparation for death should be a continual process throughout our lives, it should not become a reason for bitterness. On the contrary, the highest level of cultivation is the acceptance and celebration of life in all its aspects. The very process of life is a battlefield on which we develop the tools to reach insights and to develop the various qualities of our nature, our lives, body and spirit, as well as of the nature of reality itself. At this stage, when a person has cultivated a calm contemplative mind, the powers of potential physical and psychological problems are said to be neutralised. The problems can no longer be traded for the self and they are no longer attached to us or to the image of the self with which we no longer identify.

Our detachment from life and death, and our equanimity, lead to our liberation, which is also the goal of Asian spiritual

practices. The prerequisite of spiritual progress is our continual awareness of our inner essence which transcends the awareness of our external, empirically experienced reality. Furthermore, the Asian traditions often employ the fact of universal transience as a tool for surpassing the self. “Homo-sapiens has clearly been the most successful of the more than three hundred primate species currently living on our planet, and it is no secret that our big brains and sagacity have helped facilitate our success.”<sup>59</sup>

Allow me to conclude with an episode from my own journey of personal discovery in Asia. In January and February 1989 I took part in Kumbha Mela in Allahabad, India. When I reached the enormous tent colony in the dried-up Ganges river-bed where 15 million *saddhus* and gurus were gathering in order to be present at an auspicious moment in which the stellar condition was so rare and favourable that it would help them descend from the *samsara*, I found myself caught into a fog of DDT with which the local authorities were attempting to control the possible outbreak of infectious disease. When I told a holy man that I intended to leave the colony because of this poison that the authorities were spraying indiscriminately over India’s wisest, he was very surprised: “What poison? Human beings are the greatest poison in the universe!” So I chose to remain and to learn – and I am still learning today – about the methods of transforming poison into nectar, and to seek ways in which human beings can deserve to remain a part of the universe, transcending the human condition and the so-called animal inertia. The Cosmos with the primal life force challenges the development of a new sensitivity and an awareness that extends far beyond the present and beyond any mere development of intellect.

As an illustration I will use the Chinese Daoist tradition and the phenomenology of a sage who ascends the clouds and mist and who rides a flying dragon and wanders beyond the four seas. He touches upon the cosmic energy mentioned in the ancient texts, as well as upon the techniques that bring

the wise beyond the ordinary physicality of sensory experience, which frees him from the limitations of time and space. Why is the methodology of becoming a part of cosmic energy so central and in what degree can a human being possess power over the workings of the universe? And under what conditions does she or he remain “human”?

Three years after I began to serve the Master and befriend a certain man, my mind no longer dared to speak of benefit and harm; and it was only then that I got as much as a glance from the Master. After five years, my mind was again thinking of right and wrong, my mouth was again speaking of benefit and harm; and for the first time the Master’s face relayed a smile. After seven years, I thought of whatever came into my mind without any longer distinguishing between right and wrong, said whatever came into my mouth without any longer distinguishing between benefit and harm; and for the first time the Master pulled me over to sit with him on the same mat. After nine years, I thought without restraint whatever came into my mouth without knowing whether the right and wrong, benefit and harm, were mine or another’s, without knowing that the Master was my teacher and the man I have mentioned was my friend. Only then, when I had come to the end of everything inside me and outside me, my eyes became like my ears, my ears like my nose, my nose like my mouth; everything was the same. My mind concentrated and my body relaxed, bones and flesh fused completely, I did not notice what my body leaned against and my feet trod, I drifted with the wind East or West, like a leaf from a tree or a dry husk, and never knew whether it was the wind that rode me or I that rode the wind.<sup>60</sup>

In this quote we are confronted with various developmental sequences in which each subsequent stage comprises the qualities of the previous stage, adding something extra, something more that had not been central in the previous stage. It presents a challenge to the consciousness and its transcendence, from the subject-object dichotomy to the non-dual awareness in which the being emerges into the vast and open space, becoming one with everything arising.

## Violence in Travelling

NARAYAN LAL KACHHARA

*Travel by any mode causes violence, but the principle of nonviolent action dictates that this violence should be minimized. It can be done by careful walking and careful choices regarding the mode of travel. In this essay, I compare different modes of travel with regard to the level of violence involved.*

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Do we commit violence in travelling? One kind of violence, killing, that is visible and apparent is by accidents in transportation. We hear of accidents on roads, trains, and air crashes that kill many people. Such accidents may take place due to human error, bad weather or technical faults.

Road accidents take the heaviest toll of lives. For example, 5,419,000 accidents took place in the USA in 2010 killing 32,885 people and injuring 2,239,000 persons. The number of persons killed in road accidents in 2011 was 32,367.<sup>61</sup> This means that about 90 persons are killed every day on the U.S. roads. Road accidents in the UK killed 1,901 people and injured 23,122 persons in 2011, and there were 1,754 dead

and 23,039 injured in 2012.<sup>62</sup> The toll is much higher in India. About 499,628 accidents took place in 2010 out of which 119,558 accidents were fatal, killing 134,513 people and injuring 527,512 persons.<sup>63</sup> Table 1 shows the proportions of death and injury in different modes of transport in these accidents.

**TABLE 1: Proportional share of death and injury in road accidents by different modes of transport in India in 2010:**

	Two Whe- elers	Auto Rick- shaws	Cars Jeeps Taxies	Buses	Trucks/ Tempos Tractors	Motor Vehicles	Other Vehicles
Accidents	23.8	7.3	21.8	9.5	23.3	7.8	6.6
Fatal accidents	19.1	4.7	19.2	9.9	29.4	9.8	7.9
Persons killed	18.3	4.7	19.2	10.3	29.6	10.2	7.8
Persons injured	21.9	8.2	22.7	12.5	21.5	5.8	5.1

Road crashes take the lives of nearly 1.3 million people every year, and injure 20-50 million in the world. India and China are listed among countries with the highest number of road deaths. Poor road infrastructure, failure to comply with speed limits, growing drinking and driving habits, and the refusal to use proper motorcycle helmets and child car-seats, are among the main factors contributing to deaths from road crashes in India. Here, with a growing middle class which is encouraged to buy the newest and latest vehicles, the youth – people aged between 15-29 years – have become the main victims of injuries. More disturbingly, a large number of deaths from road accidents are borne by “vulnerable road users” such as pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists. Around 13% of the victims of road-related deaths in India are pedestrians, as compared to 15% of accidents from passenger cars and taxies and 27% of riders of motorized two-or-three-wheelers. The road traffic crashes, which result in grief and suffering, contribute to economic losses to victims, their families, and the nation as a whole, to the tune of 1-3% of its respective gross national product.

Trains are the next major means of transport and also cause accident deaths. Table 2 shows the number of train accidents, people killed and persons injured in 2010-2012 in India, the USA and the UK.<sup>64</sup>

**TABLE 2: Rail accidents, deaths, and injuries in 2010-2012 in India, USA and UK**

Country	Year	Number of train accidents	People killed	Persons injured
India	2010	19	282	431
	2011	13	230	562
	2012	15	98	111
USA	2010	3	0	13
	2011	20	15	114
UK	2010	4	1	6
	2011	1	0	0

Air travel is a global phenomenon. Persons of all nationalities fly in airplanes all over the world. The Aircraft Crashes Record Office, a non-governmental organization based in Geneva, compiles statistics on aviation accidents of aircraft capable of carrying more than six passengers, excluding helicopters, balloons, or combat aircrafts. The number of accidents and deaths in this century are shown in Table 3.<sup>65</sup> This shows that aviation accidents are next to road accidents in taking a toll on lives.



**TABLE 3: Aviation accidents and deaths in 21<sup>st</sup> century**

Year							
2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
2009	2010	2011	2012				
Number of Accidents							
200	185	199	172	185	166	147	156
122	130	117	119				
Deaths							
4140*	1413	1230	771	1459	1294	971	884
1103	1115	828	794				

\*This high number is due mainly to the September 11 attacks

Besides human beings, many animals and birds are also killed in transportation. No records of such killings are available. One may ask: am I responsible for these accidental deaths? No, but someone is. Taking proper care can prevent or minimize accidental deaths.

Governmental agencies should properly plan and manage the road, rail and aviation systems, and frame rules and regulations for travelers to ensure safety of passengers. Travelers should faithfully follow the rules and maintain discipline for their own safety and the safety of other passengers. Some important points for safe travel are:

1. Follow the traffic rules in all cases, irrespective of time and traffic.
2. Comply with speed limits, always drive slowly in busy areas.
3. Do not drink and drive.
4. Always use seat belts.
5. Avoid driving for a long time at a stretch. Take a rest every 1.5 to 2 hours, and for very long distances arrange for a substitute driver.
6. Do not talk on a cell phone while driving.
7. Maintain your vehicle in good condition.

There is another kind of violence in travelling. Many insects are killed by moving vehicles. Further the Jain philosophy posits a different class of micro-organisms which lack self-movement.<sup>66</sup> Such micro-organisms can have earth body, water body, air body or fire body. They are found all over and are killed by human travelling – even in walking. We are supposed to minimize all kinds of violence in travel. This is the reason unnecessary walking is discouraged in Jainism. Even in essential walking, care must be exercised to minimize violence.

How to assess this second kind of violence in travel? This is very difficult. The insects and earth body organisms on the ground are killed by rolling wheels, and the air body organisms are killed by the exhaust gases and engine heat and by the impact and drag of the vehicle. All this violence is proportional to the distance travelled by any mode of transport, which in turn decides the amount of fuel consumed by the vehicle. Therefore fuel consumption per mile can be taken as a reasonable indicator of the order of violence taking place in travel by a vehicle. We shall use this property for comparison of violence committed in different modes of transport. As different numbers of persons travel in different modes of transport, we must calculate the fuel consumption per passenger to estimate the individual share of violence.

Table 4 shows person-miles per gallon of fuel consumption in different modes of transportation for average conditions in the USA.<sup>67</sup> Please note that lower person-miles per gallon means higher fuel consumption for travel of a given distance, and so higher violence. We find that the human body is a highly efficient walking machine, and the fuel-driven machines are no match for it. Bicycle is by far the most efficient mechanical mode of travel, involving the least violence in its category. Motorcycles and passenger trains involve comparable violence, and air travel is next highest in terms of violence followed by bus. Car travel is a still more violent mode, and the maximum violence is committed in travel by SUV and minivan.

**TABLE 4: List of transportation modes by Person-Miles Per Gallon (PMPG) in the USA**

Transport	Average PMPG	Max PMPG
Walking <sup>#</sup>	700,000	700,000
Running <sup>+</sup>	315,000	315,000
Bicycle <sup>*</sup>	984,000	984,000
Motorcycle	71.8	113
Passenger train	71.6	189.7
Airplane	42.6	53.6
Bus	38.3	330
Car	35.7	113
SUV, Minivan	31.4	91

In India small size motorcycles below 250 cc engine capacity are in common use and their efficiency ranges from 77.5 to 113 pmpg for a single rider.<sup>68</sup> The maximum pmpg for two riders is double this value. Trains in India carry more passengers than in the USA and may be a better option than motorcycles. Bus travel is the next choice in order of violence. Cars and SUVs, in any case, are the most violent means of transport and are a last choice. Sharing cars by a group is a good practice and must be encouraged.

The above analysis does not consider the violence committed in manufacturing the vehicles and the production of fuel. But accounting for these things is not likely to change the comparative position of different vehicles.

Another important factor which is not considered in the above analysis is the amount of infrastructure required to support the particular mode of travel. Travel by cars and buses requires a network of roads and trains require rail lines, both of which involve additional violence in their construction and maintenance. Airplanes need no such supporting facilities. This makes air travel better than bus travel, and it may be even comparable to trains in the USA from the consideration of violence.

An important consequence of motorized transport is air pollution, and the increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere that causes global warming via the green house effect. These effects have now reached serious proportions and the automobile sector is agreed to be its major contributor. Production of fuel in refineries and the extraction of crude from the earth also cause water pollution and soil pollution that ultimately affect life. This is all the more reason that automobile travel must be discouraged.

Jain monks do not use vehicles; they travel on foot to minimize the violence. Even in walking they exercise the utmost care to avoid violence. They focus their eyes on the ground at a distance of about 2-2.5 yards so as not to kill any insect. This gives them 1.5-2 seconds to act when they see an insect on the ground ahead of them. Coincidentally, this is also the time standard now employed in traffic rules: the driver should keep such distance from the vehicle in front to give himself about 2 seconds to act in case of any imminent danger. In recent years a special category of nuns known as Samani has been created; they are allowed some relaxation in the rules and permitted to travel by transport in the interest of propagation of the message of Lord Mahavira. They are, however, not allowed to travel by vehicle for pleasure, or for personal needs as far as possible. Monks also do not walk on grass or water as these are supposed to possess life. Some monks who are old, sick and disabled may use hand-driven carts. Carefulness in walking is a part of the code of conduct for monks. We must also be careful in walking and travelling and in selecting the mode of travel to minimize violence.

Jain monks also take care that no insects are killed when sitting on the ground or on a platform (wooden)/chair. For this purpose they always carry a kind of cotton brush, in the Svetambara tradition, or a brush assembled out of fallen peacock feathers in the Digambara tradition. They sweep the floor gently before sitting or putting anything down.

Jain monks restrict walking to essential needs. Even serious lay-Jains are supposed to observe restraint on walking. There are twelve vows for householders, two of which are called “*Digvrat*” and “*Deshvrat*.” These require that he or she limit the areas of operation and the time of operation to minimize the violence in travel to the extent possible.

### **Appendix**

# *Walking* : A typical person expends roughly 75 calories to walk a mile in 20 minutes. Assuming 2100 calories consumption per day, an American burns about 30 calories just to exist for 20 minutes, so the net expenditure for walking is 45 calories per mile. One gallon of gasoline contains roughly 31,500 kcal. Thus the average American has a walking efficiency of 700,000 mpg.

+ *Running*: The calculation is similar to walking. Here we assume a 6 minute/mile pace, which burns 1088 calories per hour, or 109 calories per mile, and 100 net calories per mile. This gives running efficiency of 315,000 mpg.

\* *Bicycles* : Bicycling at 10 mph requires 408 calories per hour, or 40.8 calories per mile, which is 32 net calories per mile. This yields mpg rating of 984,000.

*Ahimsa* in Daily Life

P. KRISHNA

*Nonviolence is not just a decision not to kill or strike any living being. The feeling of anger or hatred from which such a desire originates is itself violent, at the level of consciousness, and unless we transform ourselves at the level of consciousness, we are not truly nonviolent. Consciousness does not transform simply through our deciding or willing it, though. The transformation of consciousness comes about only when we come to a deep understanding of how our consciousness operates, without either suppressing it or interfering with it. That brings self-knowledge which, in turn, is the key to wisdom, as it ends the disorder that arises from negative emotions. Real virtue is order in consciousness.*

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*Ahimsa*, or nonviolence, in daily life is not merely a matter of deciding not to hit or kill another. That is just the outer manifestation of a feeling of anger or hatred within our consciousness. So long as such feelings arise within us we are not truly nonviolent, just because we are able to control the

outer manifestation of it through our will. So, if one wants to be truly nonviolent, we must examine the cause of anger or hatred within us and see if it is possible to eradicate that. So long as the cause exists, the effect will appear and controlling the effects will only produce a conflict between “what is” and “what should be,” which is a subtler form of violence within oneself. Therefore, instead of positing what should be and forcing oneself to live up to it, it is more important to understand “what is.”

We think that “what is” undergoes a change if we fight against it and decide not to be that way; but a little investigation reveals that the state of anger or hatred does not disappear because of our decision or wish. Indeed our decisions work only in very superficial matters. One can decide what to wear, what to eat or which language to learn but we cannot decide to love, to be peaceful and happy or to stop worrying. Reason and will can undo what reason and will have created but they cannot change a state that we were not reasoned into. The cause of anger, fear, violence and hatred lies much deeper in our consciousness and the field of reason and argument does not reach there.

If we really want to be free of the cause of anger, division and hatred within us we need to learn about them by watching these within ourselves, noting where they arise, how they grow, and what they do to our lives. In so observing and learning about oneself, there is the possibility of a deeper insight into the problem, which may eliminate the cause. The Buddha taught that ignorance is the cause of sorrow: ignorance not as lack of knowledge but as illusion in the mind. Illusion is just a mental construct which one accepts as true because one has never examined it. It is born of imagination and has no existence in nature; therefore it is a non-fact. Illusion can also arise from giving excessive importance to something which in reality has very little or no importance in life.

The problem is that the mind that has an illusion is not aware that it has an illusion because it takes that to be true.

Such illusions lie at different levels of our consciousness. At the most superficial level they are in the nature of superstitions. These can be dispelled even by scientific or intellectual inquiry. Then there are cultural illusions which lie deeper in our consciousness, such as our particular concept of God, our feeling of patriotism, our attitude towards the opposite sex and so on, all of which we imbibe imperceptibly through a form of osmosis, from the environment in which we grow up. It gives us a sense of identity and of moral values, which differ from one culture to another. They divide people, and make them feel “we are very different from them” though that may not be a fact. The Buddha said, “The other man is yourself,” but it does not seem so to us. It is our illusions that divide us, not facts; for facts, by definition, are the same for everyone. Imaginations and opinions about the facts differ and divide us.

Out of that division comes hatred and out of that hatred comes violence. So, to end violence and hatred in oneself one must end the illusion that is the source of all this disorder in our consciousness. Fortunately, illusion can be ended by discerning what is true and what is false; because when one perceives the false as the false, it ends. Facts cannot be ended but illusions, being imaginary things can be ended. Since the disorder in our consciousness arises from illusions, it can be ended; but order cannot be imposed upon disorder through discipline. Such a disciplined order is still disorder because the illusion has not been eliminated. This quest for the ending of disorder in consciousness is the true religious quest, beyond all forms of traditional religion. It is the quest for self-knowledge and is the key to wisdom. Socrates said that there is only one virtue and it is order in consciousness.

The quest for truth in this area is really an unlearning process: unlearning the false within our consciousness. To do that, one has to become a student of oneself and learn not so much from books written by others but through one’s own observation of the way our consciousness operates in daily



life. It is constantly revealing itself to us in our relationships with people, with property and with ideas. If only we have the eyes to see and a learning mind that lives with questions rather than conclusions, we can learn through observing ourselves. Violence is born out of our attachment to our own opinions and conclusions, and our sense of pride in them. To have a learning mind is to know that one does not know the truth and to be in a constant state of inquiry. Then every disorder one encounters in one's consciousness is a fresh opportunity to learn and end the illusion from which it arises. Without such self-learning which discerns what is true and what is false, one does not grow in wisdom and therefore does not change fundamentally. All true change is a byproduct of such deep learning; the rest is only control and adaptation, it is not freedom.

I am afraid there is no short-cut to nonviolence. The practice of a pre-formulated ideal of nonviolence is not real nonviolence. It is an illusion to think that one will gradually become nonviolent through the practice of certain methods and techniques. If one says it will take ten years to gradually become nonviolent, one is giving oneself the license to remain violent for ten more years. It is not a matter of practice; it is a matter of perception. One does not perceive truth gradually; either one has perceived it or one has not. Time does not help us to perceive. Time just passes, irrespective of whether we perceive or do not. If we do not perceive the truth, we continue to live with the illusion and nothing changes substantively; the feeling of gradual progress is an illusion.

One can see the truth of this in our world-affairs. We have not moved one iota in 60 years over the issue of Palestine or the issue of Kashmir, despite all the efforts made by the United Nations and all the diplomatic compromises. The problem lies deeper at the level of our identification with certain communities that then view other communities as rivals. More of the same kind of thinking, which creates the problem in the first place, can never solve it. What is needed is to get out

of that illusory mindset. The same is also true of the problems of the world as a whole. Experience has not taught us not to make war and not to solve our problems through violence. Our history of the last 3000 years is a history of battles and wars. It will not change with more time; it will change only when we learn to look at the “other” human being differently, irrespective of where he or she was born, what they eat or how they pray.

We are trained into rivalry. The truth is we are brothers and the same laws of nature have given birth to all of us. When we realize that truth, the violence will end. It can happen at this moment or it may not happen for another 3000 years. That is up to us.<sup>69</sup>

## The Practice of *Ahimsa* as Enlightened Self-Interest: The Jaina View

BALABHADRA BRUCE COSTAIN

*Jainism provides insights into the reality of our nonviolent and non-harming nature, and guidelines that illuminate a way to experience that nature. The five insights that guide our lives in the practice of ahimsa are: the existence of an eternal and independent soul, non-harming, non-absolutism, non-attachment, and the law of action-reaction. It is in our enlightened self-interest to follow these principles in daily practice.*

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*Ahimsa* is a moral law of the universe guiding the practitioner to the experience of the Godhood nature of their soul.

We live in an ever changing, often turbulent and precarious world. In the midst of this we strive for stability and long lasting peace. The practice of *ahimsa* is one such attempt to establish that for which we strive.

Recent events such as the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, the financial crisis requiring massive government bailouts (particularly in the West), the ongoing tension and conflicts in the Middle East, and random, murderous attacks on adults and children in countries worldwide have had the effect of creating a heightened sense of societal threat, fear and insecurity.

In these times the principle of *ahimsa* (that is, non-harming and reverence for all life) continues to be presented as a means to address the cause of the conflict and alleviate the experienced symptoms. In order to develop a concrete remedial approach for the greatest effectiveness, the question arises: Is the principle of *ahimsa* an ideal sentiment in the minds and hearts of well-meaning humans? Or, does the principle reveal a concrete aspect of reality thereby informing us of our greater human potential, and a necessary requirement by which we experience that potential? The tradition known as Jainism claims the latter to be true.

The Jaina tradition is arguably the world's oldest religion. The goal for the Jaina tradition is the liberation of the soul from "worldly," *karmic* bondage. From its beginning countless years ago, Jainism has advocated the practice of *ahimsa*; that is, adopting a lifestyle that attempts to minimize harm to humans and all living beings alike. The reason for this advocacy is based on what the Jaina asserts is necessary for attaining and sustaining happiness and peace in one's life. For the Jaina the practice of *ahimsa* is a fundamental requirement in attaining the sustained happiness and peace, which naturally occurs as the individual strives to reach the full potential of one's soul.

In essence Jainism is a detailed depiction of reality and the profoundness of reality. And the most profound of the profound for the Jaina is the existence of the independent soul, and its essential "characteristic" of consciousness, with its "quality" of *ahimsa*.

In addition, the tradition provides the logic to support the understanding that the disposition to practice non-harming (*ahimsa*) is an aspect of the soul. In fact, the Jaina views the principle of *ahimsa* as being rooted in reality in the sense that the soul exists and is real; and that *ahimsa* is a quality of the soul. It is analogous to the experience of “love” as being a real quality of soul. Thus *ahimsa*, while being considered a principle, is in reality a real thing; an experienced quality of the real entity known as the soul.

The Jaina tradition states that the adoption and practice of *ahimsa* is absolutely necessary to realize the happiness, peacefulness, and fulfillment we desire, and is thus “unavoidable.” *Ahimsa* represents the essence of what we are in reality; that is, what we are as a pure, divine, eternal soul. Happiness and joy, love and compassion, exquisite wonderment and vitality are just a few of the fulfilling experiences that result from the practice of *ahimsa*, as these are aspects of the soul.

Jainism provides insights into the reality of our non-harming nature, as well as the guidelines that illuminate the way to experience our ideal non-harming, soul-self nature. It provides five insights, (four of which can be viewed as “principles”) which guide our lives in the practice of *ahimsa*. The five insights (along with their Sanskrit terms) are: the existence of an eternal, independent soul (*aatmaa*), non-harming (*ahimsa*), non-absolutism (*anekaantavaada*), non-attachment (*aparigraha*), and the law of action-reaction (*karma*).

Jainism presents these five insights into reality specifically for the purpose of enhancing our well-being through the development of our full human potential *vis-a-vis* our pure soul nature. The insights are supported by logic, which we must use to appreciate the validity of the knowledge prior to their application to our lives. In other words, we have the responsibility to validate the truth of the insights with logic.

### **The Essential Insight: The Existence of Eternal, Independent Soul**

There is an expression in Jainism: “Everything is secondary to soul.” We live in a marvelous, mysterious, amazing reality. And there is no greater marvel and mystery than the soul, and its characteristic of consciousness, with its quality of *ahimsa*.

Jainism first, foremost and fundamentally is about the existence of soul and attaining the profound potential of soul. It is each individual’s responsibility to liberate the soul from its bondage relationship with “worldly” matter, in order to attain the soul’s profound potential.

From the Jaina viewpoint soul is the animating essence of each and every living human being and nonhuman living being. Soul is so marvelous and amazing that it cannot be fully described by language. The Jaina indicates that a full description of the nature of soul is “inexpressible.” For lack of better words the descriptive term often used is “divine.” As well, the Jaina views the pure nature of soul to be “divine.”

The Jaina description of the soul presents profound realizations, which on the surface could be viewed as “fantasy.” The “fantastic” profoundness is further indicated in that the Jaina views each soul as having “Godhood” potential. The following expands on this statement and applies logic to validate the Jaina view.

The soul exists. The logic supporting this claim is evident. Whether human or non-human, there is an apparent difference between being alive and not being alive (the latter expressed as being “dead”). The difference between the two is the presence of an energy that animates the living body. This energy has been recognized in various philosophic and religious traditions and given the name “soul.”

The soul is eternal. Science and logic lead us to the following conclusions. The science of physics states in the Law of the Conservation of Energy that energy cannot be created

or destroyed (thus existing eternally). The conclusion: the animating energy known as the soul is eternal.

An extension of this insight is the logical conclusion that illustrates the profoundness of the eternal soul. As the early Greek philosopher Parmenides argued, “If something exists it must have always existed, as something cannot be created from nothing.”

An intriguing personal insight occurs when the eternal existence of soul is compared to the time existence of the planet on which we live. Scientists say the earth was created approximately 4.5 billion years ago. The existence of the earth is thus minute when compared to the eternal existence of the soul. From this comparison the awesome personal question arises: “Where was your eternal soul before the earth was created?”

The soul is independent. Jainism is unique amongst the great religious philosophies with its recognition of independent souls. There is an expression in Jainism, “All souls are independent.” This translates into the understanding that the individual is solely responsible for the actions he or she makes and the experience of the related reactions and consequences.

For the Jaina the depiction of humans as having Godhood potential is real and true. Godhood in the Jaina sense does not mean omnipotent ruler of the universe. It does mean, however, that the individual exclusively determines his or her destiny.

In this regard the individual is indeed God. The actions he or she makes will have the effect of “reality” (the universe) responding in a precise manner to the actions made. It is profound to imagine the universe adjusting in such a way that the individual will receive the precise reaction that relates to the actions made. And knowing this dynamic occurs for each and every individual increases our appreciation of the mystery of the reality in which we are living.

The individual is the main actor in the unfolding of his or her life's experience while all relevant others play the role of "supporting cast." And coincidentally, the individual plays the role of "supporting cast" in the unfolding of the destiny of relevant others.

The soul has the characteristic of consciousness and the quality of *ahimsa*. The full potential of the pure, immaterial soul is limited by its relationship with the material body. The Jainas actually say the pure, immaterial soul has "infinite" consciousness. To be conservative it can be expressed as "limitless" consciousness. We personally do not know "infinite" consciousness but we do have an appreciation of greatly expanded consciousness. History records, for example, the originators of the traditions who have practiced *ahimsa* such as we find in the Jaina, Hindu, Buddhist and Christian traditions. The consciousness of these originator individuals has certainly made a long lasting impression. Their presence and accomplishments have changed the consciousness of people and inspired them toward lives of non-harming consideration of others.

A clear understanding of *ahimsa* for the Jaina needs to include the view of the meaning and purpose of our lives as humans. For the Jaina the meaning and purpose involves the existence of soul and the achievement of its full, independent potential. Thus, the meaning and purpose of our life (from the Jaina viewpoint) is to "purify" and free the soul from worldly bondage. It is this bondage that is the cause of our involvement in worldly events, and the unhappiness and suffering that can occur with these events. Freedom from worldly bondage results in the soul achieving its limitless potential and advancing to a region at the top of the universe which, according to Jaina cosmology, is above and beyond the region of the universe referred to as "Heaven." (Thus helping to further illuminate the achievement of human potential referred to as "Godhood.")



As soul becomes increasingly free from worldly bondage its real nature of *ahimsa* is increasingly experienced. Paradoxically, the means of attaining one's pure soul nature necessarily consists of living according to one's non-harming nature. It is illogical to think otherwise. One cannot attain something by doing what that something is not. For example, a person covered in mud cannot become clean and free of the mud unless actions are taken which stop the cause of the mud accumulating and engaging in actions that clean and remove the mud.

Also involved in the practice of *ahimsa* is overcoming our desires and worldly attachments (the mud). In particular, this involves overcoming and eliminating our emotional actions of anger, ego, greed, and deception. These are emotional reactions to worldly attachments. Including these emotions with regard to *ahimsa* may seem inappropriate and simplistic. However, upon reflection it can be seen that these four emotions often underlie and are involved in occurrences of *himsa* (violence and harming).

### **Four Guiding Principles of Jainism**

We, as humans, are involved in the process of living and as such are involved in a dynamic, changing environment. The application of the four principles (Non-harming, Non-absolutism, Non-attachment, the Law of Action-Reaction) to our changing lives provides a structure during this dynamic process that guides our lives toward the goal of soul liberation. The notion being developed here is that the four principles are permanent as statements of truth while at the same time being dynamic and interchanging in importance when applied to our everyday changing situations. Paradoxically, the static principles become dynamic and applicable by degree (that is, according to the interplay of our personal ability with the environmental circumstances) when we apply them to the ever-changing situations we encounter in our lives.

## 1. The Principle of Non-Harming

This is the principle that is necessary to practice in order to fully experience the soul's divine nature.

The term *ahimsa* is from the ancient Sanskrit language of India. It is generally translated to mean “nonviolence” or “non-harming” (“*a*” meaning “non” and “*himsa*” meaning “violence”) and is nonviolence in a very broad sense. In part the term *ahimsa* stands for an authentic personal presence, which entails love, resoluteness, compassion, empathy, kindness, friendship and co-operation.

*Ahimsa* is also understood and practiced in its broadest or highest form, namely non-harming in thoughts, words and conducts (deeds). The Jaina understanding of *ahimsa* includes the notion of compassion and non-harming toward all living beings. The Jaina sees every living being as possessing the animating energy known as soul. In addition, the soul in every living being is potentially capable of attaining liberation. This awareness of the basic worth of all beings provokes a feeling of empathy and compassion for other life forms. As a result, one means of reducing harm to other living beings is the vegetarian lifestyle practiced by Jainas from the ancient beginning of this tradition. For many present day Jainas the *ahimsa* diet has evolved into veganism.

As mentioned, there is a deeper understanding of *ahimsa* that more precisely reflects the main message and purpose of the teaching of the Jainas. Fundamentally, the purpose is to progressively purify and eventually liberate one's soul. And, the fundamental nature of the pure soul is that of non-harming. The more purified the soul the more the individual innately will strive to avoid harming other living beings. Conversely, the more impure the soul the more the individual will be inclined and willing to be involved in actions that cause harm. Attachment and immersion in the world distort the consciousness toward acts and acceptance of harming others.

Harming is a contradiction of our real, non-harming, loving, caring, joyful, peaceful, pure soul nature. Thus, when we are engaged in actions (in thoughts, words and deeds) that involve harming, we are first and foremost doing harm to ourselves. This is a subtle kind of self-harming. We are doing harm by denying ourselves the fulfilling experiences of peace, joy, and love that are, in reality, our Godhood nature. Alternatively expressed, our ongoing practice of the principle of *ahimsa* is our effort to live according to the non-harming loving, caring, joyful, peaceful nature, of our pure soul. From another perspective, the practice of *ahimsa* is the soul expressing its pure Godhood nature by way of our consciousness, into our experience, and culminating in our actions.

For the Jainas all life is sacred, not only irrespective of the color, belief, or nationality of humans but also of size and mind of all living beings, at all levels, right down to the tiny insects and tinier microorganisms. This understanding underlies the Jaina attitude of reverence of all life.

## 2. The Absolute Principle of Non-Absolutism, or Non One-Sided Reality (*Anekaantavaada*)

This is the unique Jaina understanding of reality clarifying when it is possible and appropriate to practice the principle of *ahimsa*.

This principle has two meanings of practical importance for guiding our thoughts and actions toward harmonious co-existence with other life forms. The first meaning, which is most applicable to non-harming in thought, word and action, is “relativity of thinking.”

Before proceeding an important clarification is necessary. The Jaina view of non-absolutism has been criticized as being a “relativistic” philosophy, meaning there is no absolute truth, only “relative” truth. The critics argue that, in the absence of absolute truth, all that could be established as true (and often violently established and enforced) would be “relative” to the

views, beliefs, interests, and power of a person, group or nation. Violent and destructive examples of this occurrence can be seen throughout history (and up to present day) when individuals (and often their political allies and regimes) become powerful and enforce their beliefs on the less powerful.

Such criticism of this Jaina principle is definitely unwarranted. The Jaina believes there is absolute truth from which moral principles are derived. Truth for the Jainas is an aspect of reality and thus is found in reality. With regard to the moral principle of *ahimsa* it must be a fundamental, “qualitative” characteristic of the nature of the eternal soul and as such is true. The moral principle of *ahimsa* cannot be derived from the material body as it is illogical to believe that the composition of the material human body has moral aspects. If it were so, material compositions such as stones would have the capability for compassion and non-harming.

As well, the criticism of “relativism” is dissolved by the Jaina recognition of the “paradoxical” nature of reality. One such example of paradox is the existence, relationship and interplay of the opposing elements of the absolutely “independent, limitless” soul with absolutely “dependent, limiting” matter resulting in the many forms of living beings. It is a paradox that independent (independent means absolutely, eternally independent) elements can be in relationship. And yet our very existence as living beings with material bodies and non-material souls verifies the truth of this insight.

The non-harming application of the Jainas’ relativity of thinking is explained as follows. Reality in its fullness is vastly complex, and humans are limited in their capability to “understand” as well as “express” reality. In present times not one of us possesses a complete knowledge of truth. Truth is known but it is partial and incomplete. Thus, relative to each individual’s understanding and point-of-view, it can be said that, “there is not just one aspect of truth but many aspects of truth.”

What is believed to be true is appreciated by each individual's consciousness. In this regard, we humans are aware of truth according to the development of our consciousness. The Jaina stresses that according to developmental factors each of us has our own degree of consciousness development, including the understanding of our selves and the world around us. This degree of consciousness development is to a great extent a result of the influence of our environment (customs and creeds, etc.). Thus each individual's understanding of reality and truth is "relative" to his or her degree of consciousness development. As such, each individual is appreciated as having acquired various aspects and degrees of truth that, when shared, have the potential to enrich one's own understanding. Accordingly, it is in one's self-interest to welcome and embrace the opportunity to dialogue with others to learn and expand one's consciousness.

In addition, each of us is seen as being involved in the process of consciousness development toward an eventual realization of universal truth regarding the non-harming nature of one's soul. Each individual's consciousness is located somewhere along a continuum ranging from absolute harming to absolute non-harming. With this in mind respect for other people's thoughts, opinions, and beliefs is encouraged; open-mindedness is practiced with respect to the non-harming aspects of other religions, philosophies, and schools of thought.

The understanding of relativity also applies to the practice of *ahimsa* in addressing and overcoming circumstances involving violence and harm. While *ahimsa* is the ideal practice for the individual in the effort to purify the soul, it may not be the appropriate application when addressing environmental issues that pose threat and harm. The assessed environmental circumstances will determine the relative degree of *ahimsa* that is appropriate to practice. For example, a peaceful protest against a certain law outside a government office in a democratic country would be appropriate and can

result in the opposed position being recognized and a change occurring to the law. In contrast, however, a peaceful protest in an authoritarian country would be inappropriate as it could result in the arrest, imprisonment, and harm of the protesters.

Similarly, while being a proponent of the practice of *ahimsa*, the Jaina allows for actions involving *himsa* when circumstances demand. For the layperson actions that involve harming others would be appropriate when in protection of the individual's safety and in defense of his or her family and country. However, there is a limit in the degree of *himsa* permitted in that its use may only be to the extent necessary to deter the threat and harm.

### 3. The Principle of Non-Attachment (*Aparigraha*)

This is the insight into reality that supports the practice of *ahimsa* by clarifying our relationship with our worldly attachments.

In essence, according to the Jaina understanding of reality and from the perspective of the pure, independent soul, nothing in this worldly existence is "ours." What we believe to be ours is the result of our identification with the things of this world due to the soul's worldly entanglement. Thus, our belief that we possess things as ours is "delusional."

To explain, according to the Jaina the vast, complex universe consists of six basic, eternal, independent components (referred to as 'substances' or 'elements'). The six elements are souls, matter, space, time, motion and rest. When soul and matter are combined (or "attached") such as with embodied living beings, soul is not in its independent (pure) state.

For soul to be its pure self it must become free from and non-attached to matter. Thus, in its pure, non-attached state soul is absolutely independent (and one could say totally "alone"), "possessing" nothing of this material world. The logic underlying non-possession is expressed as such: 'If something were truly a possession it could be possessed forever'. As the

material “things” of this world come and go in our lives (often uncontrollably) these “things” cannot be seen as our possessions. In reality, all we possess is our divine soul as it is a completed entity in itself.

Non-attachment for the layperson is commonly understood to mean, “limiting one’s possessions.” The principle of non-attachment does not require that a layperson renounce everything; that is only for the ascetic. However, the principle does direct that a layperson set limits to his and her desires and wants so that they do not keep on acquiring and accumulating more than they need.

Non-attachment also extends to reducing one’s attachments to persons and places, as well as things. Appreciation of the principle of non-attachment eases the practice of *ahimsa* with the recognition that in reality nothing in this world (body, family, wealth, position, etc.) is ours.

It can be seen that attachment to the world prohibits the experience of one’s divine soul. As such, attachment is detrimental to one’s soul and is in fact *himsa*. Coincidentally, the practice of non-attachment is essential to attain liberation from worldly unhappiness, while at the same time being essential for the happiness which occurs with the liberation of soul. It is based on this understanding that the Jaina adheres to the practice of non-attachment.

#### 4. The Principle of Actions and Related Re-Actions (*Karma*)

This is the principle based on the physical law of “action-reaction” (also known as “cause and effect”) whose great motivating power is generated by enlightened self-interest.

For the Jaina one aspect of the *karma* occurrence is understood as the “matter” substance that the soul attracts as the result of our mind and body activities. Different kinds of activity (action) attract and produce (re-action) different kinds of *karma* effects. Due to the *karmic* material influence the soul is held in the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

It is our emotions (for example, anger, greed, ego, and deceit) that significantly cause this *karma* dynamic. Emotions exert energy and as such create an action. The action in turn will create a reaction of like kind. With awareness and self-restraint an action can be determined which will result in a desired reaction.

The *karmic* law of “cause and effect” explains why and how a person’s actions in thought, word and deed will affect their future. It is the *karmic* process that gives rise to the Western expression “As you give, so will you receive.” In Jaina terms an appropriate expression could be, “By our actions we create our present and future experience.” For the Jaina, the individual is solely responsible for the determination of his or her destiny. All other relationships make a supportive contribution to the individual’s dynamic *karmic* process.

This principle is the great motivator due to the enlightened realization that every action in thought, word, and conduct will have a reaction in kind. In our self-interest we realize that to experience a life of happiness and peace firstly we must generate toward other living beings the actions of which happiness and peace will be the effect. In addition, the law of *karma* gives us assurance that we can receive happiness and peace (often experienced as “blessings” and “protection”) from the effects of surrounding adversity.

While in one respect *ahimsa* is an act of consideration for other living beings, it is first and foremost consideration for one’s own well-being. Paradoxically, while being an act of self-interest, the practice of *ahimsa* is at the same time a practice that is beneficial both for the actor and the recipient(s).

### **Summary: The Practice of *Ahimsa* as Enlightened Self-Interest**

Enlightened self-interest is when the individual realizes she or he alone controls the events that happen in his or her life and acts in accordance with the desired experience. If peace and happiness is desired then actions of peace and



happiness must be extended to other living beings. In the highest sense the Jaina explains the practice of *ahimsa* as a reality of the universe and a prerequisite to the experience of the Godhood nature of the soul. To attain one's Godhood potential it is necessary to act in accordance with one's non-harming Godhood nature. It is a law.<sup>70</sup>

## Jain Concept and Practice of *Ahimsa*

NARENDRA BHANDARI

*The universal law of mutual dependence, a fundamental principle of Jainism, forms the scientific basis of nonviolence to all forms of life. Its practice, in action and in thought, at several levels of personal, family, social and global interactions leads to a harmonious and peaceful life and is illustrated by some examples.*

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The principle of nonviolence (*ahimsa*) emanates from a fundamental law of nature, the law of mutual dependence, as propounded in Jain philosophy. It is not just an abstract philosophy but has a scientific foundation. Various scientific principles which naturally lead to the concept of nonviolence are discussed in this article. In practice, nonviolence is not merely the absence of violence but requires serious and sustained efforts on the part of the practitioner. It also reflects several positive aspects of humanity: concern, compassion and love for others and more importantly toward one's own "self," and appreciation for the whole of creation. The practice of

*ahimsa* has to start at a personal level with tolerance, forgiveness and mutual respect – not only for one’s human companions but also for all living inhabitants and even non-living constituents of the earth – and then spread out to larger spheres of interaction that may include family, society and nations. *Ahimsa* is the one principle that can make the world more humane and create an ambience worthy of human existence. These positive aspects of *ahimsa* and methods of its practice are described. Nonviolence, so defined, is a sure prescription for the mental and physical well-being of a person, as well as for the safety and security of humanity, the biosphere and environment, and indeed the whole earth. It has the potential to eradicate most conflicts between different societies, communities, peoples, faiths and nations.

### **The Principle of Nonviolence**

Nonviolence (*ahimsa*) literally implies the absence of violence (*himsa*), but the choice of this word only reflects the limitations of language. In reality *ahimsa* requires lot of positive efforts. The profound truth on which many religions of the world are based is that every life on this earth is interdependent. One cannot exist by oneself on this earth; if everyone else ceases to exist, the self will not be able to survive and will inevitably vanish. One’s survival is thus dependent on others. Jainism puts this very succinctly in its basic principle of existence: *Parasparopagrahojivānām*: “All living beings exist because of mutual support from each other.” Buddhism propounds that everything in the world is an aggregate, nothing is pure. So nothing (in a pure state) exists by itself. According to the profound theory of *Śūnyavāda* propounded by the Buddhist scholar Nagarjuna (ca. 150-250 A.D.), one interpretation of *Śūnyavāda* is that one exists because of the others, otherwise one, by oneself, is cipher or nothing (*Śūnya*). Thus the self, like cipher, has only a contextual value. Again, interdependence, support, and aggregation are words with severe limitations and convey only superficial aspects; the deeper meanings are difficult to express in language. Science

has done a little better, in the material (non-living) world, when it says that every particle (produced together) is *entangled*. Interdependence conveys an impression of some degree of choice; maybe one can become independent to a limited extent, if one chooses to. Entanglement emphasizes that there is no choice. Every living being is entangled with the other, and there is no way of disentangling oneself from this web. Science has discovered this principle of entanglement during the past few decades, while considering material subatomic particles that are produced simultaneously in an interaction. There is no way they can behave independently, no matter where they are, nearby or at the opposite ends of the vast universe. This principle truly reflects the living beings (souls) also, if we interpret Jain scriptures correctly. According to Jainism and Buddhism, all living species of the universe are connected by a Bodhi field, just like all material bodies are connected by gravity. So, whether we like it or not, we are all entangled, interdependent, and exist (only) because of the support provided by all other forms of life in the universe. Nonviolence is a natural corollary of this far-reaching, fundamental principle.

In a practical way, Jain scriptures illustrate this principle in a question and answer form. One famous Jain sutra asks, “When you are cheating anyone, whom are you actually cheating?” and replies, “It is yourself.” “When you are harming someone, whom are you actually harming?” “It is yourself.” “When you are destroying anyone, whom are you actually destroying?” “It is yourself.” “When you are helping someone, whom are you actually helping?” “It is yourself,” and so on, it goes.

Modern science supports this concept by what has come to be known as Mach’s principle, propounded by Ernst Mach at the beginning of the last century, while considering the cause or origin of the mass of bodies which even now remains an enigma. Broadly speaking, it states that the inertial mass of a body is solely due to its interaction with other bodies in

the universe. Similarly, Einstein stated that “the entire inertia of a point mass is the effect of the presence of all other masses, deriving from a kind of interaction from the latter.” This principle is equally applicable to living beings, if we follow Jain scriptures, and will be true if we say that every life is affected by the presence of all other living beings in the universe. The principle of nonviolence immediately follows from this paradigm, since the “whole” becomes a cause for the existence of the “part” and in this sense both are indistinguishable from each other. In effect, when, one kills somebody, or inflicts harm on any living species, however primitive, one is actually killing or harming a part of the self. It is like committing suicide to some extent, however minor and invisible. In fact one’s very existence is due to synergy with others. Therefore, since all the living forms in the universe are inseparable, interlinked, interdependent and entangled with each other, everyone affects everyone else. One way to empower oneself, then, is to empower others. The law of causality or *karma* (cause and effect relationship) follows from this realization. Once one realizes this law of interdependence of all living beings and entanglement of all souls, and is convinced of its consequences, *ahimsa* becomes imperative and the principle of *karma* (causality) becomes a guiding principle so that one can do no wrong, because he or she has to go through its consequences.

### **Practicing *Ahimsa* in Action and Thought**

It must be emphasized that *ahimsa* should not be regarded merely as not killing living species and avoiding harm to fellow beings. This is only the first step, and not total nonviolence. Nonviolence is to be practiced on several levels and requires constant efforts and sacrifice. First, not only should one refrain from killing any living being, but one should also not hurt them by physical acts, thought, or speech. Even encouraging or abetting someone else to commit violence, or approving of other’s acts of violence, is equivalent to one committing violence oneself. The next step is to feel and experience the

suffering of others, viewing oneself in the position of the sufferer. This is compassion. True nonviolence is practiced when one's soul is in unison with others, experiencing their pain as well as their pleasure. The highest form of nonviolence involves unlimited compassion, when one attains the frame of mind in which one thinks in accordance with the saying of the Buddhist monk Nagarjuna: "May everybody's ill deeds (*paap karmas*) fructify for me, and all my virtues (*punya karmas*) fructify for them." This is the highest level of sacrifice.

Life exists in many forms that, in Jain philosophy, are classified according to their level of consciousness, based on the number of sensory organs they possess, from the highest humans and mammals with five senses (involving faculties of touch, smell, taste, hearing and vision) to four-sensed (e.g., butterflies), three-sensed (e.g., ants), two-sensed (e.g., worms), to the lowest one-sensed (touch) plants and fungus. The fact that plants also have life was known to Jain scholars many millennia ago, much before it was discovered by J.C. Bose in the past century, and constitutes one of the basic considerations on which the Jain lifestyle is based.

### ***Ahimsa* Lifestyle**

Nonviolence encompasses all living species and should not be confined only to human beings, although humans, with their high level of consciousness, have the primary responsibility of practicing it. Practicing *ahimsa* in its real spirit involves a complete change in our lifestyle and attitude. The first and foremost aspect of practicing nonviolence is to embrace vegetarianism, in which one does not kill any living being for food, which is neither necessary nor desirable. To express it in simple logic: How would a human being feel if he or she were to be killed by someone for food? The same feeling, *viz.* the fear of death and pain, exists in the lower animals as well. It is a misconception that non-vegetarian food is essential for maintaining good health. On the contrary, the common experience is that refraining from eating meat is good for health. Embracing vegetarianism involves many

aspects: refraining from killing higher animals and avoiding to consume even lower animals-life forms (fungi and yeasts); refraining from consuming eggs which are meant to create new life and avoiding destruction of plants and trees to clear land for industrial and commercial complexes, and even for growing foodgrains and vegetables. It is also a myth that all bacteria are bad for our health. In fact, the human body is a storehouse of all kinds of bacteria, and we cannot survive without their beneficial effects. It is the balance between the populations of various types of bacteria in the body that is important for maintaining good health, and this can be achieved by cleanliness and not by killing them. Other aspects of change in lifestyle include avoiding trampling on insects and microorganisms while walking on the ground, avoiding killing water-borne bacteria, and breathing slowly to avoid killing airborne life-forms etc.

From avoiding killing living beings, one has to transcend to the next higher level of avoiding injury to them, feeling their pain as well as their pleasure, and to the ultimate level when one realizes that there is no difference between the self (soul) and any other life-form. Since total nonviolence is difficult in practice, one must start by avoiding violence to two or more sensed organisms. Therefore one must begin with avoiding intentional injury to mobile living beings (possessing two or more senses) and desisting from deliberate acts of violence. According to the Jain philosophy, violence is not permitted in any of the three modes: thought, speech and action. Even meekly submitting to or condoning an act of violence, or abetting it for any reason whatsoever, even when one's own life or threat to personal safety is at stake, is against the Jain philosophy.

### **Minimizing Possessions (*Aparigraha*)**

There are many corollaries of nonviolence. Since all violence in this world is rooted in the attitude of possessiveness, or the belief that something is or could be owned, an important corollary of nonviolence is non-hoarding or non-

accumulation of physical assets. Collection or possession of material assets that one does not really need is also considered a form of violence in Jainism, but it is left to an individual to assess his or her requirements. Possessing only those things that are really needed and minimizing one's requirement of material things is only the first step. On a physical level *aparigraha* means non-possession and on the mental level, which is more important, absence of the very desire to establish one's ownership and own or possess material things. Since it is impossible to live in this world without any possessions, be it food or things one needs to survive, in practice it amounts to minimizing one's requirements which leads one to develop a sense of detachment from the material possessions, with the realization that we do not own anything and nothing really belongs to us. This absence of the sense of ownership or possessiveness about anything or any person is real *aparigraha* and it amounts to practicing non-possession. As the feeling of non-possessiveness is attained, possessions automatically vanish and so does the violence involved in owning and securing them. On the other hand, depriving others of their basic requirements, or their rightful share in natural resources by amassing material assets, is also violence. Minimizing one's possessions is therefore basic to practicing nonviolence.

Observing nonviolence toward animals and humans alike, and non-possession, automatically leads to the realization of the concept of "one world." Besides, *aparigraha* reduces consumption, thereby reducing pollution, global warming, and all the ills associated with them. This leads to improvement of the environment on land, air and sea, thus eventually improving our physical and mental health.

### **Tolerance**

Jain philosophy propounds that everything in the world has multiple facets or modes and all of them do not manifest at the same time. The principle of *Anekanta* has been developed to express the multifacetedness of nature. According to this principle and its corollaries (e.g., *syādvāda*),



every statement about a thing, person or event is contextual and only partly true. No statement describes a thing, event or person in completeness or with certainty. Thus views about any object depend on the perspective of the subject, context, time and place. Therefore, one must respect all possible views on any subject, person or event. Since many views are possible, some may even be inconsistent with each other or even contradictory. In view of this realization, one must be tolerant of other's views and respect them, even while holding his or her own opinion. Respecting other's views is thus an integral part of nonviolence.

### **Responsible Behavior**

Jainism defines responsible behavior in which one is fully responsible for his/her own good and bad fortunes. Normally it is a habit to blame, and sometimes even credit, others for one's unfavorable or favorable condition. This is contrary to the basic law of nature, as defined by the theory of *karma*. If one considers him- or herself responsible for his/her destiny, not only blame games but also many conflicts in the society will disappear. One has to start with practicing this philosophy of self-responsibility and relate his/her own deeds in the past and the present condition or destiny. My personal experience is that in a week's practice of holding oneself responsible for everything that is happening, things start falling in place and one is significantly relieved of the burden of blaming others and gathers the mental strength to face the unkind situations gracefully and with fortitude. This is sure way of attaining mental peace.

### **Forgiveness**

One must earnestly strive to minimize hurting the feeling of others by deed, speech or thought. In spite of all the efforts to follow nonviolence, sometimes one causes hurt to others advertently or inadvertently. The true spirit of nonviolence implies that if any hurt is caused to anyone, even inadvertently, one should seek forgiveness for the act of omission or

commission. Forgiving others for their undesirable acts and seeking forgiveness for any wrong doings are both important aspects of nonviolence. Forgiveness, even when one is being subjected to ill treatment, is the greatest of all virtues. The Jain tradition observes a particular day every year, the universal day of forgiveness (called *samvatsari*), on which they seek and grant forgiveness, but this is effective only when one has purity of body and mind. Therefore, this day is preceded by 8 to 10 days of penance, with the aim of purifying both body and mind. To begin with, one must purify the body, first by fasting and observing other practices of penance (*tapas*), purify the mind by repentance, and then seek universal forgiveness. On this day, one aspires to have no enmity with anyone and friendship with all. Forgiveness is likened to the fragrance that a flower gives even while being crushed. On this day of universal forgiveness, one also takes a vow not to be vengeful for acts of others toward them. Forgiving others is as important as seeking their forgiveness for one's own acts. Therefore, everyone seeks forgiveness, not only from those with whom they have interacted but from all the living beings in the universe and, at the same time, unconditionally forgiving everyone, even those who have caused them hurt. Such acts of seeking and granting forgiveness usher harmony and peace in the world.

### **World Peace**

I have so far discussed only personal aspects of *ahimsa*. Actually *ahimsa* has wider implications for society, as well as for the world at large. Practicing *ahimsa* and choosing a lifestyle based on the principles enumerated above has to start at the personal level, then spread out to the family, society and then to the national and international level. Practicing nonviolent methods in attaining one's goals can reduce conflicts, bringing peace and harmony to the family and society. The history of the world over the past century, carved out by Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and presently by Anna Hazare, has amply shown the power of nonviolence

in securing world peace, human dignity, and national independence from slavery, subjugation and atrocities. At the same time the path of violence currently adopted by the Egyptian and Syrian people in their ongoing pursuits to attain similar objectives have shown the futility of the violent approach. Nonviolence can save many lives and leads to peaceful coexistence of various life-forms on the earth. It is beyond rational logic to explain how Herculean and seemingly impossible objectives were successfully attained by merely following nonviolent techniques and this in my mind lies at the boundaries of mystery. I will go so far as to state that there is some hidden latent power in the nonviolent techniques, fasting and penances which has to be experienced to be believed.

The Jain concept of peace (*shanti*) is somewhat different from other philosophies. Instead of the principle of “live and let live,” wherein one is given priority (or at least as much importance as others), to be able to live in peace, Jains follow the principle “let others live” without the narrow, selfish considerations centered on the self. In Jain philosophy, peace is not the mere absence of conflict or unhappiness, but it is something positive to be attained by sacrifices and observing penances. It is a state of equanimity which is attained by rigorous practice and has to be cultivated.

The basic Jain approach to peace is to realize the well-being of all living beings, from tiny insects to giant mammals. Various aspects of peace in Jainism are:

1. Peace and well-being of the self depends on the well-being of all others, throughout the universe, from which follows the principle of nonviolence, as already discussed above.
2. Peace entails respecting views of others even if they contradict one’s own views; hence the principle of *anekanta*, the theory of multifacetedness of nature and the importance of tolerance, as mentioned above.
3. Peace cannot be realized without undergoing sacrifices on the part of the self.

4. Violence in any form cannot be a solution to any problem, dispute or conflict, within family, society, country or the world.

The concept of peace in some other thoughts implies safety and security for oneself without much concern for others. In contrast, Jainism propounds that safety for the self is automatically ensured when everyone else in the world is safe. Hence, in Jainism, there is an overt emphasis on the collective safety of everyone, rather than just one's own safety.

Conquering others (people or nations) by applying brute force does not lead to peace. Both Buddhism and Jainism follow the same approach to realize world peace. Possession of powerful weapons with the aim to intimidate others does not make a country a superpower. According to Jainism, real superpower status is attained only when others follow you willingly and adopt your values. This is like conquering their minds by nonviolence and compassion. This can only be achieved by genuinely committing to the ideal of peaceful co-existence that alone can ensure peace and prosperity of all peoples. Such an approach alone can ensure the security and safety of all nations, big or small, which is a pre-requisite for realizing world peace. There is a myth that these techniques of nonviolence and compassion will not work in the international arena, and the policies of many countries are based on protecting themselves and their economic interests with violent techniques. But this concept is erroneous and contrary to experience. A case in point is Buddhism, which originated in India but at one stage was being voluntarily followed and practiced by peoples, with a variety of background, in more than half the world. The countries where Buddhism flourished included China and Tibet to the north of India; Japan, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia to the east; Pakistan and Afghanistan to the west, and Sri Lanka to the south. In oriental thought, this constitutes the real proof of the relevance of a philosophy – that it was embraced by people of their own will, without any coercion, and resulted in a long period of peace in the world.

### ***Ahimsa and the Concept of Gaia***

In a broader context, Jainism extends the principle of *ahimsa* to even non-living constituents of nature, like earth, energy, air and water. This is consistent with the concept of *Gaia*. The *Gaia* hypothesis proposed by James Lovelock and further developed by Lynn Margulis and others, postulates that organisms interact with their immediate inorganic surroundings on earth to form a complex, self-regulating system that strives to evolve suitable conditions as required for the sustenance of life on this planet. The biosphere and the various life-forms evolve to maintain stability of all environmental parameters (like temperature, ocean salinity, and oxygen concentration in the atmosphere) that govern the habitability of earth. Thus, the *Gaia* hypothesis suggests that organisms co-evolve with their environment, that is, that they influence the abiotic environment around them, which in turn influences the biota by the Darwinian process of evolution. Thus the evolution of life and its environment are intricately intertwined and affect each other. All life-forms on earth are considered part of one single living planetary being, called *Gaia*. It is based on the observation that all organisms are made up of two components i.e., animate and inanimate constituents, biological as well as chemical components. Likewise the earth comprises animate and inanimate forms, both of which evolve in tandem and harmony (inter-dependence) and provide conditions that are conducive for life to evolve and sustain. We can thus consider the whole earth to be a single conscious organism. The argument can be further extended to the whole universe, which is made of both conscious-animate and material-inanimate components.

The *Gaia* hypothesis is supported by some features of natural changes, as discerned from geological records that sun, earth, ocean and atmosphere have also evolved in accordance with the evolutionary requirement of living species. Without going through the technical details (discussed

elsewhere) or the evidences in favour of *Gaia*, I will only state that fire (energy), matter (nutrients, calcium, phosphorus, iron, silicon, etc.), water ( blood, for example) and air (*prāṇa*, oxygen, and carbon dioxide ) are required for the sustenance of the biosphere and they all function synergistically, and interdependently, and are in fragile equilibrium with each other. Thus both living and non-living entities essentially function and evolve in a synergetic manner.

The inorganic materials like air, earth and water, or energy by itself, may not be endowed with “life” in the strict sense of the word, as modern biology and medical science understand it. It may still be correct to say that when they act in synergy with the biosphere or with living species, these entities act “consciously” and develop some kind of “wilful” behaviour. When non-living matter (such as calcium, magnesium, iron and other chemicals present in our body, or the air we breathe), takes part in the body’s metabolism, it acquires some kind of conscious qualities. This concept, basic to Jain thought, is quite revolutionary but is remarkably effective in improving our natural environment. It teaches us to respect our non-living environment and appreciate its role in our survival.

In summary, the principle of nonviolence is rooted in a profound law of nature, the law of mutual dependence. Practicing nonviolence includes minimizing personal requirements and possessions, tolerating the views of others, seeking and granting forgiveness, adopting frugal lifestyles, and treating our environment with respect. Forgiving others and seeking forgiveness from everyone for intentional or unintentional thoughts or deeds forms the basic theme of nonviolence. The effectiveness of *ahimsa* in international relations, in spite of several successful nonviolent campaigns, can only be believed after practicing it. But as the world becomes smaller, and various nations become more dependent on each other there is no alternative but to practice *ahimsa*. This is a sure prescription of peace in the world,

friendship between everyone, and no enmity anywhere, besides personal, mental and spiritual development of the self. Many of the concepts related to *ahimsa* in Jain philosophy are supported by scientific studies.

## Applied Jain Nonviolence: A Holistic Approach

SAMANI SHASHI PRAGYA

*Both violence and nonviolence are inherent in us. Our minds also work in two ways: one dictates anger, the other counsels patience. Both the instigating and the restraining tendencies work together. It is here that the meditative practices of training in nonviolence, as developed by Acharya Mahapragya, have a role to play, allowing one to awaken nonviolence and put violence to sleep. This essay introduces four components of training in nonviolence, the root causes of violence, and the solution of the problem of violence. Addressing both theoretical and practical aspects, this holistic approach presents a novel vision of applied, spiritual, nonviolent meditation.*

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One of the world's oldest religions, Jainism has as its primary philosophy *ahimsa* or "reverence for all living beings." Its latest prophet (*Tirthankara*), Mahavira, was born in 599 B.C. in North East India. He was the 24<sup>th</sup> in the line of prophets and thus Jainism is a *dharma* of unique antiquity. His entire life is



an example of how to live in perfect harmony with nature and not to cause pain to any living being via words, thoughts, or actions. Jainism has had a major influence on the spread of nonviolent values and practices throughout the history of India. The prime maxim of the Jains is “nonviolence is the supreme religion.” The development of the human race is founded on nonviolent conduct and behavior. The vows of truthfulness, non-stealing etc. are nothing but the nurturing factors of nonviolence. In the Jain religion, nonviolence is believed to be *savvabhuyakhemankari* (good for all living beings) and *maatristhaaniya* (like a mother). All moral rules and disciplines are included in this single principle.

From time immemorial, it is thought that man is a social being who respects his fellow human beings. Looking at global violence, however, one fails to understand how man got into grip of violence – or, to be more precise, how violence got a grip on him. The world is torn by tension, strife, crimes, terrorism, and regional conflicts. The present paper is an endeavor toward highlighting nonviolence as an antidote for the burning problems of today. The paper is divided into two sections. The first section deals with the roots of violence and a way out through the practice of meditation. The second section deals with the novel concept of training in nonviolence as incorporated by Acharya Mahapragya.



## I

In the case of every problem, man wants to search for its root until he succeeds. Rising levels of violence are a major issue, and almost all the nations of the world are trying to find a solution. According to my view, there are many factors responsible for violence. We will go into them later. The violence prevalent in society cannot be ended without developing spiritual nonviolence and basing our life on it. Let us then discuss what is meant by spiritual nonviolence. It is based on the unity and equality of all souls. Once we know that every living being is subject to pain and pleasure in the

same manner as we and, therefore, that we must never inflict pain on them, never oppress or exploit them, never rob them of their rights, then we are on our way to realizing the meaning of spiritual nonviolence. And it is this nonviolence that can prevent the arson, looting, rioting and killings going on in society.

I believe that practicing meditation is a step toward spiritual excellence. To meditate is to see oneself, which in turn means seeing and searching the real base of nonviolence. Geneticists will locate its root in the genes inherited from one's forefathers. That would mean that man is helpless in the matter since he cannot control his heredity. Psychologists trace violence to one of the basic instincts. Environmental scientists blame it on the general atmosphere or circumstances surrounding a human being since his childhood. Some philosophers attribute it to *karmas*. Thus we are confronted with a plethora of views on the subject.

If we pause and think for a moment, we find that each one of them is partial or one-sided, though none of them can be termed as wholly untrue. We must take a holistic view. But even this might not provide the ultimate solution. More serious thinking is needed. Each of the theories based on genes, primal instincts, environment, and *karmas* has a more or less deterministic ring to it, which leaves one both pessimistic and helpless in the face of the inevitable. However, the doctrine of *karma* also suggests the possibility of changing the *karmas*. The possibility of change kindles new hope in the heart. After all, we can change; violence can change.

The key to change is the development of nonviolence. Both violence and nonviolence are inherent in us. Our mind also works in two ways: one dictates anger; the other counsels patience, puts the brakes on the anger. Both the instigating and the restraining tendencies are there. Good and evil are both present in us. The real question is which of the two we shall develop. Which one shall we awaken and which one shall we put to sleep? It is here that meditation has its role. Through

it we can awaken nonviolence and put violence to sleep. It is then a question of proper awakening. Unfortunately we are fully conscious of material things but totally unconscious of ourselves. Meditation makes us conscious of ourselves. It develops self-awareness. Once self-awareness has dawned, nonviolence develops.

We have read the earlier mentioned views of genes, instincts, environment, and *karmas*. Of these four, environment or the general atmosphere has an immediate impact on us and so it deserves our attention first. In this connection, it is noteworthy that right from childhood man is exposed to violence, crime, and immorality through the mass media – radio, television, cinema, internet, and newspapers. No wonder crime and violence permeate modern society. Sex, greed, fear, suspicion, and anger – they all breed violence and very little is heard of nonviolence in general. It is said that genes and instincts cannot be changed but *karmas* can certainly be, else there will be no relevance of penance, austerity, and the like. The need to change remains crucial. Both the root and the branches have to be changed. And as stated earlier, the most important and powerful means of bringing complete change is meditation. It alone has the power to develop nonviolence, self-realization, and the sense of the unity and equality of all sentiments.

As social beings, all humans like nonviolence since it guarantees the peace that in turn is the prerequisite for happiness. The roots of violence are deep and extensive; therefore, to destroy them is difficult. However it is not impossible. Meditation is the best way to do it. Before discovering the relation between meditation and nonviolence, it is necessary to find out the root cause of violence, and also the factors that sustain violence.

One of the most important factors is *stress*. Violence is not possible in the absence of stress. A relaxed person cannot commit violence. The muscles get tense, the mind becomes tense, and feelings turn tense too. Violence is the natural

outcome. Most tension is born of an agitated or uncontrolled passionate mind. There are two types of stress: that which is born of uncontrolled passions and that born of the sense of depression. To the former belong cases of stress arising out of anger, ego, and greed; to the latter those caused by despair, defeat and indolence. A man undergoing depression many times commits suicide. Whatever the provenance, all types of tension generate violence.

Against the backdrop of tension and stress, it becomes meaningful to talk about meditation and nonviolence. The main aim of meditation is to free a man from stress: for physical stress, the practice of *kayotsarga* (abandonment of the body), a motionless form of meditation; for mental stress, exercise of long breathing; and for emotional stress, the practice of *anityaanupreksha* (contemplation of impermanence) and *ekatvaanupreksha* (contemplation of solitariness). Along with that, concentration on *jyotikendra* cures specific types of emotional tension. The main thing being emphasized here is the efficacy of meditation as a cure for all varieties of stress and tension.

Another factor involved in violence is *chemical imbalance*. When there is an imbalance of glandular secretions in the body, people become violent. Every endocrine gland has its specific functions. The function of pituitary gland is different from that of the pineal and, similarly, the thyroid and adrenal glands have their particular functions. A harmonious functioning of these glands keeps an individual balanced. Any imbalance in the former results in an imbalance in the latter. Meditation can restore the lost balance. As per Acharya Mahapragya, *chaitanyakendrapreksha* (practice of perception of psychic centers of the endocrine systems) is an effective means of curing the imbalance. Concentration on the *jyotikendra* (the pineal), *darshankendra* (the pituitary), *vishddhikendra* (the thyroid), and *tejaskendra* (the adrenals) balances the flow of the hormones of the pineal, pituitary, thyroid, and the adrenal glands respectively. Such an understanding is duly backed by the findings of modern

biochemistry. Since violence can be ascribed to hormonal imbalances in the body, meditation turns out to be the best therapy.

The third factor responsible for violence is an imbalance in the *naditantra* (nervous system). Occasionally we come across cases of motiveless or unintentional violence. When policemen question the agents of such violence, they simply say that they resort to violence for no reason other than deriving joy. This type of violence is due to the imbalance of the nervous system and its cure lies in *samavrittishvaspreksha* (exhaling breath through one nostril and inhaling through the other). It requires alternate breathing through the two nostrils – inhaling through the left and exhaling through the right nostril and then in the reverse order, and repetition of the cycle. *Hatha yoga* recognizes two parts of the nervous system, the right being called the *pingala* and the left *ida*. In the language of medical science, *pingala* is the sympathetic nervous system and *ida* is the para-sympathetic nervous system. By practicing *samavrittishvaspreksha*, a balance between the two systems is created. Besides this, the practice of an internal trip (travel of the conscious mind from the bottom to the top of the spinal cord) also helps to restore the central nervous system balance. Once the three parts of the nervous system – central, sympathetic and para-sympathetic – start functioning in a balanced manner, violence automatically disappears.

Another way of looking at the problem is in terms of the two attitudes – positive and negative. Ordinarily man has a preponderance of the latter. Hatred, jealousy, fear, and lust are all symptoms of a negative attitude and they are also factors that contribute to violence. Racism, casteism and all other forms of discrimination generate violence due to the presence of negative attitude. There is a need to think positively, thereby making it impossible for the mind to harbor bad feelings for others. Meditation develops positive thinking by insisting on practicing perception of the self. One who meditates on the self reduces negative feelings and develops positive feelings. Seeing oneself, a regular practice of introspection,

*anityaanupreksha* (contemplation of impermanence), etc. is a sure means of developing positive thinking and eliminating negative thinking, the fourth factor responsible for the violence.

The sixth element is over-busyness or over-exertion of mental, vocal, and physical activities. Today man has broken all limits and has become too busy – a victim of over-exertion. The result again is violence. Nature ordains a balance between work and rest, both mental and physical, and between speech and silence. To stop unnecessary exertion of the body and the mind, as also of speech, is to lead a disciplined life. Observing silence just for an hour in the day will be a great boost to balanced living. Likewise useless and unceasing thinking can prove unhinging. So once again resting the mind for an hour during the day – keeping it free from all thoughts or concentrating one’s mind on the single subject can prove immensely useful. Physical discipline, vocal discipline and mental discipline are intrinsic to meditation.

Violence originates in the limbic system, then appears at the level of thoughts and then in action. The first principle of nonviolence is purification of the emotions, and for that our body and mind have to be trained. The body should be trained through the different *asanas* and the practice of relaxation. The training of the mind is undertaken through *pranayama*, deep breathing and alternate breathing. The training of emotions is done through the practice of meditation on psychic centers and color meditation. By practicing all three of them, we can significantly restrain violence.

### **Forty Minutes Capsule Course for Developing a Nonviolent Personality**

Training is prerequisite for developing a nonviolent personality. We have to recognize the fact that today, negative ideas hold sway in life and positive ideas are at a discount. Let me here suggest just one method of replacing negative with positive ideas. Sit down and adopt the posture of *kayotsarga* (total relaxation of the body) for ten minutes and then

practice making the mind free from all thoughts. It implies the absence of both memory and imagination, for both the past and future are fetters of the mind. Attaining such a placid state of mind is an art that one learns through long and constant practice. It amounts to cleansing the mind. After remaining in the state of thoughtlessness for ten minutes, a conscious effort should be made to probe the mind with a view to finding out the negative ideas harbored by it. This should go on for the same period: ten minutes. Then allow yourself to become aware of the positive suggestions and repeat them for the same length of time. Thus the forty minutes of training in nonviolence as recommended by Acharya Mahapragya will be the first lesson of developing a nonviolent personality. It is rightly said by Mahapragya that any discussion on nonviolence without an accompanying program of training is pointless.



## II

War and violence were ancient discoveries. We continue to use them with ever more efficient tools. Their production, research and improvement, stockpiling, sales and use constitute the crime of killing, to be more accurate, the crime of mass killing. The unprecedented destruction and human tragedy caused by dropping atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki unnerved even those who had faith in violence. So people started thinking and talking about world peace and disarmament. New movements were launched to achieve these laudable aims, yet simultaneously nations continue to manufacture even more infernal weapons. We generally think that two contradictories cannot coexist. But there are the spectacles of nations making furious preparation for war and at the same time talking of nonviolence. Is it not a paradox that we talk about peace and nonviolence and prepare for war and violence?

Under these circumstances people who have genuine faith in nonviolence have to ask themselves whether they will

continue merely to talk of and preach nonviolence or whether they will take some serious steps in that direction. According to Mahapragya's view, a multiplicity of platforms for preaching nonviolence is not going to achieve anything. We are reminded of a farmer who went to a monk and told him sorrowfully how he had been digging a pit a day in his field for the past ten days without getting a drop of water. The monk said he would have got plenty of water if only he had concentrated on one pit and deepened it enough, instead of going on digging pit after pit. The lesson is obvious. Creating too many platforms or changing from one platform to another will be of no avail. What is needed is the strengthening and deepening of one's faith in nonviolence. Without adequate and proper mental training, faith is not possible. We therefore need training to counter the violence that one learns and is exposed to, since childhood.

The arms rob the poor of their basic needs and push them to starvation, malnutrition, lack of medical care, education, shelter, clothing, sanitation facilities, drinking water, etc. While millions starve, billions are spent for mass destructive weapons. This is a grave error and sin. Then the question remains, how to tackle violence? If a struggle is inevitable, we have to look for alternative forms of struggle, a new technique of nonviolent struggle as envisioned by Mahavira 2600 years back. Mahavira was a *kshatriya* (warrior) by birth. He became a preacher of nonviolence and yet the instincts of war did not leave him. The ways of *ahimsa* and war are different. He transformed the meaning of war and said: "have a war, fight, not with someone else but with yourself." This means, conquer your own enemies (passions: anger, pride, deceit and greed) through meditation and contemplation of the self. Indeed this technique of self-transformation is a unique solution to war. Even if there is one duly trained nonviolent person for every one hundred trained soldiers, a new miracle can be performed and a new order can be created.

Lord Mahavira's teachings were basically founded on nonviolence. But Acharya Mahapragya gave multi-dimensions



to Mahavira's nonviolence. His principles on various issues – nonviolence, peace, socio-religious harmony, spirituality, science of living, morality, ecology and social economics – have been inspiring both to intellectuals and common men alike. His valuable views derived from Jain texts hold the utmost importance. His excellence remains in presenting the ancient wisdom as a solution to modern problems. His enlightening views can provide good grounds on which we can pave a new path to environmental protection and global harmony. Apart from his theoretical contributions regarding nonviolence, he has built a system of training which turns a violent being into a nonviolent one, an eco-foe into an eco-friend. In this context, he has classified two important aspects of training in nonviolence – theoretical and practical.

The former comprises comprehension of the philosophical theories of nonviolence. There are diverse doctrines of nonviolence, and if we enter into polemics we may get entangled in futile controversies. Therefore, we shall mention only a few basic metaphysical ideas without which the very concept of training in nonviolence cannot be understood. There are five metaphysical points which confirm the value of nonviolence and can help us build a healthy environment:

1. *Reality of Soul.* There exist six kinds of souls, according to Jainism. Earth, water, fire, air, and vegetation are considered immobile beings; mobile beings are humans, animals, and all living micro-organisms.

2. *Independence of Soul.* Every soul is existentially independent. It is responsible for its own sufferings or pleasures. From this point of view, the soul is the doer of its own fate. Nobody has the right to interfere in the independent existence of other beings or to inflict pain and violence on others.

3. *Equality of All Souls.* Speaking arithmetically, the number of souls is infinite. The states of different souls formed by the effects of their own *karmas* are also diverse. But from the point

of view of intrinsic nature, all souls are equally valuable; there is no difference whatsoever. This principle of “equality” is not confined to human beings but applies to each and every living being (nature, such as earth, water, fire, air and vegetation). The souls of all living beings are intrinsically identical and equal.

4. *Relatedness and Interdependence in All Facets of Living.* No one can survive by remaining absolutely indifferent to or independent from other beings. Therefore, the principle of relatedness applies to every particle of nature. Even a single leaf falling from a tree will have its effects on the whole universe.

5. *Co-Existence.* Thinking in terms of “Either I shall remain or he will remain” has no place in the canons of nonviolence. Thinking on the lines of “You as well as I will live; this as well as that will prevail,” is the terminology of co-existence and an ideology of nonviolence. Now let us proceed to explain Mahapragya’s novel concept of training in non-violence.

### **Training in Nonviolence**

It is essential to avoid senseless violence. People often quote one saying, “*Jivojivasyabhajanam*” (“one conscious being survives by consuming another”), but forget another – as quoted in *Tattvaartha Sutra*: “*Parasparopagrahojivaanaam*” (“conscious beings help one another”). The Jain scriptural aphorism, “All life is bound together by mutual support and interconnection,” is vitally important. In this aphorism, life is viewed as a gift of togetherness, accommodation and assistance in a universe teeming with interdependent constituents. It can bring about holistic environmental protection, peace and harmony in the universe. If each conscious being is full of sympathy and helpfulness toward another, no conscious being can damage the interests of another. Even if one cannot help the inevitable violence associated with birth, one should at least strongly resolve to avoid senseless violence. Those devoid of the above resolution practice unimaginable cruelty against other conscious beings. Arnold Toynbee expressed similar

thoughts: “In this hurricane of annihilating material power, mankind will not be able to save itself from self-destruction unless all of us manage to practice nonviolence in relation with our fellow beings.”

The nonviolence training program as conceived by Acharya Mahapragya consists of the following four essential ingredients: (i) a conceptual understanding of *ahimsa* and its historical perspective; (ii) a change of heart, i.e., bio-chemical transformation resulting in curbing negative emotional propensities; (iii) a nonviolent lifestyle; and (iv) suitable practical training for employment.

Each component has elaborate steps including remedial and practical exercises of *preksha* meditation. The practical aspect of nonviolence consists of the four-fold training in nonviolence. They are as follows: (a) change in heart; (b) change in attitude; (c) change in lifestyle; and (d) change in purification of livelihood.



(a) *Change in Heart* : The first dimension of training in nonviolence is change of heart. Here the word “heart” does not mean the physiological organ “heart,” but emotions or feelings. *Ayurveda* upholds that there are two hearts – one beside the lungs and other in the brain. The genesis of emotions is in the limbic system, a part of the brain. According to Acharya Mahapragya, change in heart means replacing the negative instincts with positive ones. Attachment, hatred, jealousy, and disgust are negative emotions. Friendliness, compassion, mercifulness, and love are positive emotions. The practice of *Kayotsarga* (relaxation) and green-colored contemplative meditation on the *Shanti Kendra* (centre of peace) on the upper forehead of the body can help to transform such emotions and bring about a change of heart. Unless the emotions are changed, the problem of nonviolence cannot be solved.



(b) *Change in Attitude* : Training in nonviolence is an innovative technique to train the person. It involves training toward a healthy mental state. From where does the training

in nonviolence begin? The answer to this question is a natural solution to the problem of violence. The beginning point of nonviolence is fearlessness. Unless and until there is non-attachment toward the body and material objects, man can never become fearless. Along with fear, the instinct of possessiveness and attachment of possession were also seeds of violence. The training is successful when one attains fearlessness and a detached attitude towards the material pleasures; contemplation brings about a change in outlook, in emotional state.



(c) *Change in Lifestyle*: The third dimension of training in nonviolence is change in lifestyle. At present, man wishes to become nonviolent but does not want to change his lifestyle. To become nonviolent, it is necessary to limit possessions and to get over them. Our consumerist attitude must be changed, because uncontrolled consumerism fuels the fire of violence. Our lifestyle today is based on fast food, fast action, and fast achievement. This rapid pace of life also works with consumerism. Man lives to consume rather than consuming to live. The consumerist lifestyle is causing pollution. Man does need food and shelter, but he can certainly do without indulging in luxury. In the present scientific age, man cannot leave comforts, but can limit the excessive comfortable and luxurious lifestyle. For the awakening of such wisdom, restraint is essential.

Today we realize that humans cannot live alone on this planet. Humans have to live in the company of non-humans. One cannot live without the other. This ecological argument provides a powerful basis for vegetarianism. So a vegetarian lifestyle is also essential for developing nonviolence and ecological balance. A reverent philosophy of equal coexistence and inter-dependence given by Lord Mahavira and as followed by Acharya Mahaprgya depicts the same. In *Acaaranga Sutra*, it is very well said that, “*Je loyamabbhaikhai se attanamabbhaikhai, je attanamabbhaikhai se loyamabbhaikhainevaattanamabbhaikhejjanevaloyamabbhaikhejja.*” This means: “One who abuses the cosmos abuses oneself. Do not abuse self or others.” It is

further said: “One who disregards the existence of earth, water, air, fire, vegetation, and animals disregards his own existence.”



(d) *Change in Purity of Livelihood* : Since man is a social being, he possesses body, family, etc. He has to fulfill the needs of the body, nourish it and then protect it. To fulfill that purpose, he must earn, but violent means of earning must be avoided. Business that involves large-scale violence, such as deforestation, meat production, and so on and so forth through the fifteen restricted professions identified by Mahavira in Jainism, must be avoided. It implies choosing a fair means of livelihood, and refraining from acquiring and benefiting from the wealth which creates environmental and social problems. Hence training in right livelihood stands as an important aspect of nonviolence.

The call of our time is to build a healthy and harmonious society that can train us to change our attitude, heart, and lifestyle in order to have a successful symbiosis between man and nature. Let us all practice nonviolence, so that we may save nature. Survival of nature is survival of the whole universe. Acharya Mahapragya awakens the consciousness when he says that, “Man has been fighting for human rights and animal rights but it is time to think and work for “Mother Earth’s right.” Mother Earth does have a right to exist in its originality. The slogan “either restraint or perish” needs to echo in our life. Training will be useful and successful only when it brings about attitudinal changes. Training in nonviolence should be carried out firstly at the individual level, then at the family level and finally at the level of social and institutional consciousness. With this formula, all sections of society can live a life of peaceful co-existence. In this way the value of nonviolence is found in the practice of meditation, and this in turn can bring about a happy, healthy, and fraternal peaceful environment with the protection of all species and global harmony.

Application of Nonviolence  
in Daily Life  
JOHAN GALTUNG

*This paper is a contribution to the growing field of conflict transformation. I am particularly interested in the possibility of bringing a victim and a predator together, for the purposes of therapy.*

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The TRANSCEND Peace Development Environment Network started with geopolitical macro- and mega-conflicts, many of them well-known and dramatic. But conflicts in daily life, at school, in couples-family, and at work may be even more dramatic; at the micro-level within the persons involved, between them, in the context, and at the meso-level of social groups. Macro- and mega-, between states and regions, nations and civilizations, may also matter, like micro-personal and meso-social conflicts matter for macro- and mega-conflicts within and between negotiators-mediators. Any act of violence, like bullying at school, quarrels in the family, or at work, may

not actually express hostility toward the victim but be toward the “system.” A feeling of being trapped in general may be expressed as violence at school, in a couple-family, or at work.

But higher levels generally prefer a lower-level focus; not on them and the level they represent, but on the bully or the quarrelsome person. Psychologists may be mobilized to handle “the difficult person,” yet, when observed more deeply, what is at stake is a highly problematic system. It may be sociology more than psychology.

For a nonviolent handling we have to have all levels in mind, and that is the essence of our Sabona project, TRANSCEND in daily life. The word means in Zulu: “I see you,” I take you in, all of you, all levels!

The reader will find below a table with three columns for the three types of “daily life,” and ten levels for theory and practice. Lack of adequate analysis leads to single level reductionism and interventions at the wrong (usually meaning lower) levels.

For therapy, sensitivity to intra-column multi-level conflicts is indispensable, not only focusing on perpetrators or victims and their narratives, but also on the relations, contexts, structures and cultures in which they are embedded. Sensitivity to inter-column transfers of conflict energy is also needed, as frustrations in one may easily come out as aggression in the other.

Analysis Level	Schools	Couples-Family	Work
1. Micro-, within	Bully	Perpetrator	Trouble maker
2. Micro-, within	Bullee	Victim	Competitor
3. Micro-, between	Bully-Bullee	Relation	Competition

4. Meso-, Bullee	Bully- context	Perpetrator- Victim	Trouble maker- competitor
5. Meso-, setting	Class- Teacher	Marriage- Family	Section
6. Meso-, super	School- Rector	Kin	Company
7. Macro-, meta- setting	School- system	Marriage- Family System ministry	Economic system
8. Macro-, society, structure	Vertical horizontal	Patriarchy parentarchy vs. parity	Vertical vs. horizontal
9. Macro-, civili- zations	Individual- ist-vs. collectivist	Individual- ist vs. collectivist	individual- ist vs. collectivist
10. Mega- civili- zations	Modern vs. tradi- tional	Modern vs. tradi- tional	Modern vs. tradi- tional

Difficult? Yes, but knowledge helps. Thus, sitting down with perpetrator and victim, one at the time, and asking questions beyond their relations to each other may already be half the therapy. Incidentally, it also takes some of the brunt off the verbal or physical violence: there is more to it than just the two of us. A worker-manager relation may have gone very sour; it helps to ask both what could be done with the work organization. Maybe a change from company toward cooperative may help? Thus, there are structures that are problematic regardless of the concrete persons who enact the various roles.

And vice versa: there are persons who are problematic regardless of the structure in which they are embedded. We may have to search in micro- and meso-contexts like the



Freudian focus on the childhood, not forgetting the Jungian focus on the role of civilizations.

An example: SABONA is working in kindergartens, including with two-year-olds. They can talk, but are of course not good at expressing what they want with words, and then reasoning about it. In discussions with the teachers, two general principles came up. First, when the children quarrel or fight, do not scold them but find out what is the issue – usually a conflict. Child A wants this and Child B that and the two do not go together, they are incompatible. Second, find a solution. Remember, they are not born with solutions and they may come from homes where the father bangs the table, and the children too, and the mother cries.

So, here we go: the real episode is about a teddy bear, clutched by A.

Child A: It is mine!

Child B: No, it is mine!

It goes louder and louder, then B beats A to grab the teddy bear, A cries, the teacher comes.

Teacher, mildly, not angrily: In this kindergarten we do not shout, cry and beat. And the teddy bear is neither yours, nor ours. It belongs to the kindergarten. But here is what you can do: You A have it one minute, and then it is B's turn – you see that clock there, one minute is when that finger has made one turn. The teddy bear also goes around, it rotates from one to the other of you and back again. OK?

Teacher again: And here is another thing you can do. I'll put a sign on the bear saying Kindergarten Bear, and you put it on the table. And, you know what: you sing a song for the bear, the little song you learnt yesterday. He'll enjoy it! You may even dance around the table; he'll love it!

And so they did and learnt, slowly – it does not come immediately – two major ways of solving conflict: dividing the use, here over time – and sharing, as joint property. Of course there is also the possibility of having one teddy bear for each child, privatizing at least the use, cuddling. Private property.

A and B have learnt something that may be very useful for them later in life. Imagine they become foreign ministers of Japan and/or China and the teddy bear is some islands called Senkaku-Daioyu, with oil in the EEZ, exclusive economic zone, in the sea, between the two countries. It is mine! shouts one. It is mine! shouts the other. A serious fight, even a war, may result.

But then they remember something about dividing. One year for each?

Rotation? Half the territory for each. Space may be divided, teddy bears may not.

And they remember something about joint property, owned by the kindergarten, sharing the use. But where is that super-owner? Maybe we can create one? Maybe a Northeast Asian Community, NEAC?

And now the islands have a sign: NEAC Islands. And ships dance around it and they agree: 40% of the income to China, 40% to Japan, 10% to others, and 10% to NEAC. Or something like that, but avoid 0%-100%, meaning private ownership by one or the other. Dividing, or sharing.

Of course, nobody would expect members of the zero sum “state system” to have the wisdom of a kindergarten teacher and the learning ability of two-year-old children (even in spite of their parents). But maybe if they had been to a kindergarten focused on nonviolent conflict resolution. *Ahimsa* from Day one.

Love Wrestles with the World:  
Hospitality with the Poor as a Means  
to *Ahimsa*

CLAIRE SCHAEFFER-DUFFY

*I describe the practice of hospitality, Christian mercy and forgiveness that my husband and I have tried to implement in the last few decades in our Catholic Worker house. Like Dorothy Day, who inspired us to undertake this life-long project, our experiences are both positive and negative, yet before despair can set in, we receive another phone call about an orphan child who needs protection, or a homeless person walks in looking for food and shelter. And so our work continues.*

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Any sustained commitment to nonviolence requires we love. Without love, our nonviolence is just a static principle, lacking vitality. It will fail to persuade. And love, Gandhi says, “wrestles with the world.” Offering hospitality to the poor has provided me a way to muscle up for such a wrestling. To open one’s door to the stranger in need is a counterpoint to the disregard that makes so much violence possible. It is an exertion that

lessens fear and despair and gives frequent occasion for practicing trust, a fundamental attitude for living nonviolently.

For nearly thirty years, my husband Scott and I have lived and worked at the Saints Francis and Therese Catholic worker, a lay community offering short-term shelter to men and women in need in the city of Worcester, Massachusetts. Prior to coming to Worcester, we were part of a Catholic worker community located in a blighted neighborhood of Washington D.C. The two row houses we lived in were small and squalid. Rats crawled up through holes in the floorboards and out on the street, young men hawked crack in broad daylight. Full of youthful zeal, we opened the door to just about anyone who ventured to the front stoop. In the winter of 1982, as many as thirty men and seventeen women were squeezed into the dilapidated buildings we called home. Despite the hardships, I was immensely happy.

I have always been curious about the lines that divide human beings from each other, those invisible but undeniable demarcations separating the powerful and privileged from the ignored and despised. I spent my childhood in New Delhi, India, a city of startling and intimate extremes where rich and poor live in proximity to one another, inhabiting different universes.

At college, I would walk out of the manicured lawns of the University of Virginia and cross the railroad tracks bordering the poor side of Charlottesville to volunteer at a shelter for battered women. That trek across the tracks eventually led me to the Catholic worker, a lay movement co-founded in 1933 by American journalist and convert to Catholicism Dorothy Day and French itinerant laborer and philosopher Peter Maurin. Dorothy and Peter advocated a personalist response to the problems of the day, one that took for its guide the Gospels and the social teachings of the Catholic Church. They believed the works of mercy, described in Matthew's Gospel – to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, care for the sick, visit the imprisoned,

shelter the homeless, and bury the dead – were directives for all of us and not just the holy few.

Today, over 200 Catholic Worker communities throughout the US, Europe, New Zealand, and Australia are sheltering the homeless, harboring the undocumented, running soup kitchens, health clinics, legal clinics, after-school programs, or small organic farms. Except for the farms, most of the communities are located in poor inner-city neighborhoods. Catholic workers emphasize living in solidarity with the poor over trying to bring them into the mainstream, a subjective current. Our work is more about changing ourselves than others by stepping into the territory of the marginalized. Some describe this migration in economic terms, as downward mobility. I experience it as a great widening of understanding.

“The mystery of the poor is this: that they are Jesus and what you do for them you do for Him. It is the only way we have of knowing and believing in our love,” wrote Dorothy in her book *From Union Square to Rome*. “The mystery of poverty is that by sharing in it, making ourselves poor in giving to others, we increase our knowledge and belief in love.” I wanted this kind of knowledge of Christ. I wanted this kind of knowledge of love.

Compared to many Catholic workers, our endeavor in Worcester is quite modest. Scott and I are the parents of four children, and family demands shaped the kind of hospitality we and our co-workers could offer. Between fifty and seventy people annually pass through our doors; but we have no more than five guests in the house at any given time. Some stay a few nights, others a few weeks or months. Two have made their home with us.

“We are like a bed and breakfast for the poor,” I tell social workers when they call seeking a place for someone in need. “We do not provide case management, job training, or medical care. What we offer is a place to sleep, breakfast, a home-cooked evening meal, and a bit of friendship.”

The hospitality is just one aspect of what we broadly categorize as our community's work for peace and justice. And it is the least exotic. Scott and I have traveled to war zones, marched to protest many kinds of violence, and gone to jail for acts of civil disobedience, but it is the daily drill of offering hospitality to the poor that has given me the most practical instruction in how to live a life based on trust and openness rather than fear and exclusion.

So much violence in the world is made possible by disregard, our inability or refusal to see and understand the other. More often than not, this disregard takes the form of a passive indifference that renders entire categories of people invisible to our view – the imprisoned, the tortured, the civilians we bomb in war, inner-city youth dying from gun violence, the list goes on and on. In times of acute violence, like war, we aggressively dehumanize those designated as our enemy. Germans were “krauts,” the North Vietnamese “gooks,” the Iraqis “towel heads.”

This de-personalization is necessary because most human beings find it difficult to kill people who are like themselves, toward whom they feel empathy. And this is true even for soldiers trained to become killing machines. Years ago, I interviewed the mother of a Massachusetts marine who fought in the 2003 ground invasion of Iraq and later committed suicide, undone by post-traumatic stress syndrome. Under orders from his commanding officer, he shot two Iraqi prisoners of war, seeing up close the faces of his victims before they died. One was a boy of seventeen. The other looked like the marine's uncle. “I am a murderer,” the young soldier told his family months before taking his own life.

Hospitality lessens the distance between “us” and “them,” and does so organically. A home-cooked meal is an evening tradition at our Catholic worker house. Come five o'clock, everyone gathers around our well-worn table in the downstairs kitchen. The meal is a great equalizer (all need to eat) and a place of unusual yet natural communions. Over the years,

people from all walks of life have found a seat at our table: the addicted, the undocumented, the mentally ill, battered women, abandoned youth, stranded travelers, released prisoners, veterans of wars we opposed and refugees from other wars. Artists, writers, activists, and film-makers, visiting Worcester to give presentations, have also sat among us.

I often liken my life at the Catholic worker to a long, crowded bus ride. The passengers getting on and off the bus argue over the volume of the cell phones and whether or not to open or close the window. Some comment on the passing view. Like travelers everywhere, they talk about their lives with that intimacy unique to strangers briefly sojourning together. The bus is rich with stories and revelations.

Among our most intriguing guests was M., the former head of Savak, the notorious Iranian secret police operating during the regime of Mohammad Reza Shah. Estranged from his family and recovering from a back injury, M. had been sleeping in his Mercedes Benz, parked in the lot of a local hospital, until a social worker called us on his behalf. Savak was reputedly the most hated and feared institution in Iran under the Shah because of its practice of torturing and executing his opponents. Its cruel history seemed incongruous with the genteel and gracious man sitting at our dinner table.

M. knew nothing of our pacifist politics and opposition to repression. Had our histories and life circumstances been different, we might easily have been inmates in one of his dreaded prisons. But that winter, he was a man in need of shelter, and we had a warm bed to offer. He often marveled at our hospitality, considered a sacred duty in his own Islamic culture. Because we had “broken bread and shared salt” with him, as he put it, he insisted on cooking us an elaborate Persian meal the week before he drove off to California to re-unite with his son. For years afterwards, he sent a card every Christmas.

The summer we battled an invasion of bedbugs we also welcomed James, a Mexican-born artist who had recently

returned from his homeland and was in need of shelter. Tall and with an aristocratic intonation, he regularly regaled us with accounts of life in Mexico, twirling the tip of his swooping mustache as he spoke. The North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) had decimated local economies, he said, and in poor rural communities, children were being paid to harvest poppies for heroin production. Their small hands were better suited for extracting the opiate from the flower than those of adults. “The children are skipping school to work in the fields. They’re making drugs instead of learning to read. Can you imagine?”

The day we discovered the source of our wretched bed bug infestation was a lovely wooden bed, a gift from an affluent family. James told me about the extraordinary exit of his great uncle who died in the early nineteen hundreds. Relatives attending the wake got so drunk, he said, they knocked over the candles atop the coffin, setting it on fire. To prevent the house from burning to the ground, the inebriated mourners pitched the flaming box, corpse and all, out the window. James advised we do the same with our contaminated bed, which we did, hauling its infested frame down the back porch stairs then gleefully burning it in the backyard.

A more professional shelter than ours would probably provide statistics on the numbers and categories of people served: How many addicts? How many afflicted with mental illness? Our hospitality log offers no such accounting. The tattered notebook merely lists names of our guests, the dates of their arrivals and departures. A separate section records humorous or poignant remarks often overheard at the supper table. While it is true that many who show up at our door are addicted or mentally ill, I do not remember our visitors by these categories. Living together with others, you see the quirks, the delusions, as well as the generosity and courage that exist in each of us.

What are the advantages of hospitality’s intimate view? Violence is demystified, its catastrophes more fully revealed.



As a result, you hold the world and its people in more honest and tender regard. To sit with the likes of M. is to realize that, contrary to popular perception, atrocities are often not the work of some incomprehensible monster but carried out by people very much like ourselves. You see too the human consequences of violent and exclusionary policies. The fallout from wars we blithely pursue and trade deals emphasizing market access over the well-being of a community show up regularly at our kitchen table. They appear in the form of traumatized veterans and exploited, undocumented workers like V. a mother of seven from El Salvador. One sorrowful morning, she cooked a pot of chicken stew for her family then kissed them good-bye, amid much weeping, and walked north to the U.S. to look for work because she and her children could not survive on her three jobs at home.

There are days when these revelations depress me. More often than not, they energize my desire to work for more humane arrangements because the issues of justice have become personal. I am struggling for people I know. And isn't this how love works? We love most vigorously in the particular.

Some may confuse the intimacy of our hospitality with permissiveness. The opposite is true. Years of living at the Catholic worker have made the extent of addiction's devastation more, not less, obvious to me. Popularly understood as a self-destructive habit, its net of harm spreads far wider than most of us realize. While I was working on this essay, we welcomed Mike, a garrulous, intelligent young man who had been sleeping in the bus station. He was a lively conversationalist full of talk at the supper table about his travels throughout the US.

But within days of his arrival, Mike began abusing prescription drugs. We require our guests to be sober and had to ask him to leave. Such departures are always awkward and sometimes unbearably pathetic. Mike's eyelids drooped, his gait wobbled, but still he insisted he was "fine, just fine."

Watching his meltdown, I thought of the children James described in Mexico and of the havoc drug consumption wreaks on communities, as well as individuals. I thought too of Cornelius, a Nigerian refugee we hosted fifteen years ago. An Ogoni activist, he fled political persecution after speaking out against the ecological devastation and deaths caused by the oil multinationals in Nigeria's Niger Delta. What about my own addiction to an oil-consuming lifestyle?

Do not imagine our Catholic worker to be a house of holy souls. Our guests sometimes lie to us and themselves. We, who work here, harbor our own deceptions. When the drunkenness and madness in the Washington DC Catholic worker proved too much, I kicked women out of the house including Carol. "And you call yourself a Christian?" she screamed after I put her, and her suitcases, out on the sidewalk one Easter morning. On a separate occasion, a guest, suffering from a psychotic breakdown, attacked me. Death was too good for me, a fraud in my desire for solidarity with the poor, she said. What could I, a middle-class white woman, possibly know about suffering?

Over the years, strangers and guests have stolen from us, one intruder brazenly entering our basement office while people played cards upstairs. Like any victim of theft, we have felt violated and angry at the presumption. Inspired by the joyful detachment of St. Francis of Assisi, after whom our community is named, we do not lock the front door of our house. The practice seems reckless to many, an obvious explanation for the thefts. For us, the open door represents an experiment in trust. We are trusting in the generosity of God and others. We are trusting in our ability to forgive and be forgiven.

So far, the experiment is working. Keeping the house unlocked has yielded an abundance of gifts – food, clothes, toys, envelopes of cash, and once, a milk jug of roses anonymously deposited in our kitchen and hallway while we were out. Some who stole from us apologized and even offered

repayment, which was remarkable given their poverty. The woman who threatened to kill me one psychotic night later saved my life. What we have been given these past thirty years far, far outweighs what has been taken.

Trust, not to be confused with naive cluelessness about the world and its people, is an essential attitude for the nonviolent life. To live in peace, without desiring or tolerating harm to others, requires resisting the suspicion and bitterness that shrinks the heart and impedes love. This can be hard to do when the disappointments and betrayals of life mount up. Hospitality has provided me continual occasion for practice. Amid the upheaval and joys of communal living, I have had plenty of opportunity to strengthen my trust muscle. Of course, I fail and get discouraged. My naivety is exposed, so too my assumptions and needless fear. Yet the exertion is worth it, for in opening the door to the stranger in need, I have experienced abundance I could not have imagined. God does provide. There really is a current of generosity and goodwill coursing through human affairs, constant and everlasting.

With the passing years, I have come to see our work of hospitality at the Catholic worker as an ever-available antidote to despair, a practical pushback against the mercilessness of the day. A welcoming cup of coffee and pot of soup are tools for defying the trench mentality that sets in when belief in goodness wanes. It is a preponderance of violence that depletes our hope. The enormity of the world's nuclear arsenal, the ferocity and speed of war's destruction, the persistent exploitation of the earth and its people convey the message that peace is *not* possible. Human life is *not* sacred. The media amplifies this negation, giving the impression that harm and killing outpace kindness and redemption. Best to jump in bed and cover my head, I sometimes think. Then the phone rings. Can we take in a refugee from Chad? At the supper table, I sit across from a person whose life story exemplifies resilience and courage. (So many guests have taught me courage.) I read of Catholic workers in New York

organizing against the deployment of drones to Afghanistan and of another community's joy in their shared life with the Maori, among the poorest people of New Zealand. And I take heart.

"We don't walk past the world and its problems. The world comes in with its problems and sits down for a cup of coffee and a word of consolation," wrote Catholic worker Karl Meyer of his years offering hospitality to Chicago's homeless. We who serve the coffee are also consoled.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> David Heyd, “Supererogation,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/supererogation/>>.
- <sup>2</sup> As we saw, Western devotion to God *can* make sense of this category of action.
- <sup>3</sup> The closest example that one can find within the Hindu tradition is the belief and practice of *advaita* Vedanta (non-dualism), in the tradition of Adi Shankara. The closest example within Buddhism is the belief and practice of the bodhisattva. But both of these are primarily matters of belief, whereas the practice of *ahimsa* without compromise is primarily a matter of practice.
- <sup>4</sup> I am grateful to Brianne Donaldson for conversations and emails that have greatly deepened my understanding of radical *ahimsa* – the understanding that lies behind this section. I also happily acknowledge her role in suggesting numerous challenging examples of lived *ahimsa*. Where the reader is unsure, he should assume that the best examples are from her.

- <sup>5</sup> Some find it odd to speak of violence toward living things other than people. People find it less odd to speak of violence toward pets like dogs and cats. But the example of an incident in my youth may help overcome one's initial reluctance to regard plants and insects as the sorts of things to which one can do violence. I was golfing with a friend who hit a ball that landed by the side of small tree. The tree was interfering with his next shot, and even though he could have moved the ball, he instead chose to take a nine iron to the tree and chop it down so that he could hit his ball. It was an adolescent stunt, but no more excusable for that. Clearly, he did violence to that tree. He showed an utter lack of reverence for life. Violence, as we shall see, is a matter of degree, and the more attention we pay to the lesser forms of violence, the more we will be able to reduce greater forms of violence.
- <sup>6</sup> A. Schweitzer, *Out of My Life and Thought* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 156.
- <sup>7</sup> Howard Zinn, "The Problem is Civil Obedience," in *The Zinn Reader* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1970), 403-411.
- <sup>8</sup> I once commuted to school with a new acquaintance, a Japanese man. After the first few trips to school, during which he never spoke, I asked him why he never spoke. He said that he always waited to see if I was finished saying what I had to say. He said that I always spoke again before he had a chance to say anything.
- <sup>9</sup> Robert L. Holmes, *On War and Morality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 42.
- <sup>10</sup> *First People – The Legends*, "Native American Legends: Two Wolves," [www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Legends/Two-Wolves-Cherokee.html](http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Legends/Two-Wolves-Cherokee.html).
- <sup>11</sup> In November of 2012, I began working with an Australian-based organization that provides home-based outreach support to individuals struggling with

mental illness. I was part of a small team that focused its attention on refugees and asylum seekers within the community.

- <sup>12</sup> Jason DeParle, "Harder for Americans to Rise From Economy's Lower Rungs," January 5, 2012, *The New York Times*.
- <sup>13</sup> For further discussion of these issues, see Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities* (New York: Broadway Books, 2012); Diane Ravitch, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* (New York: Basic Books, 2011); and Paul Tough, *Whatever It Takes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Court, 2008).
- <sup>14</sup> See Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (New York: New Press, 2012).
- <sup>15</sup> This is one of the main points of David Simon's brilliant HBO series, *The Wire*.
- <sup>16</sup> Steve Odland, "College Costs Out of Control," *Forbes* 3/24/2012, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/steveodland/2012/03/24/college-costs-are-soaring>; and Elliot, Philip "College Costs Rising Faster Than Inflation, Study Says," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 13, 2013.
- <sup>17</sup> See Iris Marion Young, *Responsibility for Justice* (New York: Oxford, 2010); and Slavoj Žižek, *Violence* (New York: Macmillan, 2010), for accounts of the notion of systemic or institutional or structural or objective violence.
- <sup>18</sup> Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), provides an excellent explanation of the myth of merit and how it works.
- <sup>19</sup> See Robert Holmes, "Toward a Nonviolent American Revolution," in *The Ethics of Nonviolence*, ed. Predrag Cicovacki (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013).
- <sup>20</sup> See P. Bowen-Moore, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of*

- Natality* (London: Macmillan, 1989).
- <sup>21</sup> Bob Dylan, “Most Likely You Go Your Way and I Will Go Mine,” *Blonde on Blonde* (NY: Columbia Records, 1966).
- <sup>22</sup> See Mark Kurlansky, *Nonviolence: The History of a Dangerous Idea* (New York: Modern Library, 2009); and Steven York (Director), *A Force More Powerful*.
- <sup>23</sup> See Richard Werner, “Just War Theory: Going to War and Collective Self-Deception,” in *Routledge Handbook of Ethics and War*, ed. Fritz Allhoff, Nicholas G. Eveans, and Adam Henschke (New York: Routledge, 2013).
- <sup>24</sup> See Daniel Haybron, *The Pursuit of Unhappiness* (New York: Oxford, 2008).
- <sup>25</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. W. Kaufmann (Vintage Books: NY, 1969).
- <sup>26</sup> *World Report on Violence and Health*, ed. Etienne G. Grug, Linda L. Dahlberg, James A. Mercy, Anthony B. Zwi and Rafael Lozano (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2002), 5.
- <sup>27</sup> *Child Mistreatment 2010* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Children and Families Administration on Children, Youth and Families Children’s Bureau, 2010), 25.
- <sup>28</sup> See, for example, the collection of papers on prenatal attachment issues in the *Journal of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Health*, December 2003.
- <sup>29</sup> See, for example, Rifkin’s *The Empathic Civilization*, and Pinker’s *The Better Angels of Our Nature*.
- <sup>30</sup> With each pair of shoes purchased, Tom’s Shoes will donate a next pair to a child in need as part of the One for One Movement.
- <sup>31</sup> *Jesus for President*.
- <sup>32</sup> Matthew 5:9.



- <sup>33</sup> Romans 13:1: “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.”
- <sup>34</sup> This essay is dedicated to six Jains who have labored tirelessly to establish veganism as required by any coherent interpretation of *ahimsa*: Gurudev Chitrabhanu, Pramoda Chitrabhanu, Dr. Sulekh Jain, Dilip Shah, Dr. Jina Shah, and Pravin Shah.
- <sup>35</sup> Jains consider worms as two-sensed (touch and taste) beings. They are sentient in that they can experience pain. Silk is usually produced by boiling the cocoons of silkworms who are in the pupa stage of development and before the worms become moths. About 10,000 worms are killed to make one silk sari. This clearly involves *himsa*. There is an alternative form of silk called “*Ahimsa* silk,” which is produced in different ways that apparently do not involve boiling the worms but do involve worms starving and otherwise dying. I am not going to discuss silk in the body of the article so that I can focus on the issue of inflicting suffering and death on five-sensed beings, a group that includes humans. If a reader does not find the argument compelling with respect to five-sensed beings, she will not find it compelling with respect to worms.
- <sup>36</sup> Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority: Dairy Products, available at [http://www.apeda.gov.in/apedawebsite/SubHead\\_Products/Dairy\\_Products.htm](http://www.apeda.gov.in/apedawebsite/SubHead_Products/Dairy_Products.htm).
- <sup>37</sup> Pratiksha Ramkumar, “Beef exports up 44% in 4 years, India is top seller,” *The Times of India*, April 1, 2013, available at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Beef-exports-up-44-in-4-years-India-is-top-seller/articleshow/19314449.cms>.
- <sup>38</sup> Madhvi Sally, “Egg production in India may cross 95 crore in next three years,” *The Economic Times*, Dec. 14,

2012, available at: [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-12-14/news/35820226\\_1\\_egg-production-egg-consumption-total-egg](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-12-14/news/35820226_1_egg-production-egg-consumption-total-egg).

- <sup>39</sup> The same analysis applies to silk. All silk involves intentionally inflicting suffering and death on two-sensed organisms.
- <sup>40</sup> For further discussion, see the following websites: 1. [http://c-hit.org/2013/03/20/state-nursing-homes-pilot-alarm-free-initiative-carefully/by Lisa Chedekel](http://c-hit.org/2013/03/20/state-nursing-homes-pilot-alarm-free-initiative-carefully/by%20Lisa%20Chedekel), March 20, 2013; 2. [http://news.careproviders.org/careone/issues/2010-06-01/5.html-What's That Noise? An Account of the Journey to an Alarm Free Culture](http://news.careproviders.org/careone/issues/2010-06-01/5.html-What's%20That%20Noise?%20An%20Account%20of%20the%20Journey%20to%20an%20Alarm%20Free%20Culture); 3. [http://www.ctculturechange.org/index.php/alarms/-Connecticut Cultural Coalition-Best practices of reducing alarms in nursing homes](http://www.ctculturechange.org/index.php/alarms/-Connecticut%20Cultural%20Coalition-Best%20practices%20of%20reducing%20alarms%20in%20nursing%20homes).
- <sup>41</sup> I feel obliged to say that these theories are far more sophisticated than I'll suggest in the brief discussion that follows. If you work with them in more depth, they *do* have things to say about my situation. Nonetheless, the problem with my law practice – and most such practice today, in law and other professions and outside of “the professions” – is not something that falls naturally within their concerns.
- <sup>42</sup> See Goodpaster's fascinating diagnosis of the problem of “teleopathy” (i.e., “goal-sickness”). Goodpaster describes teleopathy as “the unbalanced pursuit of purpose” and identifies three symptoms: fixation on goals, rationalization of actions taken to attain them, and emotional detachment. He is primarily concerned with teleopathy in business practice, but I would suggest the phenomenon is far more widespread than he acknowledges. Kenneth Goodpaster, *Conscience and Corporate Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).
- <sup>43</sup> Nathaniel Altman, *The Nonviolent Revolution: A*

*Comprehensive Guide to Ahimsa, the Philosophy of Dynamic Harmlessness* (Shaftesbury: Element Books, 1988).

- <sup>44</sup> These exhibitions can be fully accessed at the webpage: <http://www.nonviolent-resistance.info/eng/exhibitions.htm>.
- <sup>45</sup> During Occupy, I was a student in the Master of Divinity program at Harvard Divinity School, studying comparative theology, training in chaplaincy, and preparing for ordination in the Episcopal Church. Some close friends of mine heard that something called Occupy Wall Street was going to happen on September 17, so we decided to go and join the protest against systematized corporate greed. We called ourselves Protest Chaplains: wearing albs and carrying a cross, singing hymns, praying, listening to people's stories, reminding the world that Jesus had much to say about greed. When our march ended in Zuccotti Park, we knew something special was happening. Over the next months, the Protest Chaplains developed into a multi-religious coalition that served Occupy camps throughout the USA and Canada.
- <sup>46</sup> In fairness, many Occupiers did share hopes for a unified, post-encampment political front, and many more looked at Occupy simply as a large-scale political protest. Indeed, many Occupiers held the very views I am painting as mischaracterizations of the movement. The views I am offering are my own, from the vantage point of a few years of reflection, and they do not necessarily represent those of many Occupiers past or present.
- <sup>47</sup> Not every Occupy community was the same. As they were autonomous, radically democratic communities, variations were great in both size and context. For instance, in Boston we were permitted to erect tents, but at Wall Street erecting tents prompted the police to raid numerous times. Correspondingly, different

practices and norms arose. However, it is quite fascinating that both at Wall Street and Boston, as well as most other occupied communities, the same commitment to *ahimsa* arose.

- <sup>48</sup> Interestingly, though he developed the concept, Mahatma Gandhi requested help in concisely naming the term by advertising in the periodical, *Indian Opinion*. A reader, Maganlal Gandhi, responded and first coined the term “*sadagraha*,” (*sada* – “truth,” *agraha* – “firmness”) which Mahatma Gandhi adapted slightly to “*satyagraha*.” Thus, even the naming of *satyagraha* was collaborative, in addition to its applications. This story is detailed in *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*.
- <sup>49</sup> First appeared in the weekly news journal, *Young India*, on March 23, 1921.
- <sup>50</sup> First appeared in *Hind Swaraj* (Indian Home Rule), ch. VI.
- <sup>51</sup> Jonathan Gotschall: *The Storytelling Animal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), 132.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid. 125.
- <sup>53</sup> Steven Pinker: *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Penguin, 2011).
- <sup>54</sup> Confucius, *Confucian Analects, The Great Learning & The Doctrine of the Mean*, trans. James Legge, (New York: Dover, 1971), 292.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid. 354.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid. 192.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid. 146-147.
- <sup>58</sup> *Mo Zi jian gu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1954).
- <sup>59</sup> Dario Maestriperi: *Macchiavellian Intelligence: How Rhesus Macaques and Humans Have Conquered the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1.
- <sup>60</sup> *The Book of Lieh-Tzu*, trans. A.C. Graham (New York:



Columbia University Press, 1990), 36-37.

- <sup>61</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/  
List\\_of\\_motor\\_vehicle\\_deaths\\_in\\_US\\_by\\_year](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_motor_vehicle_deaths_in_US_by_year).
- <sup>62</sup> [http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/  
reported-road-casualties-in-great-britain-main-results-  
2012](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reported-road-casualties-in-great-britain-main-results-2012).
- <sup>63</sup> [zeenews.india.com/news/nation/india-no-1-in-road-  
accident-deaths-704455.html](http://zeenews.india.com/news/nation/india-no-1-in-road-accident-deaths-704455.html).
- <sup>64</sup> See [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/  
List\\_of\\_rail\\_accidents\\_\(2010-2019\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_rail_accidents_(2010-2019)) and  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Indian\\_rail\\_incidents](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Indian_rail_incidents).
- <sup>65</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/  
Aviation\\_accidents\\_and\\_incidents](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aviation_accidents_and_incidents).
- <sup>66</sup> See N.L. Kachhara, *Jain Metaphysics and Science: A Comparison* (Jaipur: Prakrit Bharati Academy, 2011).
- <sup>67</sup> See [knowledgeproblem.com/2010/08/13/an-  
economic-analysis-of-comparative-fuel-economy](http://knowledgeproblem.com/2010/08/13/an-economic-analysis-of-comparative-fuel-economy).
- <sup>68</sup> See [www.totalmotorcycle.com/  
motorcycleFuelEconomyGuide.htm](http://www.totalmotorcycle.com/motorcycleFuelEconomyGuide.htm).
- <sup>69</sup> For further reading, see P. Krishna, *A Jewel on a Silver Platter: Remembering Jiddu Krishnamurti* (Varanasi: Pilgrims, 2015). Website: [www.pkrishna.org](http://www.pkrishna.org).
- <sup>70</sup> The logic validating the Jaina view of the existence of the eternal soul and its non-harming nature is presented in my Ph.D. thesis: "An Ethic of Unconditional Love for All Living Beings as a Basis for Human Development," University of Toronto, 1991. Available in my book *Applied Jainism* (Self-published; sec. ed., 2003).

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