

Philosophical Perspectives on the Morality of *Strikes* and *Non-Violence* as Channels of Social Change

¹Anthony Afe Asekhauno & ²Joseph Oke Omoro

¹*Department of Philosophy, University of Benin, Nigeria*

²*Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Federal University, Otuoke, Nigeria*

Article DOI: 10.48028/iiprds/ijrssmt.v8.i1.03

Abstract

From its classical roots (the Gita, Socrates, and Christ), the world has experienced many apostles of the doctrine of non-violence—effectively interpreting and using it as a social weapon for transforming society and moderating social policy formulation. For example, the efficacy of non-violence was demonstrated in India by the practical dimension (though this is less validly claimed about Africa) given to the Gita by Gandhi, in the United States by both David Thoreau and the ebullient, resilient Nobel laureate, Luther King Jnr.; they perfected and variously adapted the principles of non-violence (organized marches, strikes, sit-ins, dissenting rallies, demonstrations, etc.) to the redress perceived or real socio-political infamies of their respective era. In some way, nevertheless, modern Africa has witnessed no known more application of non-violence than in Nigeria where strike action has become the single overriding and common industrial weapon for seeking redress such that the practice seems to be losing legitimacy, respect and efficacy. And newer questions have arisen as to the moral basis of strikes. Moreover, what is the relationship or philosophical nexus between the trio of strikes, civil disobedience, and non-violence? Accordingly, by looking into extant literature on the meanings and perspectives on strikes, civil disobedience, and non-violence, this article explains, reviews, and evaluates the meaning and presuppositions of strikes and the general principle of non-violence in order to determine their moral basis, applicability, general suitability with a view to advocating or rejecting same as means of social change.

Keywords: *Strikes, Non-violence, Philosophy, Ethics, Morality*

Corresponding Author: Anthony Afe Asekhauno

Background to the Study

Modern world has known no violence as well as practice of non-violence than the rescinding 20th and nascent 21st centuries. From the classical roots of non-violence (the Gita, Socrates, Christ, etc.), the world has experienced many apostles of the doctrine—effectively interpreting and using it as a social weapon for transforming society and moderating social policy formulation. For example, the efficacy of non-violence was demonstrated in India by the practical dimension (though this is less validly claimed about Africa) given to the Gita by Gandhi, in the United States by both David Thoreau and the ebullient, resilient Nobel laureate, Luther King Jnr.; they perfected and variously adapted the principles of non-violence (organized marches, strikes, sit-ins, dissenting rallies, demonstrations, boycott, etc.) to the redress perceived or real socio-political infamies of their respective era. In some way, nevertheless, modern Africa has witnessed no known more application of non-violence than in Nigeria where strike action has become the single overriding and common industrial weapon for seeking redress such that the practice seems to be losing legitimacy, respect and efficacy. And newer questions have arisen as to the moral basis of strikes.

Consequently, it has become expedient and necessary to review extant literature to ascertain the meanings and perspectives on strikes, civil disobedience, and non-violence. In so doing, we shall explain, review, and evaluate the various theoretical perspectives (legal, political, social, and religious) and presuppositions of strikes and the general principle of non-violence in order to determine their moral basis, applicability, general suitability with a view to advocating or rejecting same as means of social change. In other words, the basic question that needs answer is: Is it ever justifiable to engage in strikes and other forms of civil disobedience or non-violence? When, how, and why? Moreover, what is the relationship or philosophical nexus between the trio of strikes, civil disobedience, and non-violence? These and related questions could best be addressed in the following sub-headings.

Strikes and Civil Disobedience as Non-Violence

Essentially, strikes, sit-ins, peaceful protest marches, boycotts, and other forms of civil disobedience are expressions of non-violent ways achieving popular goals. Non-violence is a plethora of methods and a processes of seeking (especially) political change. From the times of Socrates, the idea that one ought not to deliberately offend against a law considered unjust and evade responsibility had been strongly established as a code for resistance to (real or perceived) injustice. Ever since, *non-violence* has come to mean “the policies of using peaceful methods, not force, to (seek) bring about political and social change” (Hornby, 2005). And so its practical aspect is called *civil disobedience*.

Aims/Objectives of the Study

The essential aim of this work is to ex-tray the pedestal and basis of strikes and civil disobedience as forms of non-violence so as to be enabled to determine their ultimate tenability and justifiability, but not to examine its causes and method or success as a weapon of persuasion and social change. In carrying out this objective, there would be need to situate the specific province of what counts as strike as an industrial operation depicting a condition of employees-employer (s) relationship; what differentiates strikes from (or connects strikes to) civil disobedience and non-violence; and to clear the ambiguities and suspicion about the employment of strike/non-violence in pursuing social goals.

Situating the Problem

Generally, to remain a social and political animal, man needs to obey the law and uphold moral standard. But what is the basis of the law order than to strengthen morality, maintain social order, and ensure justice? However, persons or group of persons often find themselves, consciously or unconsciously, breaking the law, sometimes as a last resort. But what obtains if breaking the law is to achieve a higher good, a moral good? This possibility ignites the issue of justification: could deliberate or conscious breaking of a law, for whatever the goal ever be justifiable? To be specific, is strike, or other forms of civil disobedience/non-violence, be ever justifiable? There are various perspectives on these and related questions on lawbreaking, even though it seems not to be so obvious when it comes to strikes and civil disobedience which arouse so much passion. And an adequate redress of these issues is necessary to put in proper perspective the place of those channels of sociopolitical flux.

The Methodology of the Study

The method adopted in this work is simply descriptive analyticity, in which case we shall look into extant literature on the meanings and perspectives on strikes, civil disobedience, and non-violence to explain, review, and evaluate the presuppositions contained in those conceptions and applicability, general suitability with a view to advocating or modifying it. This method relies simply on up-to-date and reliable secondary sources of information: printed (books, newspapers, magazines, and journals) and/or soft (the internet/social media); its analyticity posture is qualitative. Although the work is initially descriptive, in the end, it would also be normative, including a reference to the historicity of the measure.

On Ethics/Morality

The province of morality eclectic; it varies from society to another, from one epoch to another. Most generally, morality implies the sum total of the norms, mores and laws that form a people's foundation for action. Etymologically, the term, morality is derived from the Latin, *more*, which means people's cultural traditions and values. Morality is the foundation for or the actual status of the rightness or wrongness of an action, principle, or law. Morality is ruled by values. Values are virtues. Thus, a value or virtue is an operative habit that is good. Good habits are formed from cherished interior dispositions not mere instincts. Values reflect inclinations and dispositions, "The accessory quality that enables man to use his potencies or faculties correctly, with ease, promptness and pleasure" (Garrigou-Lagrange, 1965). Public morality regulates the behavior and values of an individual and community to achieve social order, cohesion and solidarity. It is 'the total set of ethical-moral and legal-human rights, values, customs, which define and describe, promote and defend a given society's or community's common, shared values, vision and public ethos geared towards achieving a desired civilization'. Public morality thus defines law, mores, norms and other aspects of community arrangements. Law and public ethos provides the cement of any human society; and the law, especially the criminal law, must regard it as a primary function to maintain public morality (Peschke, 2004). In other words, this phrase connotes that law is an aspect and strengthener of wider moral values of a community—moral standard cum moral Conduct.

As we stated above, there is variation in ethical opinions as to how we know right and wrong actions. The intuitionist school for example, takes intuition as the standard moral. To John Hoppers, for instance, “The experiences commonly spoken of as intuitions typically come all at once, as if in a blinding flash” (Agulanna, 2000). It is the direct mental conception of an object as being existent or as possible. There can be individual intuition, general and universal intuition (Echekwube, 1999,) (specific, belief, principle). To Sedgwick, the first two are perceptual while the other is dogmatic intuitionism (1948/66). But, what happens when two intuitive claims conflict? Intuitionism is only good enough for the intuitive individual and not for the society. It is subjective. Another position for moral standard is revelation. Whether a revelation from God or other spirits, the flaws associated with intuitionism are also here abound. There could be conflicting claims of revelation on the same idea. Still, there are those who claim that we come to know right and wrong actions through 'right reason', while some variously posited that conscience law or social custom are moral standards. The hierarchy of the laws-eternal, divine natural and positive- are termed the laws of the universe (Echekwube, 1999). Actions are deemed right or wrong to the extent of their consistency with these laws. In another strand, social norms, values, mores and rules directly mould behavior. This, societal customs and traditions guide behaviors of individual members of that society who socialize into it in order to avoid being labeled deviant. Yet human freedom and objective moral norms provide another basis for moral standard (Echekwube, 1999). In this vein, people act intentionally—out of their purposive freewill, desire and disposition; it is this latest serve that leads as to what is called 'moral' action or conduct. “A moral conduct is that which is meaningful to evaluate or guide against the backdrop of moral standard” (Owolabi, 2000).⁸ Then moral actions are voluntarily carried out by moral agents and this effects the lives of the society (which, perhaps, strengthens Kant's emphasis on reason and rationality as necessary conditions for moral judgment). Being so, the question remains on what grounds do we evaluate a morally worth behavior? Approaches to this also vary.

Conventionalism holds that what makes an action right or wrong is because of someone's saying (or believing) it as such. Actions, to this view, are not intrinsically good or bad. Religion and divine commend theory we discussed above fall under this group. Is this true? What about murder? Hence 'ethical relativism' is another conventionalist new—that “what is right or wrong is determined by the society you inhabit” (Sober, 1991). This view holds that there cannot be a single moral standard which is uniformly applicable to all men in all places and at all times. Thus, morality is relative. The view also incorporates a level of subjection in that “we make our actions right or wrong by deciding what standards to adopt” (Agulanna, 2000). Essentially, this also stresses the idea of *will* and freedom. However, conventionalism believe objective ethical truths (to society) while subjective rely on opinion about them. But if these views are true, it follows that no acts are in them self-right or wrong. The problem with these views is that they fail to explain “why things are held by all men all over the world and at all times is morally wrong” (Sober, 1991). But ethical realism asserts that there are objective ethical facts that exist independently of anyone or society. They posit that “ethical truths are true whether or not anyone says/thinks they are true” (Omorogbe, 1993). We must distinguish this from ethical absolutism—the view that there is a single moral standard which is applicable to all men, at all times, and in all circumstance; what is right is absolutely indisputable and independent of all factors such as period and situation and place, no exception. But to say

moral principles are universal is to agree that they allow some exceptions. The dilemma between subjectivism and objectivism refers to two related concepts—egoism and altruism. Egoism seeks own interest while altruism seek the interest of others (whether psychological egoism/altruism or ethical egoism/altruism, the point here is that since ethical altruism involves element of self-interest tacitly, it is a sure way towards the realization of Kantian categorical imperative). From the foregoing, ethical conflicts could arise. A single ethical system might provide some guideline for ordering principles and priorities; but a clash of such systems forecloses any such possibility.

Some Perspectives on Strikes, Civil Disobedience, and Non-violence

A clear situating and understanding of the nature of strikes, civil disobedience, and non-violence would expose differences between those and similar categories. Strike, in all its forms, is “an organized cessation or slowdown of work by employees to compel the employer to meet the employees' demand(s); *it is* a concerted refusal by employees to work... at their customary rate of speed, until the employer grants the concessions that they seek” (Garner, 2009). Strikes could take the form of walkout, lockout, boycott, work-to-rule, and picketing. Strikes, whether partial or total, are marks of strained relations of labor or production; but it ultimately does not dissolve as civil disobedience even though they may lead to revolution and/or rebellion—which, unlike civil disobedience which eschews violence in acting or reacting against, are much more radical/wild. A strike, a boycott, harassment, and other kind of pressure are moves, as against other direct confrontational but illegal acts, to redress perceived or real injustices, but are not civil disobedience. Similarly, *rebellion, war, violent protest/demonstration, legal non-obedience of the law, conscientious objection*, or other conditionality on *moral or religious* grounds does not count as civil disobedience even though they may as non-violence. Disobedience is disobedience, a defiance of some law, rule, authority, principle; it is a violation of a directive or command issued by an authority, particularly such as a government. Essentially, for there to be civil disobedience, a certain law must be broken; the action must never be violent or selfish. Hence strikes and civil disobedience are not aimed at the enforcers of a/an unjust law but the law itself, the system. In this way, a strike counts as non-violence; but not all non-violence, including strikes, count as civil disobedience. Contentious as this claim might seem, the perspectives on the status of strikes, civil disobedience and non-violence, nevertheless, make different senses depending on relative pedestal, values and convictions.

The *political perspective*, for instance, is best represented in Gandhi's conception. According to Gandhi, the first condition for the enhancement of non-violence is justice in every aspect of life, then the overcoming of fear, and the development of love—especially for those that hate one. Gandhi traces the history of man from cannibalism to primitivism, hunting to nomadism, and from family to community—all dynamically towards “a progressive *ahimsa* and diminishing *himsa*”. Metaphorically, Gandhi holds that:

Man as animal is violent, but as spirit is non-violent. The moment he Awake [s] to the spirit within, he cannot remain violent. . . . No man could be actively non-violent and not rise against social injustice, no matter where it occurred.

Consequently, Gandhi recommends non-violence approach as a response to political, socioeconomic, and all forms injustice in world affairs. What Gandhi means here is a kind of passive resistance to perceived or real injustice—a method of securing rights by personal suffering, which is the “reverse of resistance in arms”. Thus anything repugnant to conscience should be resisted by what Gandhi calls “soul-force”—disobedience and accepting the punishment for the breach, defiance or deviance—as against bodily-force which is violent. Thus for Gandhi, non-violence is “self-sacrifice”. In other words, Ahimsa is not just utilitarian but “the greatest good of all which the believer can possibly die for”. Non-violence is beyond the appeal of reason because that is more to the head; but the penetration of the heart “comes from suffering”—not the sword. Therefore “ahimsa is the largest love”, “greatest charity”; and it implies truth and fearlessness. Though it can be adequately held that man, consciously or unconsciously, commits violence, (in his eating, his walking, and his social activity) such tendency could be minimized by self restraint and compassion; for “the good of violence is temporary, but it's evil permanent”. Hence the strength to kill, for Gandhi, is not effective self-defense as is the strength to die for truth. Consequently, Gandhi recommends ahimsa because he believes in it as the true path to liberation, and historically, it had worked for Christ, Socrates, Daniel, and others at various times. However, Gandhi only prefers violence to cowardice. In a radical way, Gandhi's nonviolent activity was effective and helped win independence for India in 1947, and as MaiduNme noted during the 24mile “salt match” in the 1940s to several thousand non-violent resisters to British rule in India, “Gandhi's body is in jail but his soul with you...you must not even raise a hand to ward off blows” (Estery and Hunter, 95).

Strikes and other peaceful means of protests are legally recognized but the law stipulates the step-by-step stages before engaging in such. Thus strikes and non-violence in general entered into by recognized unions, in the legal perspective, are recognized in so far as they conform with required notices in conformity with the labor law—in this case “the law on trade disputes” (Labor Law, S42). Hence it is the duty of government to even provide protection for, and, in most cases restrict duly notified strike action; yet the more defiant of such restrictive measures the more effective the action. However, hunger strike or other non-violent protests need not consider this proviso.

Socrates, in Plato's *Crito*, provides the *social/philosophical* perspective of non-violence/civil disobedience. In the dialogue, *Crito*, Plato extols Socrates as a virtuous teacher and great friend. In that dialogue, Socrates, the principal spokesperson, emphasized that a man cannot and should not act violently against the laws of the society or the state. It must be noted that the Athenians of the Socratic age preferred sophistry, practical, and empirical justice to the rather idealistic and abstract notion of justice associated with Socrates', which is summed up in the phrase: “man, know thyself”, believing in the intelligible order and every man's ability to be aware of this order and to relate to it. It was this kind of awareness that made Socrates hold his ground against his friends who came with the offer of escape from his prison cell—having been put on trial and condemned for preaching against the gods and 'corrupting the youths.' There, he told those friends that the soul is more important than the body in its ability to contemplate and grasp truths; that wisdom, courage, goodness, justice, and truth are intrinsic values and

eternal principles that give to human lives dignity and meaning. Constantly Socrates was persuaded to escape from prison and regain his power to be practical, protect his immediate interest, security, pleasure, prestige, and wealth. But he held his ground that to escape would be cowardly and violent; that life that is not directed by soul force is that of ignorance, chaos, anger, envy, greed, fear, injustice, and violence. Socrates held that the state is ultimate justice and should thus be respected. In his words: “We ought not to retaliate or render evil for evil for anyone whatever evil we may have suffered from him.” Violence therefore is a matter of the body not of the soul. Invariably, Socrates reminded *Crito* of just men by asking the question: “How could a just man exemplify by his action a precedence which will overturn all laws of justice in a state? (Estery and Hunter, 40)” Therefore a just man, for Socrates, cannot act violently against injustice for:

...if a man's life is to another person an objective idea of justice, then will not this idea (in act) of violence against the law of the state destroy that idea and cause that person to do violence to his own idea and the laws of the state? (Estery and Hunter, 41).

The Socratic conclusion then is that a just man is one who acts non-violently, who expresses and lives in belief in the idea of justice as an eternal principle; that man should even at the threat of death fulfill the will of God and follow where He leads.

The *religious perspective*, as expressed in the *Gita* is one of the earliest bi-perceptions of non-violence. As with Hinduism, the *Gita* has a belief centered around Brahman, the ultimate reality, the source of ultimate oneness from which everything come and return, stipulating the various forms of *Yogi*—reunion with God, a prescribed path of spiritual life. For example, it stipulates that a man has the right to work [karma] but for the work's sake only, not its fruits. In it, the Lord Krishna said: “He knows bliss in the Atman, and wants nothing else, cravings transcend the heart: He renounces cravings and I call him illuminated” (Estery and Hunter, 1971).

This follows the spectacle the opening lines of the *Gita* which present to us *Arjuna*, the great militating leader, hesitating to kill his relatives in a civil war. But he was urged on, to kill them by the Hindu god, *Vishnu*. Vishnu's important message was not essentially violence, but the performance of duty; that being so, Arjuna has to perform his caste duties. Thenceforth, while some faithful now interpret the *Gita* as performing caste duties, others, like Gandhi claim that such interpretation misses the mark. They rather interpret it to mean how man is 'to be' and 'to act' in harmony with his real self—simply living a life and avoiding what Sartre calls 'anguish' or 'bad-faith'; avoiding those 'egocentrism' or self-interest, as in 'my brother', or any form of prebendalism which often cause man to be selfish, jealous, and violent. A nonviolent man is one who has moved from *himsato ahimsa*. It is important to note that the *Gita* teaches how to work or perform duty without ugly means, to take action for a just cause, without thought of personal advantage. The power of truth makes anger and violence unthinkable. Therefore, *ahimsa* is the essential way of truth for *Bhagavad Gita*—about the same period that Socrates emphasized the need for non-violently resisting perceived unjust social principles.

Like Socrates, Christ, at Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of the Gospel of St Matthew in the Bible (called Sermon on the Mount) preaches the philosophical basis for non-violence. Jesus taught an urgent divine message of the coming of God and the judgment of history. Accordingly, in chapter 5 (5-10), he says:

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Further, Jesus declares at Matthew 5: 22, that man shall neither commit murder nor nurse anger against his brother. This principle is thus the guide to divorce, litigation, retaliation, oath-taking and retribution. He requires us to go with him for about 2 miles who requests us to go one mile. Instead of loving our lovers only and persecuting our enemies, Jesus requires/urges us, in verse 44, to love our enemies and pray for those that persecute us. Jesus' teaching is complex and indeed could attract divergent interpretation. Perhaps, a strike, civil disobedience, and non-violent activity are existential interpretation of Jesus' teachings, a pursuance to the ideals of Socratic and Gandhian principles, and manifestations of avid/practical commitment to communal duties.

Findings and Discussion

The activity of strike and civil disobedience must be public. So, it is not just the usual unwillingness to obey a law thought to be wrong, but it *always* constitutes a protest against a law, policy or governmental measure; more than expression of disagreement but includes a desire or sue for change; thus it must be persuasive. By and large, “whoever engages in civil disobedience commits an illegal act because he takes a law or governmental measure to be wrong; he seeks to protest and possibly to change a wrong done by the state, pitting what he takes to right—that is to say moral—against what the state takes to be right—that is to say, at least legal. There is no type of law or governmental measure which is, by its nature, immune to civil disobedience; moreover, the way in which a law or measure might be found wanting must be left open. Some laws are protested because they are thought unjust; others because they are taken to transgress a divine commandment; some because they are thought to violate rights possessed by all men; still other because they are held to produce effects contrary to the common good. To say that the goal must be moral requires that the illegal act not be undertaken simply to gain an advantage for the actor. And because it is not always so clear what someone's purposes may be (including one's own), the willingness to accept punishment is a useful sign that the disobedience is not simply the means to a private end.” The action could be direct or indirect—a distinction that bears on the issue of justification. In direct action, the very law that is being protested against is the one disobeyed. And the indirect action is where the wrong being protested is the absence of a law or governmental measure.

In whatever consideration, the preceding alternative conceptions a particular strike or civil disobedience could be justifiable or unjustifiable, depending on its essence. Some think weirdly that both are never justifiable, others that both may be. Unjustifiable when the reason for it is simply that one *thinks* there is unjust law or there is absence of a law; wrong, because this condition pitches the law at the court of subjectivity/relativism, and morality—which also is inadequate. This requirement becomes more preposterous when one considers the nuances of conflicting uncertified legal and moral authorities to determine what the law is or should be, or what should or should not count as moral. Strikes and civil disobedience are possibilities necessitated by conditions under rational engagements; such alone can also validate or invalidate them. Yes, strikes and civil disobedience may be justifiable after one's careful/conscientious reflection about all the relevant factors about it, or that a greater good might be the outcome. But those indices are themselves undetermined. Consequently, there cannot be said to universal principle of judging all strikes and civil disobedience in all places; an adequate argument for the validation of any act of non-violence must be scrutinized under the following principles:

- i. The wrongness of the act/law/principle or lack of it must be adjudged to outweigh its rightness.
- ii. The motive must be pure and strong; it must never be personal or selfish.
- iii. The good of what is sought or sought against must be predictable and foreseeable.
- iv. The availability and exhaustion of (other formal) alternative methods of reform.
- v. Evidential conscientiousness of the convictions of the practitioners.

Thoreau (1817-1862) is sometime called the first American hippie. A Harvard college graduate and prostylist, Thoreau died a bachelor, living behind a legacy or foot print of a dynamic non-violence and civil disobedience. His essay, *Resistance to civil government*, later called simply *Civil disobedience*, stipulates an appropriate position for an individual to hold in the face of opposition/oppression to undesirable government policy. With some dexterity, Thoreau refused to support the American war against Mexico, and, accordingly, refused to pay his poll tax, in protest. This earned him a night's imprisonment. But while in the prison, his friend, Emerson, said to him: "why are you here?" Thoreau replied, "Why are you not here?" According to him, "all men recognize the right to revolution, that is, the right to refuse allegiance to and to resist the government when its inefficiency is great and unendurable." Further, Thoreau argued, "unjust laws exist"; and he asks, "Shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress at once?" (Estery and Hunter, 63) No. Resistance to such policy is the only just cause. He posits that under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison. Thus the individual's role in restoring his power over the state is steadfast civil disobedience. Fruitfully, this attracted adherents like Gandhi. In more philosophical and patterned approach, Gandhi espoused a systematic and logical analysis of the religious tradition of Hinduism into his concept of non-violence which he calls *ahimsa*. In chapter 4 of his epic book, *All men are brothers*, Gandhi argues that: non-violence is in the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the highest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man. Just as one learns the art of killing in the training for violence, so one must learn the art of non-violence... (Gandhi, 1954, 1). According to Gandhi, the first condition for the enhancement of non-violence is justice in every aspect of life, then the overcoming of fear,

and the development of love—especially for those that hate one. Gandhi traces the history of man from cannibalism to primitivism, hunting to nomadism, and from family to community—all dynamically towards “a progressive *ahimsa* and diminishing *himsa*”. Metaphorically, Gandhi holds that:

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What Gandhi means here is a kind of passive resistance to perceived or real injustice—a method of securing rights by personal suffering, which is the “reverse of resistance in arms”. Thus anything repugnant to conscience should be resisted by what Gandhi calls “soul-force”—disobedience and accepting the punishment for such breach, defiance or deviance—as against the body-force which is violent. Thus to Gandhi, non-violence is “self-sacrifice”. In other words, *ahimsa* is, to Gandhi, not just utilitarian but “the greatest good of all which the believer can possibly die for”. Non-violence is beyond the appeal of reason because that is more to the head; but the penetration of the heart “comes from suffering”—not the sword. Therefore “*ahimsa* is the largest love”, “greatest charity”; and it implies truth and fearlessness. Though it can be adequately held that man, consciously or unconsciously, commits violence, (in his eating, his walking, and his social activity) such tendency could be minimized by self-restraint and compassion; for “the good of violence is temporary, but its evil permanent”. Hence the strength to kill, for Gandhi, is not effective self-defense as is the strength to die for truth. Consequently, Gandhi recommends *ahimsa* because he believes in it as the true path to liberation, and historically, it had worked for Christ, Socrates, Daniel, and others at various times.

However, Gandhi only prefers violence to cowardice. In a radical way, Gandhi's nonviolent activity was populous and effective and helped win independence for India in 1947, and as Maidu Nme noted during the 24-mile “salt match” in the 1940s to several thousand non-violent resisters to British rule in India, “Gandhi's body is in jail but his soul is with you... you must not even raise a hand to ward off blows” (Estery and Hunter, 95). Only recently in the United States, King Jr. adopted and popularized the idea of non-violence and made it a contemporary relevance. All his writings, (including *Strength to love*, *The trumpet of conscience*, *Why we can't wait*, and *Where do we go from here: Chaos or community*) attest to King's commitment to the theory, practice and love for active nonviolence. Born in 1927 in the racially eclipsed United States, King deliberately adopted Gandhi's idea of Satyagraha to the civil rights movement in USA—organized several *ad hoc* strikes, marches and protests in active resistance to racialism and suit for equality of all men, irrespective of race, color, or social standing. His was simply a practical soul force based on six principles copiously embedded in his 1963 “I have a dream” speech—the speech considered by many as one of the best in recent human history. Philosophically, King believes that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”. In “any factual non-violent campaign”, he continues, there are four basic steps, viz:

1. A collection of the facts to determine whether injustices are alive;
2. Negotiation;
3. Self-purification; and
4. Direct action (strikes, sit-ins, marches, protests, boycott, and other forms of civil disobedience).

At the background, there must be the existence of perceived injustice, and deliberate and direct steps must be taken to get them redressed by negotiation. We only degenerate to steps 3 and 4 when step two fails. More so, King also argues that there are two forms of laws: just laws, and unjust laws. One therefore has the moral responsibility to obey just laws, on the one hand, and disobey unjust laws, on the other. But King here differs from Thoreau and Gandhi in that he gave some indices for distinguishing just from unjust laws. He says:

...a just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God; an unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law...Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust (King, 1968, 74-75).

It is noteworthy that in his interpretation of just and unjust laws, King's is disparate with the Augustinian interpretation of same. What however strikes is that unjust law, according to King, is often one inflicted by a majority on a minority but which do not bind itself—the majority. Admittedly, King's conception of and conviction for non-violence is rooted or inspired by the defiance and disobedience by the Biblical story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, on the one hand, and Christ's sermons and Paul's interpretation of same, on the other. So King admonishes that though adherents to non-violence could be branded extremists, as was Jesus, Amos, Paul, and even Lincoln, it is better to be so branded for love, truth, goodness, and justice to obtain. Thus commitment to non-violence should be done with some “discrete, discipline, and integrity amidst creative suffering”.

The very first note of the foregoing is that King succeeded in transforming the Gandhian, Critoan, and Biblical philosophical traditions of non-violence into a distinctive social weapon of resistance and social action. Moreover, from the discussions above, several principles and general features of non-violence can be extrapolated especially as indicated by King's book, *Stride towards freedom* (King, 1958, 81-86).

In the first place, non-violence does resist, but it is not a resistance to or by cowards. Its gentle 'force' is persuasion; that is, the register is not physically aggressive towards one's opponents, but one is seeking by his own example, to redirect the suasion of his opponent—which is an active non-violence to evil.

1. Non-violence resistance does not seek to humiliate the opponent but attempts to win his friendship and understanding; not hatred and bitterness which are marks of violence, vengeance, and sinful.
2. Non-violence is an attack on the forces of evil; that is, it's against the object but not the subject of evil.
3. The exponents of non-violence and civil disobedience must have the willingness to accept suffering without regret or revenge, to know there is so much more blessing and reward in receiving than inflicting violence.

4. A very important mark of non-violence is that it eschews all forms of violence, physical or psychological, and thrives on love, expressed in “self-giving love of God which is still ineffably and inextricably etched in human nature. It is obvious that the kind of love required here is *agape*, not *Eros*; love which has no distinction between enemy and friend; love that is necessary, and dynamic, that is “willing to go the second mile” (King, 82-83), love that is forgiving and loving all men as brothers.
5. A final feature of non-violence (and its practical approaches such strikes, civil disobedience, etc.) is that it is an expression that the whole world is directed by some force superior to man's nature of unjustness, a direction to bring all the disconnected aspects of reality in or to a harmonious whole.

Accordingly, both the theoretical and the implications of the idea of non-violence raise vary worrisome philosophical questions. In the first place, there is the overlapping conception of superiority between the state and the individual. Whereas Socrates' tradition is that the state is greater than any one individual, Thoreau held that “the individual is the basis for the state”. Both conceptions rekindle the philosophical issue of holism versus individualism. More importantly, the theory of non-violence lives us with no clear indication of what it is that makes something right. In other words, in a society, is the majority always right? Or is it right to be lawful or moral in a lawless or immoral society, or otherwise? A clarification of this issue is important because of the implication of the fact that adherents of non-violence may be branded deviants and non-conformists. According to Gandhi, besides a soul, man's physical nature is violent. Is this true or tenable? If this is true, by what is this founded? Or is man determined, by whom? Well this brings to the fore whether therefore man ever be praised for his good deeds or held responsible for his misdemeanors socially, legally, and morally. Gandhi and King claim that the problems of the soul, conscience, mind, and body vary. Accordingly, this raises the question as to whether man is a single entity or a dualism. More so, Gandhi believes that man historically dynamic. If this is to be usefully regarded, one would then ask, is man created, as held by Augustine, or is a product of evolution, as held by Darwin.

Conclusion/Recommendation

A strike and other civil disobedience, to sum up, is a legal, non-violent, moral and public protest against a law, policy, or governmental measure not desirable to the people. Non-violence could be a useful social program of action. But everywhere, it raises critical issues. For example, it is not very clear whether it is in all cases that non-violence is effective. Remarkably, we do not know the divide between Gandhi's *ahimsa* which merely projects, and the basic tenets of the *Gita*. This is because, in Gandhi, non-violence is not just a social force but has a religious undertone especially its explication and requirement for the reunion of Brahman and Atman. Again, it is observable that non-violence as a principle arose only as ad hoc measure against specific social problems that confronted the early theorists in their lifetimes. For example, Thoreau wrote at the time when slavery was being eliminated, the US-Mexican war, and undue poll-tax; Gandhi wrote at the time of colonial rule in India; and King wrote at the height of social segregation in the US. Therefore, it is clear that the theory of nonviolence was originated for some teleological motives by each of its classical exponents; and it is therefore not altruistic. Importantly, and from experience and the fact of human emotional contagion and expressive behavior, is it not possible for non-violent action to degenerate into physical

violence? This possibility is not practically countered by any of the classical exponents of the theory. Intricately, the theory of non-violence seems only to think violence in just the physical and overt sense as against also the psychological or indirect sense. Does soul force not commit soul violence which forces the persecution or unjust condition to turn around? Nevertheless, my observations above do not and cannot undermine the efficacy of the social desirability of nonviolence, though a society requires order for its existence, an order not threatened by the practice. Thus, the theory of no-violence is a new approach to the question of “how to divide our duties to Caesar and God”; it is not creepy, weird, or eerie; its nuance is perseity and its practitioners must not be naïve. On a final note, given that non-violence and civil disobedience usually involve some protest against a law or governmental measure or policy, it is a devise for social change. It can be direct or indirect. When it is direct, it is usually directed towards the redress or amendment of some laws or rules; whereas the indirect is often used where there is the absence of certain law or governmental measures. Once an action of strike or civil disobedience as non-violence (which are legally recognized channels of pressing home some demand) meets the demands of having a popularly acknowledged actionable wrong to be fought with (evidential) strong persuasive motive for altruistic and predictable outcome, and having exhausted all alternative routes to its resolution, then a conscientious call to non-violence could be adjudged moral. But both forms are consistent commitment to social change via peaceful means, because the mills of God grinds slowly but exceedingly small. This is achieved by the sufferer's capacity to endure and resist injustice. I believe with Christ that I should 'turn the other chick when slapped on one face'; with African tradition of 'appeal to the gods'; and with Gandhi that: I contemplate a mental and therefore a moral opposition to immoralities. I seek entirely to break and blunt the edge of the tyrant's sword, not by putting up against it a sharper edged weapon, but by disappointing his expectation that I would be offering physical violence. But then, should strikes and non-violence (rational though) be employed against an irrational government?

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