Gandhian Nonviolence

Moral Principle or Political Technique

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The early 20th century European anarchist-pacifist movement was early influenced by Gandhian nonviolence. Many anarcho-pacifists, such as Ostergaard and Bart de Ligt, found in satyagraha and Gandhi's social programs the counterpart for the more violent European anarchist strains they were eager to reject. Ostergaard's distinction between nonviolence as a moral principle and nonviolence as a political strategy seems more relevant now than when he wrote it in the 1980s; more central to debates within the Occupy Movement, and the nonviolent movement in general. This is the second in our series of historical articles that we began with Theodore Paullin's "Introduction to Nonviolence". The Editor's Note at the end of the article presents biographical information about Ostergaard, sources, and credits.

Discussions of nonviolence tend, not unnaturally, to focus on the issue of the supposed merits, efficacy and justification of nonviolence when contrasted with violence. Here, however, I propose to pursue a different track. My object is to explicate the Gandhian concept of nonviolence and this, I think, can best be done, not by contrasting nonviolence with violence but by distinguishing two different kinds of nonviolence. My thesis, in short, is that, Janus-like, nonviolence presents to the world two faces which are often confused with each other but which need to be distinguished if we are to appraise correctly Gandhi's contribution to the subject.

Gandhi is sometimes credited with being, if not the inventor of nonviolence, then the person who first employed it, successfully and on a mass scale, for political purposes. But, although we owe the term with its present connotations to Gandhi, nothing could be further from the truth. Nonviolent action as a political technique is very old, dating back at least to ancient times. One of the first recorded uses of it occurred in 494 B.C. when the plebeians of Rome withdrew en masse to the Sacred Mount as a way of seeking redress of their grievances. Subsequently, the technique has been employed by all kinds of people, in various circumstances, and on both a small and a large scale. A significant expansion of its use occurred in the late 18th and in the 19th centuries and is associated with the development of the labour and socialist movements and with movements for national independence. In the movement which led to 'the first new nation', the United States of America, a variety of methods of nonviolent action, including tax refusal, were employed by the rebel colonists before they eventually turned to military struggle. And it was the Hungarian nationalists who, in a protracted campaign lasting from 1850–67, provided one of

the clearest examples of successful nonviolent action, the campaign resulting in the recognition of Hungary as an autonomous state within the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Other pre-Gandhian examples are provided by the Finnish and the Irish nationalists—the latter using, among others, the method of the boycott, named after a landlord against whom it was originally directed. One particular method of nonviolent action—the strike, in all its many varieties—has been the classic weapon of labour and socialist movements. Typically, of course, the strike has been used against employers for economic ends, but overtly political strikes have a long history. And one particular school of Socialism, namely Syndicalism, developed the notion that Socialism could be achieved by a general strike, in the course of which the workers would take over the factories, workshops and mines, dispossessing the capitalists. Although Syndicalists believed that it would be necessary for the workers to defend the revolution by armed force, the essentially nonviolent character of this notion is conveyed by the Syndicalist symbol of the sturdy proletarian standing upright with folded arms; and also by the name originally given to the general strike by its Owenite inventor, William Benbow: 'The Grand National Holiday'.

It is only in very recent years, however, that academic researchers have begun to make a serious study of nonviolent action as an unconventional political technique intermediate between constitutional action, on the one hand, and violent revolutionary action, on the other. The person who has done most in this respect is Gene Sharp, whose book, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, published in 1973, provides the most comprehensive analysis of its theory and practice. Cataloguing, with historical examples of their use, no less than two hundred distinct methods of nonviolent action, Sharp classifies them into three broad categories : (i) nonviolent protest and persuasion, (ii) nonviolent non-cooperation, and (iii) nonviolent intervention. The first includes actions, which are primarily symbolic in their effect and designed to indicate dissent to a particular policy or, on occasions, to a whole regime. Examples are mass demonstrations, marches, vigils and picketing. The second includes actions, which are characterised by a withdrawal of the usual degree of cooperation with the opponent, the object being to make it difficult or impossible to maintain the normal efficiency and operation of the system. Examples, in addition to strikes and boycotts, are tax refusal, abstention from elections, and mass voluntary emigration. In the third category fall those methods, which involve activists intervening in the situation, either negatively by disrupting established patterns of behaviour, or positively by creating new ones. Actions of this kind are the most radical of all and are exemplified by sit-ins, factory occupations, nonviolent invasions, and the establishment of alternative institutions and a system of parallel government.

In Sharp's terminology, 'nonviolent action' is a generic term for a political technique adopted by those who seek to achieve their objects by pressuring their opponents but without inflicting, or threatening to inflict, on them physical injury. Defined in this way nonviolent action is not synonymous with pacifism or identical with religious or philosophical systems of thought that emphasize nonviolence as a moral principle. Some notable campaigns using methods of nonviolent action have been led by pacifists, but many have not. And further, there are some forms of pacifism, which look askance at all or many of the more popular methods of nonviolent action. For example, the form of pacifism held by some Christian sects, such as the Mennonites and the Amish, leads them to adopt a posture of non-resistance, rather than nonviolent resistance. They refuse to participate in war or to hold public office, but, provided that it is not inconsistent with what they see as their duty to God, they do whatever else the State demands. For them, evil is not to be resisted even by nonviolent methods; it is to be ignored as much as possible. Considered

historically, it is also clear that the technique of nonviolent action has been used as much, if not more, by non-pacifists as well as by pacifists. And, when used by the former, it is often combined with, or is the prelude to, the use of other techniques, which involve violence (including 'legitimate violence', usually labeled 'force').

In the West, the interest of political scientists and political activists in Gandhi has centered largely on his use of various methods of nonviolent action, such as the boycott and civil disobedience of unjust laws. It is usually assumed that it is possible to abstract from Gandhi his technique and to ignore his philosophy and metaphysics as well as his peculiar social ideas, such as 'the fad' of reviving the *khadi* (cotton cloth) industry by means of the *charkha* (spinning wheel). This assumption rests, in turn, on more general assumptions: that techniques are merely techniques, neutral between various social philosophies, and that in the sphere of human action *means* are clearly separable from *ends*. To make explicit these assumptions is to indicate clearly the risk involved in treating Gandhi in this way. For it is an essential element in Gandhi's thought that, in human action, means are not separable from ends. Means precede ends temporally, but the two are morally indistinguishable, and, in the last analysis, convertible terms. Or, to put it in another way, means, according to Gandhi, are never merely instrumental: they are always also expressive, end-creating and part of a continuous chain of events infused with moral value. And, because means and ends are convertible terms, one can in a sense forget about the ends and concentrate on the means—which are ends-in-the-making sure in the knowledge that, if the means are pure, the end-result will coincide with the end-goal. More concretely, this view implies that if one has as one's end the achievement of, say, the socialist ideal of human brother/sisterhood—a society reflecting concern and respect for others as equals—then the means to it are actions in the here and now which treat all human beings —including capitalists—as brothers and sisters. To act otherwise is, in effect, to abandon one's end which then becomes a mere utopia, or something worse—a mental construct by which one rationalizes actions that are in fact inconsistent with it. For Gandhi, one might say, utopia is for today—not for tomorrow, after the revolution. The real revolution is now and, hence, 'Socialism begins with the first convert'. Referring to violent revolutionaries whose ultimate ideals he shared, Gandhi rejected their means as self-defeating. "I would use," he said, "the most deadly weapons if I believed they would destroy the system. I refrain because the use of such weapons would only perpetuate the system."

For Gandhi, then, nonviolence is both an end and a means. But, to appreciate the full significance of treating nonviolence in this way, it is necessary to look more closely at his philosophy of action. This philosophy is composed of three main elements: Truth, Nonviolence, and Self-suffering. The three are inextricably fused together but, if one can be considered more basic than the others, then that one would be, *not* nonviolence but truth. This much is suggested by the term Gandhi coined to describe his philosophy of action: '*satyagraha'*, meaning literally 'the firm grasping or holding on to truth'. But, in Gandhi's usage, 'truth' has a wider connotation than it has in Standard English. '*Satya'* derives from the Sanskrit '*sat*' which means 'being', 'abiding', 'actual', 'right', 'wise', 'self-existent essence', 'as anything really is', and 'as anything ought to be'. In the Indian tradition of thought, *Sat* in its highest sense stands for the absolute, archetypal Reality and for the absolute, archetypal Truth. For Gandhi, therefore, '*satya'* embraces not only factual and logical truth but also moral and metaphysical truth. From the perspective of social relationships, it is the moral aspects of '*satya,'* which are the more important. '*Satya'* then stands for the eternal moral order, which is a constituent of the cosmic order, the ultimate reality. In its moral sense, Truth for Gandhi approximates to the concept of Justice in the natural law tradition

of Western thought. But in its fullest sense Truth is more than Justice: it is truth in the realm of knowledge, and righteousness in the realm of personal conduct, as well as justice in social relations. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Gandhi asserting on occasions the familiar religious equation: 'God is 'Truth'. But since truth can also be expressed by a sincere atheist, Gandhi goes further and reverses the equation: 'Truth is God', adding that this is the most perfect definition of God.

Given this definition, "Devotion to Truth," says Gandhi, "is the sole justification of our existence." Life is thus seen as a search for self-realization (*moksha*), a striving to achieve identification with the absolute, which is at once both imminent and transcendent. Truth as the ground of being and as 'the substance of all morality' exists as an absolute and merits a capital T. But one important aspect of Truth is that, in life at least, it is given to humans—even to those considered to be Mahatmas—to glimpse only faintly this absolute. The truth that humans actually achieve and express, therefore, is always relative, never absolute. This limitation is inherent in the nature of life, and it is because of this limitation that the search for Truth must proceed by the way of nonviolence.

The Indian term for nonviolence is '*ahimsa'*, meaning ' literally 'non-injury or non-harm to all sentient beings'. The concept, like '*satya'* has its roots in ancient Vedic religious thought. But, in this case, Gandhi invests the traditional concept with new meaning. His usage differs from the orthodox Hindu concept of '*ahimsa'* in conceiving it not merely in a negative but also a positive way. Conceived positively, '*ahimsa'* would be more fittingly translated into English by 'the simple four letter word: love'—except that 'love' is not a simple word. If we translate it thus, we must not, of course, equate it with erotic love, as in the slogan of the hippies, 'Make Love, not War'. The Greco-Christian concept of *agape*, signifying goodwill rather than good feeling towards other persons, comes perhaps nearest to Gandhi's meaning. "*Ahimsa* and love are one and the same thing", said Gandhi; and, again, "In its positive form, *ahimsa* means the largest love, the greatest charity".

Thought of in this positive way, nonviolence is not to be identified with non-killing. Indeed, as a votary of nonviolence, Gandhi explicitly justified some types of killing of sentient creatures. Humans, he believed, are justified in killing when it is necessary to sustain their bodies; for example, killing monkeys which destroy food crops. They are also justified in killing when it is necessary to protect those under their care. On this ground, Gandhi provides a sharp answer to the classic question posed by tribunals 'to the conscientious objector to military service: What would you do if someone tried to rape or kill your sister? : "He who refrains from killing a murderer who is about to kill his ward (when he cannot prevent him otherwise) earns no merit but commits a sin; he practices no *ahimsa* but *himsa* (violence) out of a fatuous sense of *ahimsa*." And, finally, killing may be justified, Gandhi believed, for the sake of those whose life is taken. On this ground, Gandhi once caused grave offence to orthodox Hindus, to whom cows are sacred, by sanctioning the killing of a suffering calf. Gandhi regarded such killing as an expression of *ahimsa*, not *himsa*. For him a basic consideration in deciding whether or not a particular act of killing amounted to violence was the motive behind the act.

The same consideration led him to insist that nonviolence born of cowardice was not genuine *ahimsa*. The person who has not overcome all fear, including the fear of death, cannot, in his view, practice *ahimsa* to perfection. If the choice is between cowardice and violence, then the latter is always to be preferred. To practice nonviolence, in his sense requires the possession of several positive qualities. These include courage in the face of violence, truthfulness of thought

and word, adherence to the ideal of non-possession, and the qualities of *brahmacharya*, meaning by that not merely sexual continence but control of all the senses. Above all, the practice of nonviolence requires the presence of love and the total absence of hatred or any other form of ill will to others, including one's adversaries. But love for one's adversaries does not imply acquiescence in the act of a wrongdoer. In Gandhi's words: *Ahimsa* is not merely a negative state of harmlessness; it is a positive state of love, of doing good, even to the evildoer. But it does not mean helping the evildoer to continue the wrong or tolerating it by passive acquiescence. On the contrary, love, the active state of *ahimsa*, requires you to resist the wrong-doer by dissociating yourself from him even though it may offend him or injure him physically."

Truth and Nonviolence are, in Gandhi's philosophy, intimately related. In one sense, Truth has primacy because Truth may be thought of as the supreme end and Nonviolence, or Love, the means. But since, in Gandhi's view, ends and means are not in fact separable, Truth and Nonviolence may be thought of as two sides of a single smooth-surfaced coin. In the search for Truth in action, one turns up, so to speak, the nonviolent side of the coin. Nonviolence is essential because absolute Truth is unknowable to humans: to use violence is to make the unwarranted assumption that one has achieved absolute Truth. Joan Bondurant in *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict,* (Oxford University Press, 1959, p. 25) expresses the relationship thus: "To proceed towards the goal of Truth—truth in the absolute sense—the way must lead through the testing of relative truths as they appear to the individual performer. The testing of truth can be performed only by a strict adherence to *ahimsa*—action based on refusal to do harm, or more accurately, upon love. For truth, judged in terms of human needs, would be destroyed, on whichever side it lay, by the use of violence. Nonviolence or *ahimsa* becomes the supreme value, the one cognisable standard by which true action can be determined."

The third element in Gandhi's philosophy of action, self-suffering, is the one that, perhaps, presents most difficulty for Westerners, despite (or is it really because of) the example of Jesus. Like the concept of *ahimsa*, Gandhi's notion of it is rooted in an ancient Indian concept: '*tapasya'*, suffering or sacrifice voluntarily undergone as a means to individual self-realization. In this sense, it forms the basis of the ascetic practices we associate with *yogis*—fasts, strict bodily discipline, vows of chastity, and other measures of self-restraint. To many Westerners, such practices smack of masochism, but their object is not perverted pleasure but self-mastery as a step towards self-realization. The person who undertakes *tapasya* seeks to purify his self by purging away the dross of life, the material things which distract him from life's real purpose. For Gandhi, *tapasya* retains this original meaning, so that Churchill's ill-tempered description of him as 'the half-naked fakir' is not altogether inapt. But it also has a larger meaning and purpose, which are related to nonviolence in action. In this larger sense, it links up with the Socratic idea that it is always better to suffer evil than to inflict it. As Gandhi saw it, "Suffering injury in one's own person is … of the essence of nonviolence and is the chosen substitute for violence to others." *Tapasya*, we should note, plays an important role in the mechanism of *satyagraha*. First, it demonstrates to the opponent the *satyagrahi's* seriousness of purpose, indicates that the opposition is not frivolous, and constitutes a guarantee of sincerity. Secondly, it shows the opponent that the *satyagrahi* is completely fearless. Since the *satyagrahi* is prepared to suffer even unto death, his or her nonviolence cannot be dismissed as the act of a weak and cowardly person. And thirdly, in Gandhi's words, 'it opens the eyes of understanding'. It constitutes a way of reaching the opponent's heart when appeals to his/her head, i.e. rational arguments, have failed. It is an element in what Richard Gregg has called 'moral jiu-jitsu'. The act of not striking back, turning the other cheek, accepting

injury without retaliation, has the effect—so it is claimed—of pulling up the opponents sharply in their tracks, leading them to question their own values and to reconsider their position as a prelude to joining the *satyagrahis* in a common pursuit of truth. By a kind of shock treatment dramatizing the position of the *satyagrahi*, writes Bondurant (pp. 227–8), "suffering operates … as a tactic for cutting through the rational defenses which the opponent may have built."

In this aspect of *tapasya*, there is, it should be noted, a large element of faith, which shows that, in the last analysis, *satyagraha* is a closed system of thought, incapable of disproof, unfalsifiable. Gandhi sometimes referred to *satyagraha* as a science, and the subtitle of his autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth*, evokes a scientific image. But fundamentally his outlook is religious in a sense in which 'religion' and 'science' are opposed to one another. The presupposition is that 'no soul is beyond redemption', that the heart of even the most wicked opponent—a Hitler, a Stalin, an Idi Amin—will eventually be touched. And if the *satyagrahi* fails to achieve this, the fault lies with the *satyagrahi*: the nonviolence he or she has been practicing has not been sufficiently pure. By definition, *satyagraha* is rooted in Truth and must succeed: thus, the failure must be attributed to the practitioner, not the philosophy.

The three elements of Gandhi's philosophy of action: Truth, Nonviolence, and Self-suffering, enable us to pinpoint his contribution to nonviolent action considered as a political technique. This contribution may be expressed as the clarification of the two types of nonviolence mentioned in my opening paragraph. For convenience, I shall refer to them as '*satyagraha*' and '*passive resistance*'—the latter a term commonly used to describe the technique and one used by Gandhi himself in his early days before he had established the use of his own term. In outward appearance, the two forms of nonviolent action have much in common and may involve the use of similar methods, as listed by Gene Sharp. But they differ in their inward character, in their spirit, and in their styles and manner of action.

To be specific: in the first place, *satyagraha* is principled nonviolence. Passive resistance, in contrast, is pragmatic or expediential nonviolence—adopted not on grounds of principle but either because one is weak—lacks the means of violence to secure one's objectives— or because one recognises that, in some particular situation, the use of violent means is inexpedient, i.e. it will not be the most efficient way of achieving one's objectives, and may even be counter-productive. It was this distinction, which Gandhi had in mind when he contrasted nonviolence as a creed with nonviolence as a policy, and the nonviolence of the strong with the nonviolence of the weak.

Leading on from this distinction about the *status* of nonviolence is a difference about the *scope* of nonviolence. Because the nonviolence of the *satyagrahi* is principled, it is something which he or she seeks to apply to all social relationships, not merely—as in the case of the passive resister—to selected relationships. For the passive resister, nonviolence is like a raincoat to be worn or not worn according to the state of the weather. For the *satyagrahi*, it is like his or her skin, something that is perpetually renewed but never worn out or cast off. Seeking to apply nonviolence to all social relationships, the *satyagrahi*, unlike the passive resister, strongly emphasizes what Gandhi called his 'Constructive Programme'— measures or actions of social reform, such as the promotion of *khadi*, the fostering of communal unity, and the uplift of *Harijans* – measures, which on the face of it, have no connection with confronting the principal opponent (in Gandhi's case, the British *Raj*). The importance that Gandhi attached to his Constructive Programme is evident in this statement: "The best preparation for, *and even the expression of*, Nonviolence lies in the eternal pursuit of the constructive programme" (italics added). And also in the statement, or

confession, that he made in 1940: “In placing civil disobedience before constructive work, I was wrong; I feared that I should estrange co-workers and so carried on with imperfect *ahimsa*.”

A third difference may be expressed by saying that *satyagraha* is truth-oriented, whereas passive resistance is power-oriented. Passive resistance, although an unconventional political technique, belongs squarely to the realm of power politics. It is an attempt to use force, albeit nonviolently, to achieve one’s end. The idea is to direct the power at one’s disposal at the weak points in the opponents’ defenses, and to use it with sufficient skill to overcome them, so that they are compelled to back down, or at least to make concessions. Passive resisters are not concerned with truth: they know, or think they know, that truth is on their side. They assume that error is all on the side of the opponent: the opponent is wrong and must, therefore, be compelled to acknowledge the right. Consequently, the desired outcome of the conflict is prejudged. Passive resisters struggle *against* their opponent, seek a victory over the opponent; and they see the desired end-result as a change of relations, which will benefit their own side and discredit that of their opponent. Because power and not truth is central to their orientation, passive resisters are likely to be careless of truth in the limited factual sense. They may exaggerate the faults of the opponent and willfully misinterpret the opponent’s statements and actions; and, as a way of improving their bargaining position in the final negotiated settlement, they may state their own claims at a higher point than they are really prepared to settle for. Again, fearful of giving anything away to the opponent, passive resisters are likely to be secretive in planning and in carrying out their actions. If they can catch the opponent unawares, so much the better, and so much nearer—they think—the ‘victory’. In short, passive resistance shares many of the characteristics we associate with conventional politics when we call politics ‘a dirty game’: it is distinguished from conventional politics mainly by its avoidance of violence.

In contrast to all this, *satyagraha* is always practiced *with* opponents, not *against* them. True, the opponent may experience and define the action of the *satyagrahis* as a form of coercion, but coercion is not the essence of the situation. The struggle belongs essentially to the realm of moral values, not power politics. The *satyagrahis* seek to transcend conventional power politics in an effort to establish a new kind of politics. No victory is sought *over* the opponent, but, rather, a resolution of the conflict, which will be of real benefit to *both* sides. *Satyagrahis*, at the outset of the struggle, naturally believe that they are right and the opponent is wrong, but they do not assume that truth is *all* on one side. Recognising that humans can achieve only relative not absolute truth, *satyagrahis* maintain an open mind and are always prepared to admit the valid claims of the opponent. And, although they always stand ready to negotiate and reach an honorable settlement, their posture is not that of a bargainer. They put forward proposals that they genuinely believe in, and they stick to them or they modify them in the light of their understanding of what truth and love demand in the developing situation. In hope, what they seek through the conflict is a deeper realization of the truth, a new level of understanding by *both* parties. Since truth is at the forefront of their minds, *satyagrahis* also scorn secrecy and maneuvering in their actions, and they refuse to take unfair advantage of any chance weakness they may discern in the opponent’s defenses.

The distinction between being power-oriented and truth-oriented leads to other important differences. Passive resistance is a form of nonviolent *coercion*: it seeks to compel opponents to do something against their will. *Satyagraha*, in contrast, is not intentionally coercive; it seeks always to *convert* the opponents, to persuade them voluntarily and willingly to do what is right. And, since conversion, not coercion is the aim, *satyagrahis* are careful to choose methods which are

conducive to this aim. Methods, which humiliate or harass opponents, are clearly not conducive to their conversion. They are more likely to generate fear, hatred, and continued opposition. And even if they appear to succeed, they may well embitter subsequent relations between the parties and lay the seeds of future conflicts. Respect for the person of the opponent is essential to *satyagraha*, and this involves keeping clearly in mind, the distinction between a person and the evil he or she represents. *Satyagrahis* seek to separate opponents from their evil and to treat them as persons, fellow human brothers and sisters. Their refusal to inflict physical injury on opponents while at the same time being prepared to accept such injury to their own persons is a signal to opponents that they think of themselves as the opponents' fearless friends, and that they wish opponents to think likewise of them.

In sum: passive resistance is a power struggle in which nonviolence figures as a tactic and presents a negative face. *Satyagraha*, although it too involves struggle, is above all a search for truth in which nonviolence, adopted as a principled way of life, appears as a positive moral force—the force of truth and love. Passive resistance, when practiced skillfully, may well produce favorable results, but these are likely to be limited and temporary gains, setting the stage for future conflicts. When practiced unskillfully, it may, like violent action, serve simply to exacerbate the situation. *Satyagraha*, on the other hand, with truth as its lodestar, never fails: by definition, it cannot fail—only its practitioners can fail because they are not sufficiently truthful and loving. *Satyagraha* presents or sees itself as creative nonviolence that leads to a constructive transformation of relationships. This transformation not only effects a change of policy but also ensures a basic restructuring of the situation, which led to the conflict. Conducted in a way that is fundamentally supportive of, and reassuring to, the opponent, the outcome of the struggle is always educative to both sides, and it leaves no legacy of bitterness behind.

Satyagraha and passive resistance, as I have described them, may best be seen as what Max Weber called two 'ideal types' of nonviolence, or, alternatively, as two models of nonviolent action at opposite ends of a continuum—like the economists' models of perfect competition and monopoly, neither of which actually exist in the real world. Any concrete instance of nonviolent action, will, almost certainly, contain elements derived from both models, but with leanings towards one rather than the other. Even the Gandhian campaigns in India bear out this hypothesis, as Gandhi himself came to appreciate towards the end of his life. He then said: "The nonviolence that was offered during the past thirty years was that of the weak. India has no experience of the nonviolence of the strong." He was, of course, exaggerating, since his own nonviolence and that of his closest followers was predominantly the nonviolence of the strong. But most of those who joined him in the struggle for independence, especially the bulk of politicians in the Indian National Congress, were really passive resisters rather than *satyagrahis*. It is not surprising that the Congress leaders, including Pandit Nehru, ignored what is now called Gandhi's Last Will and Testament, written on the very eve of his assassination. In this remarkable document, Gandhi urged the Congress to disband as a political party and to transform itself into a Lok Sevak Sangh, an association for the service of the people; in other words, a constructive work organization which should undertake the task of completing a nonviolent revolution in such a way as to bring what Gandhi referred to as 'real independence' to the masses of India, those who live in the villages. Power-oriented rather than truth-oriented, the politicians retained the Congress as a political party and proceeded to develop India as conventional modern industrial nation-state, relying for its defense, like other nation-states, on military force. Gandhi is still revered and hailed as the Fa-

ther of the Indian Nation, but, ironically, the central message of his life has been largely ignored by most of those who have given him this label.

One final point: From the perspective of political thought, Gandhi may be seen as the polar opposite of Machiavelli, the thinker who ushers in the period of modern politics. With his conception of *real politik*, his notion of *rasion d'etat*, and his principle that the end justifies the means, Machiavelli may be interpreted as insisting that the realm of politics must be separated from the realm of ethics. Ethics has its rules, but politics too has its rules, and they are very different. Princes must bear this in mind and, as politicians, give precedence to the rules of politics whenever they conflict with the rules of ethics. Gandhi, quite explicitly, refused to make such a separation, insisting that there is only one realm of reality, and that what is morally right cannot be pragmatically wrong or politically wrong or invalidated on grounds of apparent futility. However, it is a feeble interpretation of Gandhi to see him as trying simply to put together again what Machiavelli had so roughly torn asunder. Beneath the stark differences in the thinking of the two men, there is an underlying common thought: the practice of power politics cannot by any logic be reconciled with the precepts of ethics. To this Machiavelli responds: So much the worse for ethics! But Gandhi responds: so much the worse for power politics! And he then proceeds to attempt to transcend power politics and to pioneer a new kind of politics—the politics of truth and love. To tough-minded politicians and to the hard-headed political scientists who devote their lives to legitimating the ways of politicians, Gandhi's attempt appears absurd, a ridiculous and impossible enterprise. But to such people Gandhi had an answer, which may contain much more insight than the tired, trite formula that politics is the art of the possible. "Our task", he said, "is to make the impossible possible by an ocular demonstration in our own conduct."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Geoffrey Ostergaard (1926–1990) was Professor of Political Science, University of Birmingham (England). He was a leading member of the anarcho-pacifist movement, which rejected the use of violence for social change, basing its social principles on the communitarian theory of Kropotkin, Ruskin's *Unto this Last*, and Gandhi's social reform principles. He was a prolific writer, contributing regularly to the anarchist publications *Anarchy* and *Freedom* as well as to *Peace News*. Among his many books we might cite as of importance to nonviolence theory, *Nonviolent Revolution in India* (1985) and especially *The Gentle Anarchists* (1971), co-authored with Melville Currell, a definitive study of Gandhi's social reconstruction principles and movement, as mentioned near the end of the above article. We are very grateful to Peter van Dungen for his assistance, and to Alison Cullingford, Special Collections Librarian, University of Bradford (England) for her advice concerning rights and permissions. Bradford Library archive website gives further details about Ostergaard and their holdings of his writings.

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