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Studia Philosophiae Christianae 50/1, 51-77

2014

Studia Philosophiae Christianae
UKSW
50(2014)1

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Abstract. Gandhi's philosophy and practice of nonviolence was undergirded by his own interpretation of Hinduism. As the interest in his work has moved to the West, certain questions have arisen about its applicability to Western culture and thought. Martin Luther King, Jr. used his version of Christianity, for instance, to import Gandhi into a powerful movement in mid-20th century America. American philosopher, Gene Sharp, has written about Gandhi's influence in terms of methods that work, with or without a metaphysical or religious foundation.

This paper contends that some sort of metaphysical foundation is necessary for nonviolent movements to be effective with large groups of people over time. In service of finding a Western metaphysics that would support nonviolence, the writings of Martin Heidegger are employed. First, Gandhi's metaphysics is discussed. In light of this discussion, Heidegger's insights into the relationship of beings to Being are compared to some of Gandhi's interpretations of Hinduism, especially with regard to nonviolence (ahimsa), Sat (truth) and the active confrontation of violence (satyagraha).

In the work of both these thinkers there lies an apparent paradox of boldly confronting the truth that violence and injustice exists while holding to a belief in the impossibility of possessing truth totally. At the heart of this paradox is the danger that a self-righteous "holding to truth" (satyagraha) itself may be a source of much violence, both physical and structural and therefore is the antithesis of nonviolence. It is precisely at this point of contradiction that Gandhi's and Heidegger's metaphysical insights converge and transcend this paradox and can be employed as a metaphysical foundation for nonviolence as an ongoing, active struggle with violence.

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Keywords: hermeneutics, ethics, metaphysics of nonviolence, Gandhi, Heidegger, nonviolence, violence, metaphysics, ahimsa, satyagraha, human rights

Until the last five years or so, nonviolence as a serious philosophical idea and political method had long been languishing on the ash heap of history, next to Marxism, as a hopeful and glorious idea that, in the end, is too out of synch with human nature to be of any lasting use. With the recent spate of radical social movements around the world – from the Arab Spring, to the nonviolent experiments of both Palestinians and Israelis, to the Occupy Movement in the United States, to the controversy over the arrest of members of the rock group, "Pussy Riot" in Russia, to jailed dissidents in China – an awakening of interest in nonviolent political action has surged.

Appearing on the horizon along with this renewed interest in nonviolent political action is the towering figure of Mohandas K. Gandhi; the symbol of 20th century nonviolent action in the face of oppression. Gandhi's approach to nonviolence, as much misunderstood now as in his lifetime, likewise, is easily dismissed as out of reach for the average person (he was, after all, called Mahatma (Great Soul) by most), not applicable to a non-Indian society ("nonviolence is a way of life in Hinduism"), and, in the end, not achieving the goals that Gandhi imagined (Muslims and Hindus continued to fight in what resulted in Pakistan's creation; Dalit/Untouchable leaders resented his patronizing approach to them) and certainly, not applicable in Western culture (the most violent civilization known).

Yet, the expressed interest in and active use of the methods and philosophy of Gene Sharp,[1] student and interpreter of Gandhi's methods,

[1] G. Sharp, *Gandhi Wields the Weapon of Moral Power*, Navajivan, Ahmedabad 1960; Idem, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, with the editorial assistance of M. Finkelstein, P. Sargent Publisher, Boston 1973 (1992); Idem, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist*, Porter Sargent, Boston 1979; Idem, *Social Power and Political Freedom*, Porter Sargent, Boston 1980; Idem, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, available through the Albert Einstein Institution: http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations98ce.html.

has introduced, again, the power of Gandhi's methods to the arena of real political and social change. Sharp demonstrates persuasively in his books, articles and pamphlets that nonviolence is and has been tremendously effective in negotiating change throughout history. Part of what made nonviolence identifiable and acceptable to Indians was Gandhi's brilliantly developed interpretation of Indian religious metaphysics to support his assumptions that nonviolence, or ahimsa is the way to Truth and human's true nature. This metaphysics then becomes the rationale and foundation for satygraha (holding to truth), or nonviolent political action. One of Sharp's contribution to nonviolent studies, however, is his deliberate separation of nonviolence as a method of political action from nonviolence as a philosophy/religious way of life, or an explicit metaphysics. The need for a metaphysical foundation for Sharp is irrelevant and, in some ways inimical to nonviolent political action. His stance is radically pragmatic: what works and how and when? One need not subscribe to a belief system to engage in effective nonviolent resistance.

In spite of the persuasiveness of Sharp's approach to the practice of nonviolence it has yet to bring forth significant fruit to compare with, say, the work of Gandhi or even Martin Luther King, Jr., the great American disciple of Gandhi. To spread and take hold across culture and time, I submit that, as for Gandhi and King, a metaphysical grounding of nonviolent action is crucial. The idea that nonviolence is an essential part of being human is, at once, the most promising and the most improbable of hypotheses. I would further assert that it was Gandhi's ability to ground his method in a metaphysics that was recognizable by masses of people that enabled him to mobilize literally hundreds of thousands of Indians to resist tyranny. Without a grounding in a metaphysics what kind of belief system would motivate people to practice nonviolence except for a distaste for violence? This is a relatively shallow rationale, yet history is full of examples that persuade that humans are nothing if not violent.[2]

[2] For an alternative view on the pervasive and increasing violent nature of humans, see S. Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*, Viking, New York 2011.

One problem with the assumption that a metaphysics is crucial to the success of nonviolent action is, that for one to subscribe to a particular metaphysics is often to invite violence.[3] If I strongly believe that the world and humans have a particular nature, then all views and behaviors that contradict this self-evident nature are violating the order of the universe (often ordained by a deity) itself and should be subject to punishment. In light of this paradox, as an insight into Gandhi's exquisite awareness of the problems with such a metaphysics I want to offer a quotation from him that contains what I consider to be the heart of Gandhi's understanding of Truth as existence (his metaphysics) as the rationale for nonviolent action: "It (Truth, Satyagraha, or clinging to truth) excludes the use of violence because man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth and therefore is not competent to punish."[4] This quotation sets up a metaphysics that both asserts the existence of truth and relativizes human's ability to know it. The limits of human capacity to know truth, then becomes a part of the metaphysics.

In contrast to Gandhi, Martin Heidegger seems an unlikely source for a metaphysics of nonviolence. First, Heidegger's philosophical project included "the destruction of the history of metaphysics" from Plato on.[5] Yet I will argue that his philosophy has many parallels with Gandhi's and may serve as a touchstone on which to conceive a Western foundation for a philosophy of nonviolence. Heidegger was concerned with what he saw as the 'forgetting of Being" and its consequences for Western philosophy. In other words, the fact that beings exist at all is

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[3] For a discussion of the relation between metaphysics and violence see E. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being: Or, Beyond Essence*, trans. A. Lingis, M. Nijhoff, Hague – Boston 1981. J. Derrida, *Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas*, in: Idem, *Writing and Difference*, trans., with an introd. and additional notes by A. Bass, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1978, 79–153.

[4] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Delhi 1961, vol. 19, 466 (March 23, 1921); *Mahatma Gandhi: Selected Political Writings*, ed. with introd. D. Dalton, Hackett Pub. Co., Indianapolis 1996, 50–51.

[5] M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie, E. Robinson, Harper, San Francisco, Calif. 1962, 41–49.

something that is not addressed in Western philosophy and that to think about Being is to question the whole Western philosophical tradition.

A significant objection to Heidegger being associated with nonviolence is that his clear involvement with and support of the Nazi party especially during his tenure as rector at the University of Freiburg which aligns him with the antithesis of nonviolence and humane treatment of others. I propose, however, that it is in spite of this, even because of these tendencies in Heidegger's thought, that there lies a significant contribution to a metaphysics of nonviolence within the Western European tradition. Part of my thesis is that Gandhi's interpretation of Hinduism is, in many ways, like Heidegger's thought a deconstruction of all attempts at a metaphysics. For Gandhi in the end, Truth/Nonviolence/God/Being requires a quality of response to life as it presents itself not from predetermined, codified assumptions about truth. A foundation for nonviolence requires a metaphysical thinking that transcends traditional dualism and recognizes, always, that knowing Absolute Truth is impossible by virtue of the limits of human knowing. Also, part of this view is what I would call an inter-relational ontology. That is, existence for humans is an interconnectedness and relationship which precedes individuality. In spite of this, because each individual cannot see the whole of its relationships or divine its ultimate purposes, the individual's best response can only be determined from their particular perspective. Violence is the quality of relationship which compels individuals to act on the basis of what they cannot possibly know (i.e., Absolute Truth).

This is precisely, however, where the paradox of nonviolence and of nonviolent resistance is most difficult to reconcile. I will show that both thinkers support the idea that part of a foundation for a philosophy of nonviolence is an imperative to confront violence and actually provoke conflict. Only by drawing out the poison of violence against life and thereby making the forces of violence confront the broader consequences of their own destructive behavior toward life, that nonviolence and life itself is ultimately affirmed. In other words, in the name nonviolence toward others, one must confront others who are violent to make them aware of the problems with their violence and, by doing

so, not merely let purveyors of violence be. Satyagraha, or nonviolent resistance, as Gandhi asserted time and again, is not a passive acceptance of all that is. Instead it is an active engagement with the forces of destruction and oppression.[6] The saving grace in this, for Gandhi, is the practice of self-suffering, so that the violent consequences of the confrontation between violence and nonviolence are suffered by the votary of nonviolence, even unto death. It is by this extreme practice only that Gandhi sought to dissolve the contradictions inherent in his practice.

Heidegger's philosophy also advocates a certain conflict designed to change structures that inhibit and work against the expression of particular forms of life. He certainly doesn't advocate nonviolence, as such. I will argue though, that Heidegger's discussion of the inclusion of Being in thought is essentially opening to possibilities of being as they emerge in relationship in time. This requires a critique of 'the they' and a confrontation of the way that humans tend to subject themselves and one another to truncated versions of what it means to be human. These collective opinions are enforced and obscure one's experience of authentic being of others and of oneself. The collective acting from these presumptions can also be understood as the maintenance of forms of what has been called structural violence that perpetuate economic, gender and racial injustice. Injustice itself becomes a form of 'inauthenticity'.[7] In this light nonviolent political action becomes the use of conflict necessary to find particular truths that might be obscured by structural elements of culture that are maintained by common habits of using language.

In this essay, then, I will first attempt an explication of Gandhi's metaphysical view of nonviolence and its problems. Second, I will discuss Heidegger's philosophy as offering a perspective and, in some ways

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[6] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, op. cit., vol. 13, 520–526. Also see *Mahatma Gandhi: Selected Political Writings*, op. cit., 51–55. For Gandhi's discussion of this issue: *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, op. cit., vol. 19, 538–541 (April 7, 1921).

[7] M. Heidegger, op. cit., 211–214; R. Singh, *Ethics, Ontology and Technology: Heidegger and Gandhi*, in: *Komparative Ethik*, eds. R. Elberfeld, G. Wohfast, Edition Chora, Köln 2000, 296.

a corrective to Gandhi's interpretation of Hinduism as a metaphysics of nonviolence. Next, I want to show how and why both Gandhi and Heidegger advocate an active confrontation with violence as a way to expose its often-hidden reality in what has been called "structural violence"; that is, violence that is inscribed and maintained in social practices which, in turn are supported by language about relationships that is reified and seen as true outside of time.[8] Finally, toward the end of this essay, I want to suggest that each thinker can serve as a compliment and critique of the limits of the other. Gandhi's philosophy can be turned back on Heidegger in order to inform and compensate for what I see as Heidegger's stubborn and somewhat disingenuous, but understandable insistence that his view is not a foundation for a system of morality. I also want to suggest the use of Heidegger as a light shined on Gandhi that both clarifies and illustrates inconsistencies within his thought and suggest an interpretation of Gandhi in a Western context. Heidegger, in some of his later writings, recognized a common realm which both Western and Eastern thought must explore: that realm of existence as it presents itself beyond cultural preconceptions. "This is equally true for both the language of Europe and that of East Asia and is true above all for the realm of possible dialogue between them. Neither is able on its own to open or to found this realm."[9] It is in this spirit that I offer a confluence of Gandhi and Heidegger in search of a metaphysics of nonviolence.

1. GANDHI'S METAPHYSICS OF NONVIOLENCE

After a number of years of exploring various philosophies, religions and spiritual practices – many of them Western – Gandhi returned to the Hinduism of his home and youth. His interpretation, while faithful to the central terms and ideas and traditions and not entirely unprece-

[8] G. Fried, *Heidegger and Gandhi: A Dialogue on Conflict and Enmity*, in: *The Wake of Conflict: Justice, Responsibility and Reconciliation*, eds. A. Speight, A. MacLachlan, Springer, New York 2013, footnote, 7.

[9] M. Heidegger, *On the Question of Being*, in: Idem, *Pathways*, ed. W. McNeill, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998. 321.

dented, was highly unorthodox and in a way, an attempt to universalize its precepts beyond the borders of tradition and Hinduism itself. Central to his world view was the assertion of equivalence of God, Truth, and nonviolence.[10] By sorting out this equivalence one can reveal the metaphysical foundations of his dedication to nonviolence.

Truth in this context is the Sanskrit word, Sat. Sat is the equivalent of being, or 'what is.' This assertion of truth then is a physical as well as a moral reality.[11] To affirm truth is to affirm 'what is.' Ideas about Truth are often limited by virtue of the fact that they are socially constructed and given form in a particular time, place and circumstances. Ultimately, then, the truth that humans perceive or work with is relative. As finite humans we may be on our way to truth, but never knowing if we are there because we cannot know the Infinite; we can only know from our limited perspective of our culture, time, place, history and body. It is this insight which caused Gandhi to assert that Truth has precedence over God because God[12] is subject to culturally conditioned assumptions and therefore, should not be used as a measure of ultimate truth. Likewise, Gandhi's autobiography was entitled *The Story of my experiments with truth*.[13] Because we cannot know truth absolutely at any one point in our lives, a life dedicated to truth must be seen as a humble experiment moving from relative truth to more accurate relative truth. "I am but a seeker after Truth. I claim to have found a way to it. But I admit that I have not found it yet. (…) I only see as through a glass darkly and therefore have to carry convictions by slow and laborious processes, and then, too not always with success."[14]

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[10] *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, op. cit., vol. 21, 472–475 (November 20, 1921); 457 (November 17, 1921).

[11] R. Singh, *Gandhi and the Fundamentals of World Peace*, Peace Research 30(1998), 97.

[12] *Mahatma Gandhi: Selected Political Writings*, op. cit., 36; *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, op. cit., vol. 35, 456–457 (January 12, 1928).

[13] M. Gandhi, *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Navajiman Publishing House, Ahmedabad 2010.

[14] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, op. cit., vol. 21, 457 (November 17, 1921).

Gandhi tried to live humbly and simply, not to impress others or to follow a model of the saint, but because he realized how incomplete and little he did know of truth.[15]

When one believes one has the Truth, we can actually do violence to what is. We superimpose out assumptions; try to fit the mystery of Being and beings into the Procrustean bed of our limited view of reality. When 'what is (sat)' seems to resist our assessment of truth, we judge it as untrue and take measures appropriate to that judgment: stigmatization, rejection, coercion, punishment, captivity, death. This imposition of our assumptions at any level is, for Gandhi, violence. Thoughts, words, social structures and practices which reflect a negative evaluation of a category of being, regardless of how traditional, or 'time-tested' is violence (himsa) and untruth (asatya).[16] One cannot approach the world with violence and know truth, because violence involves imposing one's prejudices upon what is and thereby distorting our perceptions. Nonviolence is not only a prerequisite to encounter truth, but is truth in that truth isn't an idea, so much as the manifestation of our coexistence with and participation in Truth as it presents itself.[17] Giving oneself to Truth is to know it. In fact, violence issues from a misconception of truth and quite naturally leads us away from what is (satya) and, instead, toward our own limited understanding of it. Gandhi's fierce opposition to the conflict between Muslims and Hindus and the caste system which righteously mistreated the Dalits (Untouchables) were examples of his innovative interpretations of Hindu teachings, but also sites of his most virulent opposition within Hinduism; leading ultimately to his assassination. He insisted that judgment of others that leads to inequality and nonviolence supersedes all interpretations of tradition, went beyond God and Hinduism itself, as it had been practiced for millennium.

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[15] R. Singh, *Nonviolence, Gandhi, and Our Times*, International Journal of Applied Philosophy 5(1990)1, 36.

[16] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, op. cit., vol. 13, 294–295 (October 1916); vol. 23, 24–25, 27 (March 9, 1922).

[17] R. Singh, *Gandhi and his Original Ontological Contemplation*, Indian Horizons 43(1994)4, 194.

In spite of its 'progressive' agenda, Gandhi's Hinduism contains some inner contradictions which challenge its validity and its fittingness for a 'real world.' The idea that truth known by humans at any one time is relative would seem to make impossible any kind of judgment even of social inequity. To judge our enemies or those who abuse power seems to presume that we can know that what they are doing is wrong. Even the Bhagavad Gita, one of Gandhi's favorite books, cites examples where one can be a violent criminal and still achieve the highest spiritual state.[18] His judgment of the hostility between the Muslims and the Hindus was not ultimately successful in his goal of unity and, in fact brought hostility down on him. His calling of the Dalits, "children of God," was seen as insultingly patronizing from B. R. Ambedkar, the political leader of the Dalits.[19] His advocacy of nonviolence as a political tool has been criticized as a unrealistic and dangerous approach to complex human relations in which one or both parties are cruel and violent. Examples include his suggestion that Jews should have voluntarily died resisting Nazi policies[20]; Malcolm X's critique of nonviolent action as "criminal" because it is a failure to protect oneself and a capitulation to the White power structure.

Though Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence, on the surface, demonstrates the contradictions between an unyielding commitment to principles and a tentative approach to truth, it ultimately transcends these contradictions in an active confrontation with structures of violence contained in laws, traditions, and other forms of human rela-

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[18] *The Bhagavad-gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*, trans. B. Stoler Miller, Bantam Books, New York 1986, 89. Also, M. Gandhi, *The Bhagavad Gita According to Gandhi*, North Atlanntic Books, Berkeley, Calif. 2009, especially Gandhi's introduction, xv–*xxiv.*

[19] J. Lelyveld, *Great Soul: Mahatma Gandhi and His Struggle with India*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York 2011.

[20] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, op.cit., vol. 69, 290. Also, see discussion of this topic in: D. Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action*, Columbia University Press, New York 2000, 134–137. G. Shimoni, *Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews: A Formative Factor in India's Policy Towards Israel*, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1977, 37–60.

tionships. This is the essence of satyagraha, a holding to nonviolence/truth under all circumstances. In bringing nonviolence face to face with violence one draws out and bears witness to the latent violence that is necessary to protect and maintain the oppressive social structures and practices. Nonviolence in response to violence engenders what Gandhi called 'self-suffering.' So the seeming contradiction of his 'judging' of violence (always the structure and system and never the persons involved) are born by the satyagrahi (literally, one who clings to truth/nonviolence). The practitioner of nonviolence, instead, suffers the violence that is the result of their confrontation. This suffering aims to convert those who see the violence – whether perpetrators or bystanders – by revealing the mindless cruelty behind it and by appealing to the deeper impulse of nonviolence within most humans. Undergirding this strategy is the metaphysical idea that there is no separation, in ultimate reality, between beings; that we are united by Being/Satya/Truth/God. Nonviolent action merely demonstrates this truth for all who may witness it. The perception that there is a subject of violence and its object is a result of finite thinking a lack of what the Bhagavad Gita calls 'knowledge' of the true nature of existence. The harm done, whether the confrontation was based on truth or a misunderstanding, results in violence borne by the satyagrahi (the practitioner of holding to nonviolence in active resistance). The bearing of violence by the activist counters the violence that might occur as a result of the self-righteous imposition of one's tentative truth on others. Nonviolence and violence have an inextricable relationship and nonviolent action is a creative way to take a strong stand against injustice without the violence done to others that often results from such judgments.

2. HEIDEGGER, METAPHYSICS, AND NONVIOLENCE

At the risk of making Martin Heidegger's philosophy the equivalent of Gandhi's Hinduism, I will look at some of the parallels between them. Heidegger saw his project, primarily, as both a critique or 'destruction' of Western philosophy and a "recovery of metaphysics." By this, he meant that systems of Western philosophy (metaphysics) since Plato

have focused on individual beings and their relationships and have ignored what all beings have in common: that they exist. This implies a unity of beings in the reality of Being itself.

There are some significant consequences for this oversight. One is that relations between humans and other beings appear as a subject over against an object. This relationship tends to, then, be seen from the perspective of the subject. While Descartes' metaphysics imagined a place outside of time from which one might examine an object, Heidegger, showed that all perceptions and ways of being and talking about objects were influenced by their radically historical context which included the immediate relationship with the world around us. The idea of an 'objective' view of something was a fantasy which ignored the fact that all things were 'thrown' into the world together and interrelated in ways that are impossible to discern from one's limited, finite perspective.[21]

As a part of this epistemological mistake, second, through an alleged misinterpretation of Plato, Western philosophy, because of the forgetting of Being, we mistake the appearance of things for the thing itself (as in Kant's distinction between phenomenon and noumenon). Instead, says Heidegger, it is more accurate to see our relationship with other things and beings as emerging co-temporaneously with us. For Heidegger, the "Human essence is hearing" our world. It is therefore more appropriate to see this relationship with other beings as a 'calling' by the other. This presence cannot be comprehended in its entirety or essence, but only in its existence in time in relation to our own position in time. By the presence of another being we are challenged ('called') by the encounter to think about, or make sense of it beyond our opinions or those of our culture. Because our perspective is necessarily skewed to our particular place in time and space, we are often under the illusion that we can understand another's essence. Relationship within Being, however, is primary. We are part of it and our understanding is, by necessity, a limited part of the whole; never as object to subject.

[21] M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op. cit., 276.

We can only know from our perspective in time the emerging event of relationship with others.

Through the limited language in which we find ourselves we are more accurately "shepherds of being," says Heidegger.[22] Our response, given that we are united with others in Being and the event of our emergence with it in this time and place is such that we cannot know completely, must more accurately be one of letting be, of care, of solicitude. We co-exist in place; we co-emerge in time and to live authentically with this reality, we must recognize relationship as primary and enter it with vigilance toward the limits and dangers of our assumptions.[23]

This relational way of thinking for Heidegger is the bridge between Being and beings. This is ultimately ungraspable and beyond systematizing.[24] Thinking at this level "means two things: (…) first (…) letting come what lies before us." And second, 'taking things to heart" "where (...) what lies before us is safeguarded and kept as such (…) not manipulated."[25]

Because the importance of Being has been ignored in Western philosophy, there is much to be developed in terms of thinking about it, says Heidegger. Western religions, in particular, have attempted to give voice to a relationship with Being, but often devolved into a concomitant metaphysics which ends up focusing on beings or Being as a objects; a god; a people; a narrative. This leads to "a damaging influence, obfuscating opinions, distorting concepts and leading entire disciplines in a wrong direction."[26] One might say, echoing Gandhi, that metaphysics causes violence towards beings because of a mistaken understanding of their relationship in Being. Like Gandhi, Heidegger seeks to

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[22] M. Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, in: Idem, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, 239–276.

[23] G. Fried, op. cit., 18.

[24] M. Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, with an introduction by J. Glenn Gray, Harper & Row, New York 1972, 217.

[25] Ibid., 211.

[26] Heidegger quoting Goethe in: M. Hedegger, *Pathmarks*, op. cit., 322.

talk about this relationship with Being itself in ways that transcend any one tradition and tries to appeal to the experience of being alive.

According to Heidegger, Dasein (being human here in the world) is, essentially the process of our interpretation of our relationship to the world around us. This applies to our being-with other beings and so, what makes us Dasein is this process of shepherding beings using our language. Dasein is not an object engaged in a unilateral project with ourselves as subject-in-charge, but of process of interpretation of our being-in-the-world moving through time. Dasein is thereby subject to both reigning opinions and conceptual systems which distort the direct experience of being in that time and place.

What specifically does this mean for human's relationship with the world, especially in terms that may be interpreted as nonviolent? Heidegger's collection of lectures, entitled *What is Called Thinking* is widely considered one of the most cogent expressions of his later philosophy. In it, he focuses on how thinking itself is a reflection of the nature of relationships with the world. Domination in relationships is not only wrong, but impossible. Humans are essentially "pointers"[27] in that there is a recognition of others as they present themselves quite independent of individual agency. We don't cause another's presence, obviously, but they appear to us through our use of language. Dasein, then, must 'listen.'[28] to what this emergence is, as we are connected to others in Being and this connection in Being is always new. Each emergence is unique in its time and place respective to our history.

In contrast, the way science looks at objects always must refer them from within conceptual systems. Heidegger's critique of science is not that it is useless or wrong for what it does, but that it does not 'think.' In science this means that preconceptions developed from previous attempts to know the world tends to lead to what he calls, "one-track thinking"; a 'univocity of concepts"[29] which ignores the fact that we exist in relation and, instead, privileges the perspective of a subject

[27] M. Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?*, op. cit., 15.

[28] Ibid., 28.

[29] Ibid., 35.

assessing objects or other beings. Through this kind of representational language presuppositions dominate our ways of thinking and limit the way we can see beings to the point where even "policio-social and moral categories are too narrow."[30] This would account for Heidegger's strict resistance to seeing his philosophy as an ethics; not because he doesn't at some level value a particular approach to others, but because the very assertion of an ethical view closes off the ability to 'think' about a fitting response.[31] True thinking, for Heidegger, "remains open to more than one interpretation."[32] Ethical systems rely, ultimately, on referring to past views, concepts that are destined to become platitudes and empty imperatives. "Ethics as mere doctrine is helpless unless the relation to Being is different. [33]

So, Heidegger's project for Western thought is to begin to think about Being before we can begin to solve the problems that our narrow thinking about others has gotten us into. He uses Nietzsche's idea of 'revenge' to explore, what I take to be the violent tendency in human life.[34] His discussion of Nietzsche's use of the term, "revenge" resembles the concept of structural violence that has emerged out of the study of Gandhi.[35] The confusion of representational ideas with reality leads humans to "pursue and set against everything that exists in order to depose, reduce and decompose it."[36] if it does not fit with the preconception. In representational thinking, the common understanding of truth in Western thought is reduced to reason which judges something true when it measures up to an external, past version of what is true rather than of what is emerging in time, in language. Reason assumes dominion over its subject, but ultimately 'obfuscates' one's relationship

[30] Ibid., 67.

[31] G. Fried, op. cit., 9.

[32] M. Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, op. cit., 71.

[33] Ibid., 89.

[34] Ibid., 92.

[35] Th. Weber, *Gandhi as Disciple and Mentor*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, 191–231.

[36] M. Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, op. cit., 93.

with it in time. The 'object' of thinking is not an object external to us as such, but a unique relationship emerging in time that cannot be known from outside the relationship, but only responded to by allowing that relationship to evoke language that is particular and fitting to that particular time and place. This means using language which does not seek to manipulate and deny the "essence' of other beings with whom we are in relationship, but seeks to safeguard its uniqueness from the inevitable pressures to conform our thinking to the standards of common language and its concomitant practices (i.e., structural violence).[37]

In the attempt to prejudge others, there exists a hostility toward that which resists this need for it to conform to 'it was.' "Revenge is the will's revulsion against time."[38] Since time inevitably changes circumstances and the dimensions of all relationships it tends to make concepts and systems ultimately irrelevant, or at least, less exact in its descriptions of reality. Systems of thought cannot contain nor accurately anticipate the outcomes of change. To try to fit life into concepts and systems requires a "violence" in the Gandhian sense of thinking as a negative judging of what is against how things should be. Concepts, in Western thought, first introduced by the Greeks and, according to Heidegger, subsequently misunderstood by the ensuing tradition, attempts to establish an eternal idea of things (while ignoring Being) that is immune to change in time. Life as it present itself to us in time itself becomes less real than concepts about reality. Resentment arises as the vicissitudes of time challenge the established representations of eternal reality.[39] Revenge that grows out of this resentment wants to subsume everything into the 'it was,' losing its particularity. It does not take much to see the connection between this tendency and violence. Each day relationships between governments, individuals and groups demonstrate the violence that issues from resentments over the disparity between preconceived expectations and real people.

[37] Ibid., 212.

[38] Ibid., 96.

[39] Ibid., 98–99.

Using Nietzsche again, Heidegger writes of the 'deliverance from revenge' as the overcoming of Nietzsche's "last man" (the one who is self-satisfied with collective ideas of reality and not willing to criticize and change) and a movement toward the overman. This requires that humans emerge into a conscious relationship with and a 'remembering' of the fact of Being and its implications for our relationships with others that dissolve the object/subject relation and our frustration with our attempts to control the uncontrollable relation of being and time.

This insight leads, then to what, I suggest, is Heidegger's 'nonviolent' approach to relationship. Though Heidegger does not use the word itself, he claims that 'thinking' is a receptivity to others; being called by them to their 'safe-keeping' or 'preserving' or 'frees it as a gift'[40] or a 'letting be."[41] He speaks out against customary meanings because they prejudge and obscure the essence of beings by 'usurping' its place in our language about relationships.' In a Gandhian sense, these meanings lead to what we might call "structural violence"; that is, a prejudged evaluation of others that is enforced by language and social practice.[42] Nonviolent thinking of others, then, is a 'gathering' of that which is before us and a call from 'what is' to make a 'fitting response (…) leaving the used thing in its essential nature."[43] Again, as for Gandhi, violence is all forms of language and thought which judges others negatively and wishes them ill. Because this essential nature cannot ultimately be known because it involves our relationship in Being, our response to others cannot be definitive and wholly based on established concepts or systematic thinking. This corresponds with the Gandhi's idea that Truth/Being must be attained though nonviolent thought and deed.

Contrast this with representational thinking which strives to fit the other into a concept predetermined on the basis of collective general definitions (what Heidegger calls, 'the they') rather than the particula-

[40] Ibid., 118; 156–157.

[41] G. Fried, op. cit., 18.

[42] R. Singh, *Nonviolence, Gandhi, and Our Times*, op. cit., 40.

[43] M. Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, op. cit., 187.

rity of what emerges in a specific time in a specific relationship with the thinker.[44] The goal of thinking, which in this sense is a nonviolent approach to others is a move to "release language from the leash of common speech."[45] For Heidegger, to free thinking from common speech and prejudice toward other beings is emblematic of a new way of thinking: An overcoming of the tendency of revenge (violence) that is a result of our frustration that relationships don't conform to our prejudiced assumptions. Yet the purpose of this way of nonviolent thinking is not just a passive letting be of other beings. Nonviolence, as in the Gandhian tradition, is the active challenging and dissolution of structural violence that contains and maintains violence in relationships.

There is an element in Heidegger's thinking, however subtle, that is an active questioning of the consequences of representational thinking. Along with Nietzsche and Gandhi, he sees the necessity and even the inevitability of moving toward a new kind of human: One that is able to see these tragic faults that contribute to revenge and then go beyond them. The dynamic consequences of these faults may be captured in the word "resentment"; that is, an attitude that reflects a resistance to changes brought on by time that cannot be stemmed by systems of thought and reified concepts. This resentment can also be seen as analogous to the point made in my earlier discussion of violence: that the reification of ideas of the other in favor and instead of coming to terms with the living breathing, ultimately mysterious being before us is the root of all violence toward others. In this sense, Heidegger offers a way of looking at nonviolent action in the face of structural violence contained in common language and practices. He hints at this in his discussion of 'the crude" and "the pure" in a poem by Hoelderlin. What is referred to as 'the crude' (…) is useful, that the pure may know itself."[46] This is

[44] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, op. cit., vol. 54, 416–417; vol. 22, 176–178 (January 12, 1922); vol. 72, 378–381 (August 18, 1940); vol. 42, 380–381 (January 9, 1930); *Mahatma Gandhi: Selected Political Writings*, op. cit., 29, 41, 45, 47; G. Fried, op. cit., 10; 14.

[45] M. Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, op. cit., 192.

[46] Ibid, 194.

not a dialectical development through the interaction of the crude and pure, but an arising in awareness of the necessity of violence for forms of nonviolence to emerge and "know itself."

To describe this process, Heidegger discusses a poem, *Ister River* by Friedrich Hoelderlin. In it, Hoelderlin describes the relationship between the rock and the shaft that runs over it so that the water might run, and the earth and how furrows enable life to spring forth. The nature of a 'fitting response' goes beyond a relationship of subject and object. Heidegger quoting Hoelderlin continues: "it is useful for the rock to have shafts, and for the earth, furrows. It would be without welcome, without stay." Heidegger: ""It is useful" says here: There is an essential community between rock and shaft, between furrow and earth, within that realm of being which opens up when the earth becomes a habitation (…). But its situation is not determined first by the pathless places on earth. It is marked out and opened by something of another order."[47]

The relation of violence and nonviolence is a community of forces which open up places for humans to live as beings together in Being. They are united in Being and in that unity, violence is 'useful' to the opening up of a nonviolent place to live. This violence which has been insinuated into the deepest levels of human understanding and behavior is therefore 'structural' rather than merely physical.[48] It is physical in the sense that it is practiced repeatedly between bodies inscribed with the expectations and objectifications contained in language. It is interwoven with the ways in which people that are objects of this violence see themselves through the lens of the history of these practices.

[47] Ibid., 190–191.

[48] For a discussion of structural violence and Gandhi see J. Galtung, *Twenty-five Years of Peace Research: Ten Challenges and Some Responses*, Journal of Peace Research 22(1985),156; J. Galtung, *Violence, Peace, and Peace Research*, Journal of Peace Research 6(1969),167–191; J. Galtung, *A Structural Theory of Imperialism*, Journal of Peace Research 8(1971)2, 81–118; J. Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilisation*, Sage, London – Oslo 1996; Th. Weber, op. cit., 204–208.

I would claim that this understanding of a struggle is a good description of Gandhi's view as well as Martin Luther King, Jr's and other advocates of nonviolent action. In their examples of the practice of nonviolent political action even occasional effectiveness was predicated on a metaphysics and ethics which, again and again, had to challenge the reality of human systems while paradoxically, asserting the truth of their own. In the face of this paradox, struggle becomes part of what it means to be human and nonviolent. We are destined to live out of a truth which is relative, while we struggle to free the evolving truth of our relationships with other beings from violence through purposeful conflict with that which would impede it. An important part of resolving this paradox is the ability to 'fight' against violence, without resorting to the very violence which one is fighting. This avoidance of violence in the struggle necessarily includes confronting structural or conceptual violence that results from the reification of others and its ensuing practices. This is the effort to move beyond the subject/object relation toward an understanding of one's unity with others in Being.

Here, I offer a highly controversial paragraph from *Being and Truth*[49] which contains the seeds of thinking about nonviolence as a struggle against that which oppresses. Speaking of this 'fight' or struggle in a lecture from 1933–34, Heidegger states[50]: "One word stands great and simple at the beginning of (Heraclitus') saying: *polemos*, war. This does not mean the outward occurrence of war and the celebration of what is 'military,' but rather what is decisive: standing against the enemy. We have translated this word with "struggle" to hold on to what is essential but on the other hand, it is important to think over that it does not mean agon (Greek: contest), a competition in which two friendly opponents measure their strengths, but rather the struggle of polemos, war. This means that the struggle is in earnest; the opponent

[49] M. Heidegger, *Being and Truth*, trans. G. Fried, R. Polt, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind. 2010.

[50] I want to thank Professor Fried for generously sharing his provocative and insightful article and stimulating my thought about this highly problematic passage.

is not a partner but an enemy. Struggle as standing against the enemy, or more plainly, standing firm in confrontation."

This can be applied to Gandhi's view of the British[51] and King's view of Southern racial segregation in that the British and segregationists, respectively, were enemies and these men chose to "stand against them (…) in confrontation" not in a military battle.

Continuing: "An enemy is each and every person who poses an essential threat to the Dasein of the people and its individual members. The enemy does not have to be external, and the external enemy is not even always the more dangerous one. And it can seem as if there were no enemy. Then it is a fundamental requirement to find the enemy and to expose the enemy to the light or even first to make the enemy so that this standing against the enemy may happen and so that the Dasen may not lose its edge."

By looking at the strategies involved with Gandhi's engineering of the Salt March, and the work of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Montgomery and Birmingham, we can see that to many of those whites didn't see themselves as an enemy. The social forms and customs were insidious, but hidden under ideas of propriety and the natural superiority of white men. Gandhi and King worked to bring the hidden violence to light in a way that they did not 'lose their edge' but become more defined as a people with dignity and uniqueness. The goal, ultimately, however is to put an end to the very nature of this relationship which is one of a subject to an object.

"The enemy can have attached itself to the innermost roots of the Dasein of a people and can set itself against this people's own essence and act against it. The struggle is all the fiercer and harder and tougher, for the least of it consists in coming to blows with one another; it is often far more difficult and wearisome to catch sight of the enemy as such, to bring the enemy into the open, to harbor not illusions about the enemy, to keep oneself ready for attack, to cultivate and intensity

[51] M. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, ed. A. J. Parel, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009, 66–67; *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, op. cit., vol. 40, 300.

a constant readiness and to prepare the attack looking far ahead with the goal of total annihilation."[52]

This section emphasizes that the ultimate goal is bringing the enemy out into the open and annihilating them totally. Certainly, this doesn't sound like nonviolent language. The use of military language by nonviolent movements however is clear. Gandhi, in Hind Swaraj shows what sounds like contempt for the British way of life and its effect on his countrymen.[53] Martin Luther King, Jr. speaks of "a marvelous new militancy" in his "I Have a Dream" speech. James Bevel's work with King in finding the best place to provoke violence from the Birmingham police and the Gandhian strategies of James Lawson that opened up lunch counters to African Americans in Nashville, and others at the frontlines of confronting segregation in the American South during the Civil Rights movement, make no apologies about trying to seek to "bring the enemy into the open" and "annihilate" the social structure of the "the enemy" which "attached itself to the innermost roots of the Dasein of a people and can set itself against this people's own essence and act against it."[54] Yet in each case, the emphasis is on the social structure as the enemy, not the individuals with whom they were interlocked in this oppressive relationship.

This discussion of Heidegger's has all the flavor of a prelude to an ethical system, but Heidegger assiduously avoids claiming an ethics. He seems to dance around it and does everything but declare it. Why? For the same reason that Gandhi sees his relationship with Truth as an experiment. To claim absolute knowledge of what our relationship is with ultimate Truth; Being; the Good; and so on, is to put an end to the process of interpretation which is the essence of being human (Dase-

[52] M. Heidegger, *Being and Truth*, op. cit.

[53] M. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, op. cit., 33–37; 67–68. Also, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, op. cit., vol. 40, 300.

[54] For insight into the strategic use of nonviolence in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's–60's in the U.S. to draw out and confront violence, see D. J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*, W. Morrow, New York 1986; T. Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954–63*, Simon and Schuster, New York 1988.

in). It is to act as if we knew something that it is quite impossible for us to know. It is to set the stage for subsequent violence of forcing the emerging relationships in the world into a preset concept and system of thought. This suggests a metaphysical grounding to the nonviolent action initiated by Gandhi (for example, in the Salt March) and King (for example in Montgomery and Birmingham) in which they both consciously and deliberately dramatized the existing relationship in which violence was latent in a traditional system of relationships and by exposing it led to its "annihilation." Both Gandhi and King insisted that their enemies were a part of them and that to approach them, not as an evil object, but as part and parcel of the 'habitation' that was carved out of history. They were united in God/Truth/Being and only by acting out of this metaphysical reality was there any hope of escaping its habitual course, like a river whose course is changed by a mutual and emerging shift in the water and rocks over time. All truths then emerge in relationship through time. To rely on past interpretations of "the they" or collective wisdom – especially in the West – is to fall prey to the subject/object fallacy which ignores the primary existence of Being which unites all beings in an unfolding of life. To rely on past interpretations sees the ultimate as situated in beings which separates us according to our superficial differences and leads to the enforcement of that 'truth' through violence. From Gandhi's perspective, we then must approach other beings with humility of not truly understanding, yet a responsibility to confront violence with this truth. Knowing that always and everywhere are relationships that we are in, over which we never have unilateral control. In fact, it is this collapsing of the subject/object relationship which gives us insight into the inextricable relationship of nonviolence with violence. As the presence of the other emerges in time, our relationship with it becomes "unhidden" and we are called to give voice to its ever-changing contours and in doing so expose the existence of violence inscribed in the collective sense of what this relationship is which has more to do with traditional and conceptual ideals than actual, human relationships emerging in time.

3. AFTERWARD: GANDHI AND HEIDEGGER IN MUTUAL CRITIQUE

One problem with Gandhi‘s philosophy might be that as an activist, committed to social change, in spite of cautioning against judging others, he seems bent toward non-acceptance of others if they perpetrate violence. Also, Heidegger’s critique of liberalism could be turned against Gandhi in the sense that Gandhi’s idealized view of humans ignored the historical realities of being Muslim, or Hindu or Dalit.[55] Thirdly, it could be argued also that history has shown that Gandhi-’s attempts at change failed to affect the problems of these peoples. Some would argue that his nonviolent resistance was a subtle coercion, which attempted to impose his unrealistic values onto a political stage.

The limits of Heidegger should also be open to examination. His injunction to view unity of humans in Being and letting-be of these beings was compromised by his chauvinistic interpretation of how history influenced the direction which Dasein took. His shortsighted view of existence turned his caution toward knowing ultimate Truths into support of a hypocritical and violent nightmare [56]. One might argue that Gandhi solved this problem by adherence, at some level, to a metaphysical/ religious system and tradition and a strict moral system that issued from this. Heidegger has been accused of writing a Christian metaphysics stripped of its moral content or imperative.

Both of these men put forth an unorthodox mixture of a humble approach to knowing truth with a quite aggressive approach to living one’s perceived reality. In some ways, this is where they come closest and where, I think, a blending of their insights show the most promise for a metaphysics of nonviolence.

[55] G. Fried, op. cit., 13; 17.

[56] Ibid., 17–18

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