

WORKING TOWARD THE DEVOTIONAL IDEAL: GANDHI ON THE NON-IDEAL STATUS OF LIBERAL INSTITUTIONS AND VALUES

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Abstract: Gandhi's relationship to liberal political philosophy has recently become a source of controversy. On the one hand, advocates for a virtue-based reformed liberal interpretation of Gandhi are inattentive to the devotional aspects of his political thought. On the other hand, advocates for a Tolstoyan and Hindu devotional interpretation are equally inattentive to those aspects of his political thought embracing liberal institutions and values. However, I re-interpret the devotional Gandhi's relationship to liberalism in light of a distinction between ideal and non-ideal theory. This re-interpretation acknowledges Gandhi's profound disagreement with liberal ideals of justice in both domestic and international politics. Nevertheless, it also acknowledges his acceptance of liberal institutions in non-ideally facilitating progress toward his devotional ideal of enlightened anarchism by which humanity's spiritual progress renders the lawful uses of state violence unnecessary.

Gandhi's relationship to liberal political philosophy has recently become a source of controversy. On the one hand, Nicholas Grier (2003) and Sanjay Lal (2016) argue that Gandhi was a reformed liberal. Indeed, both interpret Gandhian non-violence as a civic virtue. They contend their interpretation of Gandhi resolves a dispute in contemporary Western political philosophy between liberals and communitarians. On the other hand, Grey and Hughes (2015) argue that Gandhi saw non-violence not as a liberal civic virtue, but rather as a devotional practice of Truth-seeking. To this extent, they do not base their interpretation on an engagement with any contemporary dispute in political philosophy. Instead, they base it on a close textual reading of Gandhi himself. In particular, they emphasize his early influences from Tolstoy concerning experimental paths to God/Truth and later influences from Hindu philosophy and theology concerning the individual self and its universal interconnectedness. Moreover, they contend their devotional interpretation substantially contradicts any reformed liberal interpretation of Gandhi. On their analysis, he was not "merely attempting to reform liberal political institutions." At most, Gandhi was a "friendly critic of liberal democracy, with the *implication that he was not a supporter* of those institutions" (Grey and Hughes, 2015, 391; my italics).

In this paper, I argue that the difference between the liberal and devotional interpretations of Gandhi are, in some large part, the function of an equivocation within

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the latter interpretation, as well as in Gandhi himself, between separate ideals of state order, one anarchist and the other constitutionalist. Indeed, advocates of the devotional interpretation deny that Gandhi is a supporter of liberal institutions because his political ideal is one of 'enlightened anarchism' and strict compliance with non-violence. In other words, his ideal of state order is one in which all coercive uses or state power — or lawful violence — are unnecessary. Violence is unnecessary because individual selves and nations have experimentally followed their various paths to apprehending the Truth of non-violence in God and the interconnectedness of all humanity. Nevertheless, Gandhi's enlightened anarchist ideal contradicts the liberal ideal of state order grounded in justice as strict compliance with publicly justifiable terms of state violence or coercion exercised in the interest of keeping the peace. This is an ideal of state order based on an appropriate distribution of the coercive power from local to federal levels of citizens' participation in legislative and judicial activities. Moreover, advocates of the reformed liberal interpretation rightfully claim that participation in such dispersed civic activities requires the virtue-based politics they attribute to Gandhi. Consequently, Gandhi would appear as much a 'civic constitutionalist' concerned with the rightful uses of political coercion and lawful violence as enlightened anarchist.

Such an equivocation of enlightened anarchism and civic constitutionalism poses an unresolved problem in the most recent literature on Gandhi's politics. Did Gandhi entertain two contradictory political ideals, one anarchist and the other constitutionalist? One possible solution to the problem of 'two Gandhis' is to say that Gandhi was ultimately a political pragmatist, willing to separate his private devotional aspirations from his public efforts to create a new liberal constitutional order in India. Indeed, this is the view taken by Anthony Parel (2008 and 2007). However, this view of Gandhi as willing to reach political compromises with Indian liberal nationalists is impossible to square with the considerable textual evidence that Gandhi was no pragmatist. Consequently, I propose a different kind of solution, appealing to Rawls' distinction between ideal and non-ideal theory. In particular, I argue that there is no equation between two separate ideals, but rather a relationship between anarchism and constitutionalism as ideal and non-ideal. This kind of relationship has the advantage that it avoids attributing to Gandhi a pragmatic view of politics he clearly did not hold. While demoting liberal justice to non-ideal status, it also assigns to liberal institutions and values an important role in facilitating diverse spiritual paths towards Gandhi's distinct *religio-anarchic* ideal.

I proceed in the following steps. In the first section, I discuss the reformed liberal interpretation of Gandhi as a resource for mediating the liberal/communitarian dispute, along with certain difficulties it encounters regarding Gandhi's Hindu influences. In the second section, I discuss the devotional interpretation's challenge to liberal appropriations of Gandhi, especially in light of his Tolstoyan and Hindu influences. However, I also note the equivocation in the devotional interpretation (and Gandhi himself) between the ideal of state order as anarchist and constitutionalist, respectively. In the third section, I discuss this equivocation in light of Parel's pragmatic interpretation, but dismiss this interpretation based on Gandhi's stated views concerning the necessity of lawful violence. In the fourth section, I adapt Rawls'

distinction between ideal and non-ideal theory for reconciling the anarchist and constitutionalist Gandhis. I conclude that the reformed liberal interpretation of Gandhi is properly an expression of non-ideal theory, concerned with facilitating progress towards strict compliance with non-violence grounded in devotional purity.

I. The Reformed Liberal Interpretation of Gandhi

Both Grier and Lal appeal to Gandhi primarily as a resource for addressing a contemporary dispute between liberals and communitarians. Communitarians contend that liberals are committed to an ontologically false conception of the self as unencumbered by social attachments. Indeed, this conception of the self underwrites “a morally neutral procedural liberalism” (Grier, 2003, 72). Such a liberalism is neutral with respect to the values, ends, and aims of individuals as socially unencumbered selves. However, it fails to take into account that to a considerable degree the values, aims, and ends of those communities of which they are members constitute individual selves. According to communitarians, cultivating the values and virtues specific to their communities empowers and constitutes selves as individuals. Nevertheless, procedural liberalism lacks any substantive account of the importance of civic virtues and their relationship to core liberal values like “individualism, diversity, and tolerance” (Ibid, 88). Consequently, its commitment to neutrality leaves individual selves morally disempowered and cast adrift, vulnerable to dissipation and violence.

Grier sees this analysis as consistent with Gandhi’s critique of the modern West as especially “unstable and violence prone” (Ibid, 83). Drawing from Bhikhu Parekh’s (1989) seminal work on Gandhi’s political philosophy, Grier argues that Gandhi saw the modern liberal emphasis on proceduralism, stripped of any substantive account of civic virtue, leading only to “hedonistic dissipation or the clash and mutual cancellation of personal and national.” (Grier, 2003, 83). Grier thus advocates a reformed liberalism that attributes “axiological primacy to the virtues” over “rights, as abstractions from virtue” (Ibid, 75). Giving primacy to civic virtue, this reformed liberalism is not “morally neutral” (Ibid, 72). Indeed, for them to be morally empowered to realize liberal values, individuals must first learn self-discipline by cultivating entirely general civic virtues, such as patience, moderation, and courage. As learned in the context of diverse community traditions, these general virtues become the basis of “personal appropriation” by which individuals turn their “participation in social practices into performances expressive of ... individuality” (Ibid, 87). More important for Grier’s argument, general virtues are also the basis on which individuals personally appropriate the “nexus of public justification, tolerance, and moderation ... central to liberal virtue” (Ibid, 89).

He argues a range of contemporary Western liberal thinkers, including Stephen Macedo (2003), William Galston (1995 and 1991), and the later John Rawls (1994) endorse some version of this position. Each of them vary in their specific approaches to bridging the liberal-communitarian divide, but each emphasizes the importance of civic virtue for the realization of liberal values. According to Grier, however, Gandhi is also a reformed because non-violence, *ahimsa*, is itself a liberal civic virtue that enables individuals who have learned self-restraint by appropriating the general civic virtues of

their particular communities to be “persuaded by debate and fortified by education to become open to the views of others” (Grier, 2003, 89). To this extent, non-violence aligns with the fundamental liberal ideal of “peace through toleration” (Ibid). Indeed, non-violence is not an “*optional* personal virtue but a *required* civil virtue” (Ibid, 93; my italics). Hence, we might say that, on Grier’s reformed liberal interpretation, Gandhi’s *ahimsa* is the functional equivalent of Rawls’s liberal virtue of civility. Indeed, in his (1994) *Political Liberalism*, the later Rawls argues that civility requires citizens to exercise discipline and restraint in formulating shared public reasons as justification for peaceful terms of social cooperation.

In this respect, both Gandhian *ahimsa* and Rawlsian civility are alternatives to the “fact of oppression” (Rawls, 1994, 53) in which impatient, immoderate, and intolerant social antagonists struggle to impose terms of cooperation onto one another embodying only their particular comprehensive doctrine of the Truth. Absence of restraint and moderation in formulating a shared basis of public justification, across multiple conflicting doctrines of the Truth, necessarily results in violence. It does so because the antagonists must resort to coercion in the interest of maintaining forced adherence to their belief-system. To be sure, this is an imperfect alignment of Gandhi and Rawls. Rawls’ liberalism is non-neutral regarding the virtue of civility, but it is committed to a strict ideal of *state neutrality* regarding competing doctrines of Truth. However, as I shall discuss shortly, Grey and Hughes’ devotional interpretation of Gandhi regards non-violence as a *non-neutral* political practice of individual devotees seeking Truth through diverse paths.

This is an important point. Reformed liberalism rejects moral neutrality regarding general civic virtues as enabling non-violent civic participation, and this is consistent with and Rawls’ endorsement of civility. Nevertheless, political liberalism is neutral regarding conflicting comprehensive doctrines of the Truth as opposed to entirely general virtues like patience and moderation in formulating public reasons. According to Rawls, liberalism should thus detach itself from all ideas of the whole truth, or truth with a capital ‘T,’ and instead commit to establishing a civil peace based on an overlapping consensus of comprehensive doctrines. Such a politically liberal overlapping consensus should be “freestanding” or independent of all such doctrines of the whole Truth. As a reformed liberal, Rawls thus combines non-neutrality regarding virtues enabling non-violent civic participation with neutrality concerning Truth. This combination of commitments by the liberal state to maintaining separate domains of non-neutrality and neutrality reveals a potential weakness in Grier’s analysis that becomes apparent in Lal’s effort to give it “greater substance” (Lal, 2016, 31).

In this regard, Lal appeals to Gandhi’s “avowed identification with Hindu philosophy” and, in particular, “the central Hindu emphasis on a Universal Self,” *atman* (Ibid, 31). Consistent with Grey and Hughes, Lal interprets Gandhi as positing an Atman or self that is “distinct yet connected to [all] other beings within the broader world” (Ibid, 381). Indeed, as “equivalent to Truth,” the Universal Self is realized only by each individual self experimentally working out its own path to Truth. Consequently, “life’s purpose” for each distinct yet connected self is the “actualization” of this Truth/Universal Self. We each work out our own path to the Truth of universal interconnectedness as “both our final end and goal” (Ibid, 35). By

appealing to *atman*, Lal reinforces Grier's interpretation of non-violence as a civil virtue insofar as the self-discipline required for such non-violent experiments in Truth must first be learned by diverse individual selves "in a way specific to traditions of a particular community" (Ibid, 40).

However, he also inserts Gandhi's notion of Universal Self or *atman* into the political project common to liberals of peacefully reconciling a multicultural diversity of conflicting beliefs about Truth. This inevitably pits the reformed commitment to non-neutrality regarding the virtues against the commitment to neutrality regarding comprehensive doctrines. Indeed, despite their reformed non-neutrality regarding the virtues, political liberals see the 'path' to realizing this ideal through state neutrality towards any one or other conception of the ends and purposes of life. Consequently, they would reject Gandhi's endorsement of the whole Truth of 'universal interconnectedness' as the *one final end or goal* sought through non-violence. Lal intends his appeal to *ahimsa* to show that "there is ample room in Hindu philosophical tradition to sense of Gandhi as a reformed liberal" (Ibid, 31). Nevertheless, his appeal to *atman* clearly reveals an aspect of Gandhi's political project opposed to reformed liberalism's continued neutrality concerning life's purpose and Truth.

II. The Devotional Interpretation of Gandhi

In marked contrast with the reformed liberal interpretation, Gray and Hughes' devotional interpretation of Gandhi is not an attempt to engage any contemporary political issue.¹ Indeed, based on close textual readings, they advance the view that Gandhi advocated and practiced a form of devotional, *bhakti*, political philosophy. According to them, this devotional philosophy is derivative of Gandhi's early engagement with Tolstoy's ideas about the relationship between truth and non-violence, as well as his later innovative engagements with the Hindu philosophic and theistic traditions. On the one hand, they argue that Gandhi took from Tolstoy the idea that the "only way to know the truth of a doctrine is through experimentation and experience, not through abstract rational proofs" (Gray and Hughes, 2015, 378). Tolstoy grounds this experiential understanding of Truth in both Christianity and Hinduism: the "experienced truth of Christ or Krishna is that God is love" (Ibid, 379). Likewise for Gandhi, "God is truth, and truth is intimately connected to love" (Ibid). On the other hand, Grey and Hughes argue, "one cannot simply reduce Gandhi to a restatement of Tolstoy" and that his "reading of the Gita refines and modifies his Tolstoyan concepts" (Ibid 378). Gandhi not only fuses Tolstoy's concepts of truth and love with Ahimsa: "To follow truth, the only right path is non-violence" (Ibid, 379). He also fuses Tolstoyan religion with a further range of Hindu concepts, including Atman and, especially, *bhakti* or devotion.

As regards the Hindu concept of *atman*, Grey and Hughes emphasize its universally connected and "socio-relational" (Ibid 381), which Lal sees as the basis of

¹ Contrary to Gray and Hughes, Puri (2009) argues that Socrates was an early influence on Gandhi. This establishes an engagement by the younger Gandhi with the Western tradition of political philosophy, if not modern Western liberalism.

Gandhi's "synthesis" of liberalism and communitarianism. Nevertheless, their emphasis falls in a quite different place. They stress not the sources of self in community, but rather an "*inner politics* ... between the higher (*Rama, atman, buddhi*) and lower (*Ravanna, manas, indriyas*) parts of ourselves" (Ibid, 392). One might think this stress on an inner politics -- in which the higher parts order the lower parts of the individual self -- contradicts the notion of an interconnected, socio-relational self. In Hindu thought, the individual Atman *ontologically precedes* community: transmigrating "after death ... it is usually asleep within us and needs to be reawakened" (Ibid, 381). One might also think this is precisely the ontologically false conception of the individual self as decried by Western communitarians. However, Lal could insist that awakening an ontologically prior, indeed reincarnated, self depends on first learning general community norms, thus empowering it to discipline its higher and lower parts. Only then can it embark on its particular experiments with Truth through experiential learning.

As far as Gray and Hughes are concerned, however, this fails to 'save' the reformed liberal interpretation of Gandhi from Grey their devotional interpretation. The problem here is they interpret Gandhi as saying that "the self and individual agency" is primarily a function of "our relation to God" (Ibid, 383), and not to other individual selves. Indeed, we come to the realization of our universal interconnectedness in a wider world, not through community or civic participation, but our apprehension of God. To be sure, experiential learning, experimenting with various devotional paths to God/Truth will inevitably have some basis in community traditions. Nevertheless, community has diminished significance for Gray and Hughes' devotional interpretation of Gandhi. Faith alone "helps us to cultivate inner knowledge, self-knowledge, and thus leads to inner purity" (Ibid, 383). As realized through religious devotion and faith, such purity is essential to establish a "proper soul order." This is a "spiritual and existential condition" in which self-discipline and self-rule (*Swaraj*) is "ultimately subservient to and aims towards *Ramarajya*" (Ibid, 388) or the rule of righteousness. Indeed, righteous soul order "must precede state order ... as the state of our politics will ultimately reflect the state and order of our souls" (Ibid, 384).

Here, the implication of Gray and Hughes' interpretation is that entirely general norms and virtues -- like patience, moderation, and courage -- are insufficient for the ideal state order sought by Gandhi. Even if Grier is right to say they are enabling conditions for central liberal virtues of toleration and respect for different belief systems, they do not necessarily entail any relation to God/Truth. Likewise, as already noted, Rawls' deliberative virtue of civility requires neutrality on ultimate questions of life's purpose and meaning. Of even greater significance for the contrast with reformed liberalism, however, Grey and Hughes detach Gandhi's ideal state order not only from these distinctively *secular* liberal values, but also "civic activity as such" (Ibid, 309). Indeed, as an "activity that begins in the atman, self, or soul" of the devotee, "politics is not primordially a public or civic matter." It thus follows from their devotional interpretation that "any positive civic effects" of inner purity and righteousness are merely "felicitous consequences" (Ibid, 392). In other words, these effects are not the result of Gandhi's purported reformed liberal commitment to virtue-based civic participation.

Grey and Hughes further stress that “if one takes Krishna’s (or God’s) teaching seriously and devotedly follows the path of duty that points towards truth ... this will then render national politics and state-operated mechanisms unnecessary” (Ibid 387). To this extent, Gandhi’s ideal state order is not any form of liberalism at all, but instead a form of religiously “enlightened anarchism.” In this respect, they quote Gandhi himself saying that in this “state [i.e. of ‘enlightened anarchism] everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbor. In the ideal state therefore there is not political power because there is no state” (Ibid, 387). After all, there is no need for political power, in the form of coercive legal authority wielded by the state, if anarcho-religious devotees are never hindrances to their neighbors. Consequently, enlightened anarchism is also *radically pacifist*. Indeed, it is consistent with the answer Gandhi once gave to the question of whether it is ever possible to administer violence “in a spirit of love:” that is, an emphatic “No. Never” (Gandhi, 1949, 141). However, Gray and Hughes go on to argue “Gandhi’s ideal is that it is village-centered, with power most authoritative at the small community level where panchayats (small, popularly elected bodies in charge of running village affairs) had legislative, executive, and judicial power, and weakest at the federal level” (Gray and Hughes, 2015, 387). Clearly, though, this emphasis on exercises of legislative and judicial power contradicts their characterization of Gandhi’s ideal of state order as anarchist and pacifist.

To this extent, I argue that Gray and Hughes *equivocate* between what appear to be two quite separate political ideals in Gandhi. In contrast with the first ideal rendering coercive ‘state-operated mechanisms *unnecessary*,’ the second ideal looks a lot like a distinctively liberal ideal of *civic constitutionalism*. Here, there *is* political power and, as such, legal coercion, but appropriately de-centered and distributed across multiple levels of participation in self-governance and, particularly, distributed to the smallest units of civic activity. In other words, the power to define the terms of legal coercion is constitutionally separated and distributed instead of *rejected as unnecessary*, in light of the spiritual progress of religious devotees. Moreover, any positive civic effects, say, in terms of maintaining necessary public order, when neighbors become hindrances to one another at the panchayats level, are not *mere consequences* of inner purity and righteousness. Instead, these effects on public order are functions of institutional design and de-centered power relations. This equivocation between anarchism and constitutionalism is not simply an exegetical error on the part of Gray and Hughes. Indeed, textual evidence shows that Gandhi himself moved between these religio-anarchist and civic constitutionalist commitments at different stages in his own complex, life-long experiments with Truth.

Having now laid out both the reformed liberal and devotional interpretations of Gandhi, I return to the question I posed in the introduction to this article: ‘Did Gandhi entertain two contradictory political ideals, one anarchist and the other constitutionalist?’ I first consider this question by considering Anthony Parel’s attempt to reconcile these two seemingly opposed sides to Gandhi by interpreting him as, above all else, a political pragmatist.

III. The Pragmatist Interpretation of Gandhi

Unlike Grier and Lal, Parel (2008 and 2007) does not appeal to Gandhi as a resource to address a contemporary dispute between Western liberals and communitarians. Instead, he sees Gandhi's political thought as resulting from his engagement with liberal political actors in India. Interpreting Gandhi as pragmatic Indian liberal constitutionalist, Parel argues that he came to acknowledge a "clear difference" between "non-violence as creed and non-violence as policy" (Parel, 2007, 122). On the one hand, as a form of "heroic non-violence," the former is "an option available only to exceptional individuals" (Ibid). On the other hand, as a form of "civic non-violence" the latter is what Gandhi "expects from the average citizen" (Ibid). Moreover, such civic non-violence "permits the lawful use of violence for the sake of the public good, such as the maintenance of public order and the exercise of the right of self-defense" (Ibid). To this extent, the heroic/civic distinction is inconsistent with the first ideal of state order, in Gray and Hughes' equivocation, as a state of enlightened anarchy in which no one wields coercive political power over anyone else. Nevertheless, it is also consistent with the second 'ideal' as entailing only a claim about the proper distribution of political power across different levels of the national constitutional system.

According to Gray and Hughes, Parel sees thus Gandhi as "engaged in his own private spiritual journey of heroic acts of non-violence as an exceptional individual" while, at the same, "engaged in a separate act of moderate reformation of the increasingly liberal-democratic political institutions of India" (Gray and Hughes, 2015, 391). If Parel's pragmatic interpretation is correct, then his political philosophy looks much more liberal than Gray and Hughes are willing to acknowledge. Nevertheless, they brush aside what they see as Parel's "misreading" of Gandhi as an Indian liberal constitutionalist, arguing that his "entire discussion ... lacks any reference to Gandhi's written or spoken word" (Ibid, 391). However, this is surprisingly hasty for avowed textualists.

Indeed, the heroic conception of non-violence in Gandhi is not unique to Parel. For example, Vinit Haksar emphasizes the "high moral qualities" (Haksar, 1976, 153) necessary for those devotees who, as Satyagrahis, hold fast to Truth in performing acts of non-violent civil disobedience, passive resistance, or non-cooperation in imperial British India. Indeed, such acts "must only be resorted to by those individuals qualified to embark on [them]" (Ibid, 151). Moreover, Haksar quotes Gandhi repeatedly stressing the "suffering of the extremist character willingly undergone" by heroic Satyagrahis: "the greater our innocence the greater our strength" (Ibid, 156). Here, there is no explicit endorsement by Gandhi of civic non-violence. Nevertheless, one might reasonably take the implication of his words to be that the heroic non-violence of the most committed devotees is not for the average citizen.

As for civic non-violence encompassing lawful uses of violence by the state, Parel does actually ground this in Gandhi's own words. In this respect, Gray and Hughes are simply mistaken in their assertion that he fails to provide any such textual grounding. Indeed, Parel references Gandhi's anti-imperialism and his engagement in questions of international relations. Gandhi denied that states could invoke national self-interest "as their supreme law of conduct" (Parel, 2008, 50). Nevertheless, he acknowledged that

they could not only use power for internal order but also “external security” and “self-defense” by “military means, if necessary” (Ibid, 53). In Gandhi’s own words, the world needed not “absolutely independent states warring one against another but a federation of friendly interdependent states” (Ibid, 51). Parel references Gandhi’s participation in the 1931 constitutional conference held in London in which he asserted that any state lacking the ability to defend itself “could not be a responsible state” (Ibid, 53). According to Gandhi, self-defense is “the essence” of a state’s existence (Ibid, 53), within the framework of a just international federation of states. In this respect, his anti-imperialism and global vision make no appeal to an enlightened international anarchism in which states are never hindrances to one another. Instead, in Gandhi’s ideal international state order, non-violence is a function of states limiting violence -- internally and externally -- to its uses for public order and self-defense.

Further, Gray and Hughes completely ignore numerous discussions of Gandhi’s claim that there is sometimes a need to inflict violence in self-defense or to protect innocent third parties and that it is worse to be a coward than to use violence for such ends (Haksar, 2012; also see Grier, 2003, and Gruzalski, 2001). Noting his ‘No. Never’ response to the question of whether violence is ever justified, Haksar quite plausibly contends that Gandhi was “sometimes unaware of the complexity of this own views” and a fallible “interpreter of this own philosophy!” (Haksar, 2012, 303). Indeed, he argues Gandhi also made it clear violence is “*always wrong*” and heroic “non-violence as creed” is always opposed to “convenient policy or expedience” (Ibid, 304). Hence, expedience “in the sense of necessity *never justifies*” violence. However, it can sometimes “*excuse or pardon*” the use of violence (Ibid, 304). Bart Gruzalski echoes this line of interpretation when he contends, “Gandhi’s preference for violence ... reflects his view that cowardice makes non-violence impossible, not a view that violence is justifiable” (Gruzalski, 2001, 16).

That said, however, I wish to point out that his view of violence as *pardonable but not justifiable* reveals an important difference between Gandhi’s defense of violence for public order and national security and liberalism’s ideal of justifiable state violence. Indeed, Gandhi could not endorse a liberal justification of state violence, even granting the heroic/civic distinction. This effectively forecloses any possibility of reconciliation between the liberal and devotional interpretations of Gandhi *on the question of justifying violence*. Nevertheless, this is small comfort for Gray and Hughes. The irreconcilability of Gandhi’s political thought with liberalism on this question does little to reinforce the devotional interpretation. After all, that interpretation of Gandhi radically diminished the importance of ‘civic activity as such,’ reducing its positive effects – the internal and external security of the state – to felicitous consequences of inner purity and righteousness. Nevertheless, as I have shown, Gray and Hughes are simply mistaken in their assertion that the heroic/civic distinction lacks textual grounding. Moreover, the non-heroic, civic dimension of his political thought attributed to Gandhi by Parel and Haksar is a plausible response to the complexity of his views.

To be sure, Parel’s pragmatic interpretation of Gandhi as engaged in ‘a constructive dialogue with liberal political actors in India’ does not withstand scrutiny in light of Haksar and Gruzalski. At any rate, it does not withstand scrutiny if Parel believes this pragmatic process of compromise and accommodation to liberal

institutions led Gandhi to embrace a liberal justification of state violence. Clearly, it did not. Instead, Gandhi's principled commitment to non-violence is fully consistent with Gray and Hughes' devotional interpretation with its emphasis on Tolstoyan and Hindu religious thought. As for his view of the pardonability of necessary state violence, I submit that we may best understand this complexity within Gandhi's views concerning such violence — as simultaneously unjustifiable and pardonable — by revisiting the two separate ideals of state order considered earlier.

IV. Ideal and Non-Ideal

I want now to re-interpret the two separate ideals equivocated by Gray and Hughes, as enlightened anarchist and liberal civic constitutionalist respectively, in light of a distinction between ideal and non-ideal. Indeed, Rawls distinguishes between, on the one hand, "strict compliance" with liberal principles of justice and, on the other hand, conditions of "non-compliance" (Rawls, 2001, 4). Here, strict compliance means that "(nearly) everyone" abides by the principles of justice. According to Rawls, however, ideal theory must refer to "realistic utopia" that involves "taking men as they are and laws as they might be" (Ibid, 11). In other words, it must refer to a condition that humanity can achieve if only over the due course of time, so that it is not "utopianism in the sense that it would be impossible to achieve" (Ibid). As realistically utopian, ideal theory establishes the long term goal for non-ideal theory. Indeed, the latter considers how this long-term goal "might be achieved, or worked towards, usually in gradual steps" (Ibid, 12). In this respect, non-ideal theory refers to a "process rather than an end point" (Ibid). Nevertheless, this does not mean that "political pragmatism" prevails over principles. It means instead that any moral or political philosophy "that does not take into account the non-ideal world" it attempts to "influence and address" is thereby normatively deficient (Ibid).

At first glance, Rawls's distinction between ideal and non-ideal theory might not appear especially promising applied to Gandhi. Indeed, some creative adaptation is required to apply the ideal/non-ideal distinction to Gandhi. Rawls advocates using a thought experiment to identify ideals of justice both domestically and internationally: the original position with a veil of ignorance. On the one hand, in the domestic case, representative or 'average citizens' select principle of justice subject to informational constraints on their personal characteristics, such as sex, race, and class. On the other hand, in the international case, representatives of national peoples select international principles of justice subject to informational constraints on key characteristics of their people, such as population, territory size, and the availability of resources within a territory. In both cases, however, representatives select principles *as if* they were ignorant of those characteristics, personal or popular, that would bias selection in their own favor. Nevertheless, Rawls' thought experiment is clearly no devotional 'experiment in Truth' in Gandhi's Tolstoyan sense. After all, as a hypothetical, it is utterly detached from any *actual experience of living in the world*. Moreover, as concerned only with eliminating personal or popular biases from the selection of domestic or international principles justice, it is utterly detached from any Hindu-

influenced concern with apprehending the whole Truth of humanity's interconnectedness.

How, then, might the ideal/non-ideal distinction apply to Gandhi, granting the devotional, Tolstoyan and Hindu, character of this political thought? My claim is that Gandhi's ideal is one of enlightened anarchism as strict compliance with non-violence. Dispensing with lawful uses of state violence, devotees identify this ideal through their various experiments leading them to apprehend the Truth of universal interconnectedness. To this extent, Gandhi's ideal is not a subject of selection by abstract rational choice, but something devotees come to see and feel in their lived experience. Devotionally inspired enlightened anarchism, however, is realistically utopia in Rawls' sense that it is achievable in the end. As Gray and Hughes point out, Gandhi believed his "devotional politics is equally available and practicable for everyone" (Gray and Hughes, 2015, 391). To be sure, not everyone has followed, or has not followed yet, their own devotional, experimental path to the point of apprehending this Truth. Consequently, they are not yet in strict compliance with Gandhi's ideal, but they are capable of finding their own path there.

This condition of non-compliance, however, is a concern for non-ideal theory as addressing the separate question of how best to facilitate the long term goal of working towards a realistic utopia of enlightened anarchism. In this respect, liberal civic constitutionalism fulfills the requirements of what I now call 'Gandhian non-ideal theory.' At any rate, it does so on Grier and Lal's reformed liberal model in which the distribution of legislative and judicial powers is balanced and combined with an appropriately 'communitarian' focus on learning general civic virtues. In other words, constitutional arrangements are not morally neutral according to the pure procedural model of liberalism, which Grier and Lal rightly point out Gandhi would reject. Instead, the communitarian focus on civic virtues, such as moderation and self-restraint, in the context of such arrangements is the precondition for realizing liberal values of toleration and respect. Indeed, encompassing virtue-based toleration and respect for diverse experiments in Truth, civic constitutional arrangements take average citizens, as they are, while holding open the possibility of gradual, processual spiritual growth towards Gandhi's devotional ideal of Truth.

I propose, then, a way to re-interpret the relationship between Gandhi's devotional philosophy and liberalism that effectively *demotes* the liberal ideal of constitutional justice to non-ideal status. In this respect, Gandhi is clearly not a political theorist who gives a full-throated endorsement of liberalism. Nevertheless, contrary to Gray and Hughes, there is an important sense in which he is ultimately a supporter of liberal institutions. He is a supporter of those institutions to the extent they offer the best available answer to the question asked by non-ideal theory in a Gandhian timbre: how can we facilitate gradual movement towards the ideal of state order in which lawful state violence become increasingly unnecessary, domestically and internationally. Indeed, I submit that this re-interpretation gives content to Gray and Hughes' description of Gandhi as 'friendly critic' of liberalism.

He is 'friendly' towards the reformed liberalism attributed to him by Grier and Lal. The cultivation of entirely general civic virtues of moderation and self-restraint serve a dual purpose in equipping citizens for both civic activity and their pursuit of a

devotional path to God/Truth. In this respect, civic activity is not separated from Gandhi's devotional concerns as expression of his private, heroic spiritual journey. Instead, his heroic acts of non-violence are an expression of his non-pragmatic civic concern with how to get from the non-ideal world -- in which average citizens are -- to an ideal state in which neighbors are never hindrances to one another. After all, failure to address this civic concern would signify the normative deficiency of Gandhi's political vision overall. In this respect, however, he is also a 'critic' of reformed liberalism's civic commitments to lawful state violence, for purposes of internal security and public order, as justifiable as opposed to pardonable. Reformed liberalism is a non-ideal condition from which average citizens should be encouraged to develop their own devotional paths. He is equally 'friendly' towards a conception of international relations generally endorsed by liberals in which states and peoples are free and independent of imperial domination.² Nevertheless, he remains a 'critic' of liberal-endorsed international relations for the same reason as before. That is, he rejects international state violence, for purposes of external security and national self-defense, as justifiable as opposed to pardonable.

That said, however, a question remains as to liberalism's relationship to Gandhi. Are liberals equally friendly critics of Gandhi, despite having their ideal of domestic constitutional justice demoted to non-ideal status? The answer appears to be yes. After all, liberals are bound by civility to tolerate and show respect for Gandhi's ontological and metaphysical assumptions regarding self and Truth, as long as devotees tolerate and show respect for the rights of others to pursue alternate paths. That, however, is precisely what these assumptions require of devotees, in terms of non-ideal theory.³ Consequently, devotees and liberals can agree substantively on protecting the individual autonomy rights of average citizens, despite disagreeing profoundly about the ideal or non-ideal status of civic constitutional arrangements. As for international

² Here, I say 'generally endorsed by liberals' because Rawls insists that the ideal of international relations does not require that every state and people to be liberal according to the strong domestic ideal of constitutional justice he favors. In the international arena, the liberal values of toleration and respect demand that states recognize one another's independence to pursue alternate paths of popular self-determination within the parameters of international law and human rights.

³ I also note the bearing of my re-interpretation of Gandhi on Amartya Sen's influential critique of ideal theory. Sen (2006) argues that many cases of blatant injustice do not require an ideal theory of justice before one can take justice-enhancing measures. Hence, we don't need an ideal theory of justice to know that children who suffer severe malnutrition, when there is enough food to go around, are treated unjustly. Further, he argues that an ideal theory of justice is too demanding; it does not allow us to remain silent on some issues where we believe the ideal is unrealizable. However, Sen's arguments are directed against an ideal theory *of justice*, whereas Gandhi's devotional ideal is *post-justice*. Nevertheless, Sen might still argue that Gandhi's post-justice ideal is unrealizable. Gandhi, though, would disagree based on his egalitarian view of humanity's potential for spiritual progress. Indeed, civic participation in constitutional arrangements suitably dispersing political power holds open this potential for each individual self to experiment with Truth of heroic non-violence.

relations, if they are indeed committed to national independence, then Gandhian devotees may prefer civic constitutional arrangements. That is, they may prefer these arrangements, not as ideally just, but as the best, or most efficient, means to facilitate individual experiments in living and apprehending Truth. Nevertheless, as anti-imperialists, they are also bound to tolerate and respect different peoples in pursuing independent paths to national self-determination, within the broad framework of international human rights law.

In this respect, Grier is surely right to remark, “it is difficult to believe Gandhi would have rejected the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) *as an appropriate framework*” (Grier, 2003, 9). It is difficult to believe this insofar as the UDHR grounds Gandhi’s avowed commitments to anti-imperialism. However, I wish to reinforce Grier’s remark with Haksar’s claim that Gandhi was not always the best interpreter of his own philosophy. Indeed, taking into account the complexity of his political thought (and those features of it overlooked by Gary and Hughes), I contend that Gandhi *should have* embraced the UDHR as an ‘appropriate framework’ of non-ideal theory. Fundamental human rights to freedom from subjugation, to freedom of movement, conscience, dissent, and so forth, may not dictate the radically de-centered distribution of political, legislative, and judicial powers Gandhi himself *non-ideally preferred* for Indian independence. Nevertheless, human rights are the minimal precondition for internationally protecting diverse experiments in Truth, whether by national peoples, individual devotees, or average citizens.

Conclusion

I have argued for a re-interpretation of Gandhi’s political vision in terms of an adaptation of the distinction between ideal and non-ideal theory. This re-interpretation captures what is true about the reformed liberal interpretation of Gandhi — that he embraced and supported liberal institutions and values — but at the level of non-ideal theory. It also captures what is true about the devotional interpretation — that he sought state order beyond the need for political power and lawful violence — but at the level of ideal theory. To this extent, the re-interpretation solves the problem of the two Gandhis, constitutionalist and anarchist respectively, contradicting one another. The contradiction is resolved by distinguishing between non-ideal and ideal aspects of his overall political vision. Grounded in civic virtue and participation in legislative and judicial activities, the non-ideal, reformed liberal aspect to Gandhi’s vision avoids falsely attributing to him a pragmatic view of politics he clearly did not hold. Instead, it offers a normatively sufficient account of how liberal institutions and values might facilitate average citizens working from the acceptance of power and lawful violence to the Truth of non-violence and universal interconnectedness.

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