

If We Listen Well

By Edward Guinan

For too long we have considered peace as the absence of conflict. We have approached the issue with this limited perspective and have directed our attention to the prevailing conflict of the moment, attempting to discover ways of reducing the destructiveness of the event. This approach is both necessary and desirable, but insufficient as we continue to approach the problem in a fragmented and isolated way. We continue to deal in symptomatic terms as if war and destruction and violence are the extensions and natural outgrowths of malignant attitudes, values, relationships, and beliefs that we continue to embrace.

Peace

Conflict will always be an integral part of human life but our methods of dealing with it need to change. We must be willing to develop and ongoing critical view of our values, operating premises and relationships, and a sensitivity to those about us.

Peace demands that one anticipate the effects of his views and actions on others and the unifying or destructive effects they may have. Most importantly one comes to realize that the "end" does not justify the "means": we get what we do, not what we hope for or intend. You cannot improve a man through punishment, nor can you bring peace through war or brotherhood through brutalization.

Finally one comes to appreciate the reality that there can be not "we's" and "they's" in our lives but only brothers and sisters – all children of God – all sacred and dignified. Destruction of any one – of these God-gifts means a certain destruction of oneself, and a mystery that is gone forever from this small, fragile world.

Violence

Violence can be seen as destructive communication. Any adequate definition must include physical, verbal, symbolic, psychological and spiritual displays of hostility and hatred. The definition must include both our acts and our inactions and that which is done directly to people or indirectly to them through what they esteem. Many forms will take on a combination of these characteristics.

Violence should then include physical acts against another (i.e., the range of acts from personal attack to war which violate human

autonomy and integrity); verbal attacks that demean and humiliate; symbolic acts that evoke fear and hostility; psychological attitudes that deny one's humanity and equality (legal, institutional, and moral); spiritual postures that communicate racism, inferiority, and worthlessness (i.e., beliefs and values that demean or categorize). Violence then becomes a dynamic rather than merely an act.

Hunger, poverty, squalor, privilege, powerlessness, riches, despair, and vicarious living are forms of violence – forms that a society approves and perpetuates. We have been too willing to discuss violence in terms of ghetto uprisings, student unrest, street thievery, and trashing, and have been unwilling to direct our attention to the more pathological types of violence that are acceptable – the types that daily crush the humanity and life from untold millions of brothers and sisters.

In the sixties we spoke with alarm of the "increase of violence" in our society, which may have been a half-truth; violence became more democratic in the decade of the sixties. Instead of resting exclusively with those who construct and maintain ghettos, keep food from the mouths of children, and coerce the young through educational programming and into war, violence became the tool of a widely divergent group seeking equality, power and redress.

Under the umbrella of violence there reside two distinctively different phenomena. First, there is the violence of men and women who act out of frustration, hopelessness and anger in an attempted grasp at life – the act of the slave breaking the chains, which is understandable and inevitable as long as some humans are in bondage. The other type of violence is the violence of the respectable, the violence of the powerful that seeks personal gain and privilege by maintaining inhuman conditions. It is the violence of the board rooms, legislators and jurists – the white collar violence that puts surplus milk down sewers, robs workers of their wages, maintains prisons of infamy, lies to children, discards the weak and old, and insists that some should half-live while others rape and ravage the earth. This latter type of violence is what we must become aware of and actively dismantle if the future is to hold any possibilities for peace and a world where all men and women have a right to live and develop and participate by reason of their humanity, not by reason of their class, productive ability or shrewdness.

Nonviolence

Nonviolence cannot then be understood as passivity or indifference to the dynamic of life (i.e., communication between men). It is not the posture of removing oneself from conflict that marks the truly nonviolent man, but, quite on the contrary, it is placing oneself at the heart of that dynamic. Nonviolence means taking the responsibility for aiding the direction of human communication and brotherhood. Nonviolence means an active opposition to those acts and attitudes that demean and brutalize another and it means an active support of those values and expressions that foster human solidarity. Nonviolence, in essence, means taking a stand in favor of life and refusing to delegate individual moral responsibility to another person or group; it means taking control of one's life and aiding others in doing likewise. Nonviolence is an attempt to find truth and love even in the midst of hatred, destruction and pride.

As the means cannot be separated from the desired ends, nonviolence cannot be separated from peace, for it is the value system and dynamic that makes peace possible.

The Times

The past has not be given to us; it is not ours to breathe or exhale. We live with the smallest perimeter, which we call today, and into this brief moment, into this small space we beckon and command the future.

These are not good times, but good times do not mold great people. The sins of our excesses and arrogance can destroy us, or these failings can humble us to sainthood. Such are the times.

If the great virtues and teachings of the martyrs, resisters, and saints are relegated to a utopian or future-oriented condition, then indeed, they have little value for us at all. But the great heritage that this "community of liberation" has left us is not some unreal, impossible dream. It is this: Love can, and must, be lived today, despite the pain and difficulty of such life. Tomorrow will carry the tenderness and peace which we live now. Do not compromise today. It is all, dear brothers and sisters, that we have. This assembled community of peacemakers has paid dearly for their belief in such words and their lives form a chronicle of inspiration. They have been demeaned and laughed at; they have been dragged through jails and courtrooms and prisons; a few have paid the price of peace with their lives.

The Themes and People

The first signs of a violent society appear in its basic inability to communicate. Words lose their meaning and become hollow. They are twisted and deformed as tools of manipulation and servitude. Noble words such as truth, goodness, and love may come to mean despotism, obedience and death. Peace becomes another name for multiheaded war missiles, and nonviolence is wrenched to mean silence, or lack of opposition, to thievery, privilege and the status quo.

The Spiritual

A line from a contemporary song pleads "Help me make it through the night." We find our existence framed in terms of aloneness rather than solidarity, struggles rather than consummations; departures rather than arrivals, questions rather than answers, and most importantly, night rather than daylight.

We cry out for fear the night will absorb us, yet we are unsure of any presence; we sing so as not to be crushed, yet the tones reflect the endless chant of the nightingales; we dance so as not to fall prey to these awesome interludes of emptiness; and most of all we pray so as not to lie. And these are the words we may use: "Help us make it through the night." Yet in the aloneness and struggle, in the departures and questions, in the cries and songs, in the dances and prayers there are imprints of heroic men and women, there are weavings of beauty, there are caresses of God. Traced through the faces of the old are messages of dignity and tenderness. The wail of the newborn is proof of silent breaths conspiring together. Each "forgive me" and "I love you" is prefaced by the warm tides of grace. Saints are born in Harlem in precise rhythm. Young people hurdle concrete mazes to touch and remember. Children weep for lost birds. Monks and mystics pray the sun up in the morning and call the evening dew. There are still wonderment, wishes and dreams.

You must never forget that you are the brother or the sister of a carpenter and the child of a king. You must remember that all life is unfulfilled without you. You must learn that life is mysterious and sacred and that you must never, never destroy it. And if you listen well you will hear the chanting of others, and they are singing to you: "Help us make it through the night."

Nonviolent Response to Assault

By Gerard A. Vanderhaar

I've never been mugged – at least not yet. I have often thought, though, about what I would do if someone jumped out of the shadows with a knife and demanded my wallet. Or if that pair of teenagers on the isolated new York subway platform swaggered over and asked for twenty dollars. Or when I was stalled on an empty freeway a car suddenly pulled in front of me and the driver stepped out pointing a gun.

I don't know what I *would* do, and I'll never know until something like that happens. But right now, when I can think about it coherently, I know what I would *like* to do: remain calm. I would like to save my life, of course, and avoid whatever would trigger violence in my assailants. I would want to do whatever would diffuse the confrontation and turn it around.

Like automobile accidents, fires, tornados, and earthquakes, the possibility of personal assault is a fact of life today. We are all potential victims of a sudden attack on our persons, our possessions, our life. Everyone should be prepared to face it.

Conventional wisdom says that if we can't get away, we should either submit or fight back strongly. "Save your skin." Self-preservation is nature's first law, we're told. Get by wit the least damage to ourselves. An empty wallet is better than a slit throat. Losing one's virtue is better than losing one's life.

Or we are advised to use force if possible. A Memphis police lieutenant who runs clinics on how to cope with rape gives this advice: "First, try to escape or scare away the assailant by wrenching free or yelling. If the criminal doesn't let go, then you either have to give in, or hurt him in the most effective and efficient manner possible." This means gouge out an eye. Kick hard at the groin. Shoot, if you have a gun, and shoot to kill. His advice has a point for people not sensitive to nonviolence or not practiced in its ways. Essentially he offers the two traditional modes of survival in time of danger: flight or fight.

If we really believe, however, that active nonviolence is an effective alternative to flight or fight in other areas of life, we need to explore how we can respond nonviolently when an assault occurs. Here are some true stories about people who were not experienced in nonviolence, not committed to ahimsa, but who did just the right nonviolent thing at the right time.

Three events

A woman with two children in a disabled car late one night on the New Jersey Turnpike looked up to see a man pointing a gun through her window. He ordered her to let him into the car. Instead of panicking, she looked him in the eye and, like an angry mother, commanded, "You put that gun away and get in your car and push me to the service area. And I mean right now!" He looked startled, put the gun away, went back to his car, and did as ordered, pushed her car to the service area.

A colleague of mine walking late one winter afternoon was jumped by two young men hiding in the bushes under a viaduct. They demanded money. He said he didn't have any. They began punching him, repeating their demand for money. He felt helpless and didn't know what to do. Then it flashed into his mind to call for the only assistance he could think of. He rolled his eyes and started shouting, "Jesus help me. Jesus help me!" And they stopped hitting him and looked at him as if he were crazy. And they ran away.

A lady drove into the parking garage of Memphis' largest hospital one afternoon to visit a friend. As she eased her car into a space she noticed a strange-looking man lurking nearby. No one else was in sight. She usually kept a gun in her glove compartment, she said later, but that afternoon she had left home without it. She had to think fast. She got out of the car, and as the man came over, she looked squarely at him and said in as firm a voice as she could muster, "I'm so glad there's a man around. Could you walk me to the elevator?" He replied meekly, "Yes, ma'am." She thanked him, got on the elevator alone – and practically collapsed out of fear and relief.

Although none of the three people were committed to nonviolence, they had improvised what we recognize as a true nonviolent response. They did not act like victims. They engaged the potential assailants as human beings, and in two of the incidents managed to evoke a sense of decency that resulted in their being helped rather than hurt.

Since we are faced with the possibility of being subject to assault – I prefer to say "subject to" assault rather than "victim of" – there is much we can do nonviolently to keep ourselves from becoming victims.

Prevention

It is very nonviolent, not to mention practical, to do everything we reasonably can to avoid being attacked in the first place. This includes locking doors, walking with others rather than alone, avoiding high risk areas, and being alert to potential danger wherever we are.

For a person tuned to nonviolence, prevention is not being cowardly, but realistic/ We are not helping ourselves or any potential assailants in the vicinity by naively thinking that everything will be all right all the time. Out of ahimsa, the desire for non-harm, we need to avoid making ourselves easy objects for attack. We should not tempt others to attack us.

If we see an attack coming, we should avoid it or seek cover. A woman in Hungerford, England, who was at the scene when a gunman began firing his rifle at marketplace strollers, killing sixteen people said she survived because she “dove for cover.”

Our safety precautions send a strong signal to anyone who would do us harm. It is not that we are scared, but that we are alert and prepared to take care of ourselves. Two strange men entered an aerobics class in which my wife was participating and began talking loudly, distracting the exercisers. No one knew what they wanted, but they seemed capable of creating mischief. One of the exercisers went over to speak to them. He told them quietly how serious the class was, and that anyone who wanted to take part had to sign a waiver form and pay a fee. They were welcome to join if they wanted. He didn't accuse or threaten; he just spoke straightforwardly, matter-of-factly. They listened, saw his seriousness, then turned away and left the room. No trouble. That was an exercise in prevention.

Restraint

If we are against an attacker who is crazed by drug or drink, or who is schizophrenic, or temporarily insane, nonviolent human interaction is nearly impossible. If we have the opportunity, restraint may be our only recourse.

One man told me about his wife who had been mentally ill. “I looked into her eyes, and she seemed like she wasn't there,” he said. She would scream and curse and throw things and was incapable of listening to anyone. She refused to see a doctor or do anything to help herself. Then one night, in one of her fits, she took a knife from the kitchen and started towards their child's bedroom. “That was the end of the

line,” he said. “I had to stop her.” He bounded across the room and, as gently as possible but as firmly as necessary, her wrapped one arm around her from behind, grabbed the wrist of the hand that held the knife and squeezed until she dropped it. Then, still holding her, he dialed the emergency telephone number and waited for the ambulance to take her to the hospital. He said it was the hardest thing he ever had to do in his life.

When I think of restraining somebody, nonviolently, I would like to do it as strongly and effectively - and as lovingly – as that man did his wife.

Self-Possession

As a remote preparation, long before any attack occurs, we can sharpen our ability for an effective nonviolent response by increasing the power of our personhood. We believe that we are important, we are valuable, and we want others to believe it about themselves. We are not victims; we are not cowering and cringing before life's challenges, fearfully looking over our shoulder to see what might be pursuing us. We stand straight, eyes calm, alert, moving ahead. We walk confidently, not with cockiness, which is a way of compensating for insecurity, but in a straightforward and open manner. We are not rash or brash; we don't take unnecessary risks, blind to danger. We are who we are, and we present ourselves to the world that way.

The caricature of the swaggering sheriff with a pistol strapped on one side, a heavy flashlight on the other, a Billy club dangling from his belt, so loaded down that he walks with his elbows pointed outward, is the image of a fearful man, so lacking in self-confidence that he needs all this hardware to protect himself.

If we are so dominated by fear that we arm ourselves to hurt those who would attack us, we have sunk to the level of the assaulter. We have become like the enemy in our desperation to overcome the enemy.

In principle, people committed to nonviolence don't carry weapons. It is because we believe in ahimsa, but it is also because we believe that in a crisis our personal ability is more effective than a gun. Truth, righteousness, and readiness are powerful nonviolent weapons. Armed with these, our personal power increases.

These weapons, more than guns and knives, have a deterrent effect on a would-be attacker. Think of a robber lurking in a doorway late at night watching potential marks approaching down the street. The robber will want to pick out those

who look like easy victims: timid, uncertain, fearful, unprotected. Someone who appears in command, confident, will not be as appealing a target. If I am this person, I'm likely to be passed over in favor of an easier target (and I'll probably never know how close I came to being attacked.)

A large-statured friend of mine, a long-time peace activist, wasn't passed over once. In a small town in South Dakota, on a sidewalk in full daylight he was suddenly faced with a much smaller man flashing a knife and demanding money. My friend, who has very little money anyway, said that the first thing he thought of was the incongruity of their sizes. "All I could do was laugh," he said. He didn't feel any fear, although later he said he was surprised he hadn't. His self-confidence was deep. The assailant glanced up at him, looked puzzled, then turned and ran away.

If an attack does occur, this kind of self-possession, this awareness of our personal power, this confidence in our nonviolent armor is the foundation of defense. But it's only the foundation. An understanding of what is likely to happen and some practice in nonviolent techniques can give us a truly effective defense against personal assault.

Human Nature Isn't Inherently Violent

By Alfie Kohn

Peace activists can tell when it's coming. Tipped off by a helpless shrug or a patronizing smile, they brace themselves to hear the phrase once again. "Sure, I'm in favor of stopping the arms race. But aren't you being idealistic? After all, aggression is just" – here it comes – "part of human nature."

Like the animals, -- "red in tooth and claw," as Tennyson put it – human beings are thought to be unavoidably violent creatures. Surveys of adults, undergraduates, and high school students have found that about 60 percent agree with this statement. "Human nature being what it is, there will always be war." It may be part of our society's folk wisdom, but it sets most of the expert's heads to shaking. Take the belief, popularized by Sigmund Freud and animal researcher Konrad Lorenz, that we have within us, naturally and spontaneously, a reservoir of aggressive energy. This force, which builds by itself, must be periodically drained off – by participating in competitive sports, for instance – lest we explode into violence.

It is an appealing model because it is easy to visualize. It is also false. John Paul Scott, professor emeritus at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio, has written: "All of our present data indicate that fighting behavior among higher mammals, including man, originates in external stimulation and that there is no evidence of spontaneous internal stimulation."

Clearly, many individuals – and whole cultures – manage quite well without behaving aggressively, and there is no evidence of the inexorable buildup of pressure this "hydraulic" model would predict.

The theory also predicts that venting aggressive energy should make us less aggressive – an effect known as "catharsis," which follows Aristotle's idea that we can be purged of unpleasant emotions by watching tragic dramas. But one study after another has shown that we are likely to become more violent after watching or participating in such pastimes.

Although the hydraulic model has been discredited, the more general belief in an innate human propensity for violence has not been so easily shaken. Among the arguments one hears is these: Animals are aggressive and we cannot escape the legacy of our evolutionary ancestors;

human history is dominated by takes of war and cruelty, and certain areas of the brain and particular hormones are linked to aggression, proving a biological basis for such behavior.

First, we should be cautious in drawing lessons from other species to explain our own behavior, given the mediating force of culture and our capacity for reflection.

But even animals are not as aggressive as some people think – unless the term "aggression" includes killing to eat. Organized group aggression is rare in other species, and the aggression that does exist is typically a function of the environment in which animals find themselves.

Scientists have discovered that altering animals' environment, or the way they are reared, can have a profound impact on the level of aggression found in virtually all species. Furthermore, animals cooperate both within and among species far more than many of us may assume on the basis of watching nature documentaries.

When we turn to human history, we find an alarming number of aggressive behaviors, but we do not find reason to believe the problem is innate. Here are some of the points made by critics of biological determinism:

- Even if a given behavior is universal, we cannot automatically conclude that it is part of our biological nature. All known cultures may produce pottery, but that does not mean that there is a gene for pottery-making.
- Aggression is no where near universal. Many hunter-gatherer societies in particular are entirely peaceful. And the cultures that are "closer to nature" would be expected to be the most warlike if the proclivity for war were really part of that nature. Just the reverse seems to be true.
- While it is indisputable that wars have been fought, the fact that they seem to dominate our history may say more about how history is presented than about what actually happened.

- Many people have claimed that human nature is aggressive after having lumped together a wide range of emotions and behavior under the label of aggression. While cannibalism, for example, is sometimes perceived as aggression, it might represent a religious ritual rather than an expression of hostility.

It is true that the presence of some hormones or the stimulation of certain sections of the brain has been experimentally linked with aggression. But after describing these mechanisms in some detail, K.E. Moyer, a physiologist at Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh, emphasizes that "aggressive behavior is stimulus-bound. That is, even though the neural system specific to a particular kind of aggression is well activated, the behavior does not occur unless an appropriate target is available (and even then) it can be inhibited."

Regardless of the evolutionary or neurological factors said to underlie aggression, "biological" simply does not mean "unavoidable." The fact that people voluntarily fast or remain celibate shows that even hunger and sex drives can be overridden.

All this concerns the matter of aggressiveness in general. The idea that war in particular is biologically determined is even more far-fetched.

To begin with, we tend to make generalizations about the whole species on the basis of our own experience. "People in a highly warlike society are likely to overestimate the propensity toward war in human nature," says Donald Greenberg, a sociologist at the University of Missouri.

The historical record, according to the Congressional Research Service, shows the United States is one of the most warlike societies on the planet, having intervened militarily around the world more than 150 times since 1850. Within such a society, not surprisingly, the intellectual traditions supporting the view that aggression is more a function of nature than nurture have found a ready audience. The mass media also play a significant role in perpetuating outdated views on violence, according to Jeffrey Goldstein, a psychologist at Temple University.

Because it is relatively easy to describe and makes for a snappier news story, reporters seem to prefer explanations of aggression that invoke

biological necessity, he says. An international conference of experts concluded in 1986 that war is not an inevitable part of human nature. When one member tried to convince reporters that this finding was newsworthy, few news organizations in the United States were interested. One reporter told him, "Call us back when you find a gene for war."

Leonard Eron, a psychologist at the University of Illinois in Chicago, observes, "TV teaches people that aggressive behavior is normative, that the world around you is a jungle when it is actually not so." In fact, research at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications has shown that the more television an individual watches, the more likely he or she is to believe that "most people would take advantage of you if they got the chance."

The belief that violence is unavoidable, while disturbing at first glance, actually holds a curious attraction for some people. It also allows individuals to excuse their own acts of aggression by suggesting that they have little choice.

"In order to justify, accept, and live with war, we have created a psychology that makes it inevitable," says Dr. Bernard Lown, co-chairman of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, which received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985. "It is a rationalization for accepting war as a system of resolving human conflict."

To understand these explanations for the war-is-inevitable belief is to realize its consequences. Treating any behavior as inevitable sets up a self-fulfilling prophecy: By assuming we are bound to be aggressive, we are more likely to act that way and provide evidence for the assumption. People who believe that humans are naturally aggressive may also be unlikely to oppose particular wars.

The evidence suggests, then, that humans do have a choice with respect to aggression and war. To an extent, such destructiveness is due to the mistaken assumption that we are helpless to control an essentially violent nature.

"We live in a time," says Lown, "when accepting this as inevitable is no longer possible without courting extinction."

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Axioms of Nonviolence

By Lanzo del Vasto

“Peace” is a strong word. It has the same root as “pact” and presupposes agreement confirmed by sworn faith and the law. It has the same root as “pay” (*pacare* means to “appease”) and so implies measured compensation. It is an act, an act that costs an effort. It belongs to the same family as “compact” and implies solidity and coherence.

This simple consideration of the meaning of words reveals the oneness of peace with justice which is stability, balance, and the law.

Everyone knows that injustice makes peace impossible, for injustice is a state of violence and disorder which cannot and must not be maintained. It asserts itself through violence, holds sway through violence, and leads to the violence of revolt, which shows that if justice is the reason for peace, it is at the same time the cause of revolution and war, acts that always draw their justification from the defense or conquest of rights and the abolition of injustice.

But we started off from justice as the foundation of peace, and here we come to justice as the cause of all conflict. Are there two justices then?

Yes, the true and the false.

The true, which is one as truth is one. True justice is at one with truth. It is above everything, in everything, inscribed in the order of things, exists by itself and is God.

False justice is double and contradictory and, like mental aberration, engenders illusion and idols. But men cling to these phantoms more tenaciously than to reality, and so are tormented and torn asunder and hurled against each other in the perpetual war called history.

Let no one say of justice what is commonly said of truth: that it is inaccessible. Say rather that it is inevitable, obvious as light to the eye, and all error claims its support.

How does true justice lapse into false?

By means of these three arguments:

1. *That we have the right to render evil for evil and to call the evil rendered true and just.*
2. *That the end justifies the means and good ends justify bad means.*

3. *That reason, agreement, and consent do not suffice to maintain justice and that it is just to have recourse to fear, compulsion, and force, not only in exceptional cases, but by means of permanent institutions.*

These three arguments are tenets of faith for the common man, for the good as for the wicked. They are never called into doubt, never discussed, and on them people base their civil law and rules of behavior.

It has seldom been noticed that they are self-contradictory and can only lead to endless conflict.

Therefore justice and truth require us to disentangle ourselves from these arguments and their consequences. We must free ourselves from them under penalty of death. For the fact is that if today we cannot find other means of solving human conflict, we are all condemned to die.

The good news that must be announced in our time is that these means have been found. They are the arms of justice, or active revolutionary nonviolence.

The nonviolent can be distinguished by their refusal of the three arguments everyone repeats in order to justify violence. Nonviolence says:

1. *No, evil is not corrected or arrested by an equal evil, but doubled, and to have recourse to it is to become a link in the chain of evil.*
2. *No, the end does not justify the means. Evil means spoil the best causes. If the end is just, the means must be so too.*
3. *No, fear, compulsion, and force can never establish justice, any more than they can teach us truth. They can only twist conscience. Now, the righting of conscience is what is called justice.*

The nonviolent directly adhere to and act from the justice that is one, universal, and as simple as two-and-two-make-four. Hunger and thirst for justice are what make them act. They are servants of justice and do not make justice their servant so as to justify acts dictated by the motives mentioned earlier or reactions dictated by the adversary's attitude.

That is why Gandhi names direct nonviolent action "satyagraha," that is to say, an act of fidelity to truth. The victory the nonviolent seek is to convince the enemy and bring about a change of heart, to convert him by fighting him and, in the end, to make a friend of him.

Is the thing possible? How can it be done? Who has ever done it? In what circumstances, and with what results? I shall not answer here. Whole books have been written on the subject.

The first thing to learn and understand what it is; the second, to try it out for oneself. But it cannot be learned like arithmetic or grammar. Learning and understanding nonviolence are done from within. So the first steps are self-recollection, reflection on the principles, and conversion, that is to say, turning back against the common current.

For if the purpose of your action is to make the adversary change his mind without forcing him to, how can you do so unless you yourself are converted? If the purpose is to wrest the enemy from his hatred and his evil by touching his conscience, how can you do so if you have not freed yourself from hatred, evil, and lack of conscience? You want to bring peace into the world, which is very generous of you; peace to the uttermost ends of the earth, for you are great-hearted, but do you know how to bring peace into your own house? Is there peace in your heart? Can one give what one does not possess?

As for justice, can you establish it between yourself and others, even those who are strangers and hostile to you, if you cannot succeed with your nearest and dearest? And what is more, if you cannot establish it between you and yourself?

But do not jump to the discouraging conclusion that in order to enter nonviolent combat one must be a saint, or a wise man, or perfect. This form of combat is for one and for all, and we can enter it as we are, with our indignities (and all the better if we are fully conscious of them.) But we should know that in principle, if not in fact, we must prepare ourselves as for all struggle. Here, however, preparation must be inward.

On the other hand, the struggle itself and the tribulations it involves are exercises that will help our transformation, and self-mastery is a pledge of victory over evil.

Peace and justice are harmonious adjustment which does not come about by itself but is the fruit of effort and work upon oneself, before and during confrontation. That is why Vinoba says,

"The training ground for nonviolence is a man's heart."

But drill is not enough, nor courage, nor reason. There must also be music and a sense of harmony.

Let us proceed to the other tenets of every man's faith:

4. All violence, including murder, becomes lawful in the case of self-defense. Another argument that no one call in doubt. Do you? Yes. Because self-defense is legitimate, a right, and a duty, but murder, which is offense, not defense, is not.

Therefore, one should not speak of legitimate defense, but of justified offense, which is self-contradictory.

I have no more right to take someone's life in order to defend mine than I have to take his wife in order to ensure my own happiness.

Let it be called "natural" or "animal" defense. It is of capital importance not to drag the law into this matter.

For if we consider legitimate the exceptional case where one can see no other means of staving off aggression than killing, we shall build upon it a whole system of legislation and institutions whose sole office will be to prepare and perpetuate murder.

And that is what we have done. The army, the police, and criminal law are that and nothing else.

Defense will no longer be natural and for that reason excusable; it will be premeditated and systematic crime, and there will no longer be any moral restraint or limit to killing and cruelty.

5. Murder is not only permissible, but a duty when common welfare requires it. Now the "common welfare" in question is not the welfare of all. It is the welfare of a limited group, even if it includes millions of people (the number involved makes no difference.) Common welfare cannot be achieved at anyone's expense. Common welfare is justice and charity toward every human being.

6. Technology, economy. And politics are morally neutral. They obey their own natural laws. Here is how men build the gigantic machinery in which they are caught and crushed. That efficiency is good and always necessary for doing something goes without saying, but it is senseless to attribute value to it in itself. If efficiency lies in doing evil, then the better it is, the worse it is.

7. *Justice is established order.* This seventh argument, unlike those that have gone before, is not accepted by everyone. There is no regime which does not have its rebels. But the conviction of the greater number is sure that the ordinary citizen is ready to kill and die through obedience to law and power.

Now the law fixes morals. Morals are the effect of a certain balance of force between tribes and classes, hard-won pacts which make possible civil life and work in common.

By the standards of absolute justice, the law always has lamentable shortcomings, in addition to which holders of power commit errors and abuses, all of which is coated over by habit and ignorance. But should the balance or power shift, conscience awake, and there ensues revolt, which results in the creation of other states of injustice.

There must therefore always be a law to correct the law, and the law is constantly having to be amended and adjusted, as in liberal regimes.

But liberal regimes are unstable and continually shaken by rivalry, so that governments have more to do to stay in power than to govern. Nevertheless, they still have enough strength to abuse their power, and the people, enough passion and blindness to abuse their right of opposition. The liberal regime is no doubt more humane than others, but criticism by the opposition is less pure because it requires less courage. Legal and licit means exist of denouncing injustice in the pres sand raising questions in parliament, but the rich, the powerful, and the intriguers remain masters of the game.

That is why one must have no fear of resorting to direct nonviolent action if necessary, of breaking the law openly, of seeking legal punishment and undertaking fasts and other sacrifices, so that justice which is above all law may dawn in men's consciences.

This does not mean that direct nonviolent action is impossible in nonliberal regimes. To be sure, it is more difficult and victory less certain.

But whoever does not attempt it is at a relatively stage deserves to fall into bondage and undergo dictatorship.

The fact is that in order to do, one must first be, and that has been our endeavor. We do not regard spiritual preparation as a means, but as something intrinsically more important than our outer demonstration or victory. Bringing man face

to face with God, and face to face with himself is what matters and is desirable for its own sake. When the tree of life has been found again, our acts will fall from it like ripe fruit full of savor.

Much more than going into the street, distributing tracts, speaking to crowds, knocking on doors, leading walks and campaigns, invading bomb factories, undertaking public fasts, braving the police, being beaten and jailed (all of which is good on occasion and which we gladly do), the most efficient action and the most significant testimony in favor of nonviolence and truth is living: living a life that is one, where everything goes in the same sense, from prayer and meditation to laboring for our daily bread, from the teaching of the doctrine to the making of manure, from cooking to singing and dancing around the fire; living a life in which there is no violence or unfairness, nor illegal unfairness. What matters is to show that such a life is possible and even not more difficult than a life of gain, nor more unpleasant than a life of pleasure, nor less natural than an "ordinary" life. What matters is to find the nonviolent answer to all the questions man is faced with today, as at all epochs, to formulate the answer clearly and to do our utmost to carry it into effect. What matters is to discover whether there is such a thing as a nonviolent economy, free of all forms of pressure and closed to all forms of unfairness; whether there is such a thing as nonviolent authority, independent of force and carrying no privileges; whether there is such a thing as nonviolent justice, justice without punishment, and punishment without violence; such things as nonviolent farming, nonviolent medicine, nonviolent psychiatry, nonviolent diet.

And to begin with, what matters is to make sure that all violence, even of speech, even of thought, even hidden and disguised, has been weeded out of our religious life.

From: Warriors of Peace on the Techniques of Nonviolence, Knopf, New York, 1974

Teaching Reverence for Life

By Albert Schweitzer

No human being is ever totally and permanently a stranger to another human being. Man belongs to man. Man is entitled to man. Large and small circumstances break in to dispel the estrangement we impose upon ourselves in daily living, and to bring us close to one another, man to man. We obey a law of proper reserve; but that law is bound to give way at times to the rule of cordiality.

There is much coldness among men because we do not dare to be as cordial as we truly are.

Just as the wave cannot exist for itself but must always participate in the swell of the ocean, so we can never experience our lives by ourselves but must always share the experiencing of life that takes place all around us.

The ethics of reverence for life requires that all of us somehow and in something shall act as men toward other men. Those who in their occupations have nothing to give as men to other men, and who possess nothing else they can give away, must sacrifice some of their time and leisure, no matter how sparse it may be. Choose an avocation, the ethics of reverence for life commands – an inconspicuous, perhaps a secret avocation. Open your eyes and seek another human being in need of a little time, a little friendliness, a little company, a little work. It may be a lonely, an embittered, as sick, or an awkward person for whom you can do something, to whom you can mean something. Perhaps it will be an old person or a child. Or else a good cause needs volunteer workers, people who can give up a free evening or run errands. Who can list all the uses to which that precious working capital called man can be put! Do not lose heart, even if you must wait a bit before finding the right thing, even if you must make several attempts.

Be prepared for disappointments also! But do not abandon your quest for the avocation, for that sideline in which you can act as a man for other men. There is one waiting for you, if only you really want it.

This is the message of true ethics to those who have only a little time and a little humanity to give. Fortunate are those who listen. Their own humanity will be enriched, whereas in moral isolation from their fellow men, their store of humanity would dwindle.

Each of us, no matter what our position and occupation, must try to act in such a way as to further true humanity.

Those who have the opportunity to serve others freely and personally should see this good fortune as grounds for humility. The practice of humility will strengthen their will to be of service.

No one has the right to take for granted his own advantages over others in health, in talents, in ability, in success, in a happy childhood or congenial home conditions. One must pay a price for all these boons. What one owes in return is a special responsibility for other lives.

All through the world, there is a special league of those who have known anxiety and physical suffering. A mysterious bond connects those marked by pain. They know the terrible things that man can undergo; they know the longing to be free of pain. Those who have been liberated from pain must not now think they are now completely free again and can calmly return to life as it was before. With their experience of pain and anxiety, they must help alleviate the pain and anxiety of others, insofar as that lies within human powers. They must bring release to others as they received release.

He who has experienced good in his life must feel the obligation to dedicate some of his own life in order to alleviate suffering.

Technical progress, extension of knowledge, do indeed represent progress, but not in fundamentals. The essential thing is that we become more finely and deeply human.

Doing and suffering, we have the chance to prove our mettle to people who have painfully fought our way to the peace that can never be attained by reason alone.

We are headed right when we trust subjective thinking and look to it to yield the insights and truths we need for living.

Just as white light consists of colored rays, so reverence for life contains all of the components of ethics: love, kindness, sympathy, empathy, peacefulness, power to forgive.

We must all bid ourselves to be natural and to express our unexpressed gratitude. That will mean more sunlight in the world, and more strength for the good. Let us be careful not of

incorporate bitter phrases about the world's ingratitude to our philosophy of life. There is much water flowing underground which does not well up from springs. We can take comfort from that. But we ourselves should try to be water that finds its way to a spring, where people can gratefully quench their thirst.

Thoughtlessness is to blame for the paucity of gratitude in our lives. Resist this thoughtlessness. Tell yourself to feel and express gratitude in a natural way. It will make you happy, and you will make others happy.

The man who has the courage to examine and to judge himself makes progress in kindness.

It is a hard fight for all of us to become truly peaceable.

Right thinking leaves room for the heart to add its word.

Constant kindness can accomplish much. As the sun makes the ice melt, kindness causes misunderstandings, mistrust, and hostility to evaporate.

The kindness man pours out into the world affects the hearts and the minds of men.

Where there is energy, it will have effects. No ray of sunlight is lost; but the green growth that sunlight awakens need time to sprout, and the sower is not always destined to witness the harvest. All worthwhile accomplishment is acting on faith.

The thing that truly matters is that we struggle for light to be within us. Each feels the other's struggle and when a man has light within him it shines out upon others.

The great secret is to go through life as an unspoiled human being. This can be done by one who does not cavil at men and facts, but who in all experiences is thrown back upon himself and looks within himself for the explanation of whatever happens to him.

None of us knows what he accomplishes and what he gives to humanity. That is hidden from us, and should remain so. Sometimes we are allowed to see just a little of it, so we will not be discouraged. The effects of energy are mysterious in all realms.

The epithet "mature," when applied to people, has always struck me as somewhat uncomplimentary. It carries overtones of spiritual impoverishment, stunting, blunting of sensibilities. What we usually call maturity in a person is a

form of resigned reasonableness. A man acquires it by modeling himself on others and bit by bit abandoning the ideals and convictions that were precious to him in his youth. He once believed in the victory of truth; now he no longer does. He once believed in humanity; that is over. He believed in the Good; that is over. He eagerly sought justice; that is over. He trusted in the power of kindness and peaceableness; that is over. He could become enthusiastic; that is over. In order to steer more safely through the perils and storms of life, he has lightened his boat. He has thrown overboard goods that he considered dispensable. But the ballast he dumped was actually his food and drink. Now he skims more lightly over the waves, but he is hungry and parched.

Adults are only too partial to the sorry task of warning youth that some day they will view most of the things that now inspire their hearts and minds as mere illusions. But those who have a deeper experience of life take another tone. They exhort youth to try and preserve throughout their lives the ideas that inspire them. In youthful idealism man perceives the truth. In youthful idealism he possesses riches that should not be bartered for anything on earth.

Those who vow to do good should not expect people to clear the stones from their path on this account. They must expect the contrary: that others will roll great boulders down upon them. Such obstacles can be overcome only by the kind of strength gained in the very struggle. Those who merely resent obstacles will waste whatever force they have.

Students Astutely Aware

By Colman McCarthy

Teaching has its heartfelt and resounding moments, and for me one of them came on the morning of January 17 when I was leaving Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School. Some students from my daily 7:40-8:30 a.m. class were taking control of their lives. Independent control.

I had just finished meeting with my class, 40 juniors and seniors in a class called "Alternatives to Violence." On the eastern edge of the school's front lawn about 150 students had gathered around a wide stump of an oak tree. Atop it was a young woman giving a speech. When I moved closer, I recognized her as a student from my class. She was speaking to a rapt audience about the war in the Gulf and the need to give nonviolent sanctions a chance.

The evening before, as U.S. bomber pilots began attacking Iraq, George Bush had announced that the world could "wait no longer." He was wrong. This part of the world could wait, as small and peripheral as it seemed on the lawn fronting the school. All semester, while reading and discussing essays on pacifism by Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day, Tolstoy, and a long list of other practitioners of nonviolence, the Pentagon's preparation for war hovered over the collective consciousness of the class.

Now that the bombing and killing had begun, as more than three-fourths of the class had predicted it would by a show of hands one morning in October, the time had come for action. I looked among the students at the rally. I knew about 20. Some I would have figured to be there, because I had listened to their anti-war views throughout the semester. Others surprised me – reserved ones who had not said much in class one way or the other about the Gulf.

The senior girl who had been speaking when I came over was in the group. I listened in amazement. Where did all that passion come from? And what inner fires had been burning in the next speaker, a senior boy who spoke knowledgeably about draft resistance. Be aware of your rights, he said, and went on to tell about the national groups that provide counseling on conscientious objection.

When the rally dispersed, four students took a large sign – "Honk for Peace" and stood behind it on the highway in front of the school. A clamor of

honks began. The group, joined by others, decided to cut classes and go be educated in democracy by visiting the anti-war protest in front of the White House.

They learned there that they were not alone, that resistance to the Gulf war was spreading daily in their country and in Europe. Mr. Bush has vowed that "this will not be another Vietnam." Wrong again. It took less than a week for America's streets, from San Diego to Boston, to be filled with citizens expressing their opposition and contempt for the same kind of war ethic that dragged the United States into Vietnam.

It is common of late for Vietnam veterans to return to Southeast Asia, in exercises of catharsis and reconciliation, and in many cases to ask forgiveness of the villagers who were bombed and sprayed by American soldiers. In 20 years, it could happen that today's U.S. bomber pilots will be returning to Iraq seeking reconciliation and peace. The anti-war demonstrators are saying rightly: Let's seek it now.

Up against the might of a war-approving Congress and the domination of the media by the Pentagon's version of events, plus television's one-sided reliance on ex-generals turned "military analysts" (why no peace analysts on these programs?), a few high school kids making speeches on a stump and holding peace signs is indeed small. Gandhi, as usual, had a thought: "Nonviolence is the finest quality of the soul, but it is developed by practice. Almost everything you do will seem insignificant but it is important that you do it."

Three of my students, articulate and spunky even at 7:40 a.m., were consistently skeptical about nonviolence, but they were willing to push themselves and the rest of us to think freshly about old problems. Moving beyond patented or conventional boundaries, and seeing life differently and acting in the riskiness of that new vision, is a breakthrough to be celebrated, not minimized. Wherever the newness leads, the students will go into adulthood as discoverers, not imitators and least of all followers.

From the Washington Post, January 24, 1991

Questions for Lesson 1

1. Explain what you think nonviolence means
2. Peter Maurin wrote that "society should be so structured that it is easy for people to be good." Do you think this is an idle dream? If achievable, would it make us more peaceful in our relationships?
3. Many anthropologists point to the violence in the animal kingdom as evidence that human animals are prone innately to violence. Are we really inherently violent or have we "learned" violence from others, from society?
4. Of all the forms of violence - physical, verbal, psychological, spiritual - which have you experienced and how did it impact you?
5. Can a nonviolent lifestyle be attained easily in the face of a government which resorts to violence to resolve its conflicts; is there a carryover effect from top-to-bottom stemming from a powerful example from one's own national government?