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Nonviolence and Civil Resistance: A Theoretical View from Social Struggle

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Abstract

We attempt to build a "reality principle" around two terms which are used frequently in social struggle and in the search for peace, but not very well known in their theoretical and historical aspects in Latin America. Building on concrete experience, we explore different conceptualizations and problem definitions, practices and ideas concerning nonviolence and its links with civil resistance and disobedience. We also present associated terms in different cultures and *weltanschauungs.* Furthermore, we will introduce, for collective discussion, a summarized series of basic and universal principles, from the author's mainly epistemic point of view, based on concrete actions, centered on processes of humanization, disobedience in response to inhuman orders, and social struggle. Taking a slightly different approach to nonviolent civil resistance, we will examine the development and practice of this strategy as a way of breaking the "lack of symmetry in power" which exists in the social order, and building the empowerment of individuals committed to actions in defense of justice, as well as a shift in social relationships and power *vis à vis* the adversary. In this sense, we take a particularly detailed look at "moral weapons", "moral force", "moral reserve" and "moral frontiers". In the conclusions, we reflect upon conceptualizations and experiences gleaned from the events described, on the base of the Mexican quest by relatives of victims of forced disappearance, and murder in the ongoing war.

Key words: Nonviolence-civil resistance-disobedience-non-cooperation-social struggle.

Introduction

This paper is a reflexive and modest, but original, attempt to acquire a better understanding of a conceptualization in permanent flux, emerging from three decades of very concrete experiences within many different fields of this culture, from conflict to education, from direct action to theorization and Academia: popular education for peace among homeless children; autonomous *Zapatista* education; social struggles for environmental protection and human rights; actions for peace in the midst of wars; support of relatives of victims of the very misrepresented "war on drugs"; teaching, writing and workshops in many different venues and geographic settings. These venues for social action and reflection, where the participants have invariably taught us to humanize ourselves and to strive to build a fairer and more inclusive world—on the base of nonviolence and resistance—are the "reality principle", the situational framework upon which our theorization rests. All my assertions are straightforward, but they are backed by a very concrete, experienced and theoretical "reality principle".

To achieve this, I will rely –textually or otherwise—on three sources which are fundamental to me, covering very different times, styles and experiences, with the object of building a diachronic, and not simply a synchronic reflection.[1] The theoretical underpinning relies, among many other authors, on the work of some classical figures of nonviolent action and civil resistance (Gandhi, Luther King, Sharp, Randle), the culture of peace (Lederach), as well as epistemology (Foucault, Canetti, Marin), in terms of disobedience, power and social struggle.

Those who are familiar with me know perfectly well that one of my educational and practical axioms is never to work with manuals or mechanical or pre-established instructions, nor do I resort to "catechisms", nor do I spread isolated information without integrating it into some form of knowledge, or conceptualization, useful in terms of the reality principle of those who share that given venue of action-reflection-action. Nor am I particularly fond of brainstorming sessions concerning ideas or opinions. So the present text, far from being a multiple option compilation, is a humble but real trip of epistemic accumulation and action.

Nonviolence as Humanization

For those of us who work with, apply and build knowledge based on the culture of so-called "nonviolence" ("as old as the hills", Gandhi proclaimed optimistically), which has now acquired the extra name of "active", to help us define it a bit more precisely, it has always been a problem to explain the term in ways that contrast it with "passive pacifism". Or, as Gandhi had to do –with the invention by his son Maganlal of the term *satyagraha* (force of truth) in 1906—to distinguish his struggle in South Africa from the previous "passive resistance". Nonviolence is a word created to define the Gandhian movement toward the independence of India during the first half of the XX century, but it is a term which has always given rise to confusion, misunderstandings and discussion because it is based on the denial of something (violence), and this interpretation is not completely true or complete. We prefer to write the expression in one word, without a hyphen, because it should express a culture and a form of action with its own particular historical principles and logic. These reach far beyond a simple rejection of violence, as if the non-existence of overt direct violence (non-violence or nonviolence) were enough (without any mention of justice, dignity, cooperation and due disobedience to inhuman orders). Something similar happens with the expression "armed peace" or "negative peace" (Lederach, 1986), which is believed to be represented by the "absence of war". Neither nonviolence nor positive peace can be defined as the opposites of violence or war.

This is why different social movements from many locations all over the world –who have become involved in nonviolent struggles for justice or liberation have always sought more precise definitions, easily comprehensible in their own particular cultures, so that people should fully understand and avoid Manichean or byzantine discussions: Gandhi would talk about *satyagraha* and *ahimsa* (strength of the soul, not causing damage to any living creature); Martin Luther King referred to the "force of love"; in the Philippines, in the struggle against dictator Ferdinand Marcos, this form of strife became known as "people power"; in Czechoslovakia, during the resistance against Soviet totalitarianism, it was "the power of those without power"; for the Franciscans from Pace e Bene, it was "the power of weakness" (Fracchia, M., 1994); in Mexico today we call it "civil resistance".

Considering now the contents of the term, for Gandhi –modern systematizer and innovator of this philosophy and practice—

"Nonviolence is the greatest force that Humanity has at its disposal, as old as the hills. It is not a monastic virtue conceived to achieve interior peace and guarantee individual salvation, but a rule of conduct for living in society, as it ensures respect for human dignity and enables the progress of the cause of peace, according to the most fervent desires of Humanity. Nonviolence does not involve 'refraining from any and all combat against evil'. On the contrary, I see nonviolence as a much more energetic and authentic form of struggle than the "an eye for an eye" approach, which ends up multiplying the evil by two. Against anything which is immoral, I plan to use moral and spiritual weapons. As I see it, there is nothing passive about nonviolence. On the contrary, it is the most active force in the world… It is the supreme law. One cannot be truly nonviolent and yet remain passive in the face of social injustice… Nonviolence and cowardice exclude each other. If there is no authentic daring, there cannot be true nonviolence" (Gandhi, 1985).

Vinoba Bhave, who continued Gandhi's work in India after the death of the Mahatma, said that "nonviolence is a spiritual force of great power". (Vinoba, B., 1994) More than a decade later, Father Donald Hessler, a pioneer of nonviolence in Mexico as from the sixties, stated: "Nonviolence is the most violent of all violences, but it does not use weapons that destroy its adversary, but those which attempt to direct him/her towards truth and justice… It is a humble and daring force at the same time". (Hessler, D., 2010) And it is worth adding what Gandhi said about not being able to wait thirty years for an adversary to shift his/her position towards justice; hence the practice of nonviolent action.

In the world movement against war (WWR) –emphasizing the practical point of view—it is stated that "our working definition of nonviolence is based on the desire to eliminate all types of violence, be it physical, or that which has been called "structural violence" or "cultural violence", without employing more violence… For some people, nonviolence is a way of life. For all of us, it is a form of action which defends life, denounces oppression, and recognizes the value of every person… Our determination not to destroy any person". (WWR –World War Resisters—)

From a slightly different point of view, Spanish academic Mario Lopez complements these visions stating that "…the key element is not to allow ourselves to become dehumanized in the face of adversity… We could

say that nonviolence is a way of humanizing relationships between humans... Nonviolence is not to allow processes and structures to lead us towards the dehumanization of other people or, directly, adversaries". (Lopez, M., 2017).

Finally, we propose –from our own experience and concrete construction—that nonviolence is based to a considerable degree on the mandate and basic epistemic which Dr. Juan Carlos Marin summarized thus: "disobey any inhuman order that authority may give us" (Marin, J.C., 2014)[2] , with all the enormous complexity that this entails, both in terms of knowledge and action.

We understand, thus, in which ways this culture embodies principles governing a form of life and methods of struggle as patterns of action in favor of social change. There is a permanent discussion concerning which of these aspects should dominate in each situation or social identity, and this –especially in terms of action—sometimes leads to dichotomous ruptures between living according to one type of ethic while acting according to another, totally opposed. For example, availing oneself of nonviolence for resolving a given tactical situation but, at the same time, promoting plunder and injustice. The great masters of this culture have always insisted on the central importance of being coherent. "Happiness is achieved when what you think, what you say and what you do are in harmony". (Gandhi, M.,1985)

If we could explain in some detail—based on our experience—some of the different areas from which nonviolence can be approached or embraced, without losing sight of the fact that it is an "entirety", we would say that –the same as in peace—there are areas of education-culture-construction, and we would add that other aspects have developed historically, like direct social action, philosophy, spirituality, experiences of community living, and of a just and solidary economy. Particularly direct action –which most definitely is not a provocation or an incitement to social disorder—pursues as its objective "to compensate the asymmetry of power with the adversary", something that the social order has established beforehand, and concerning which just and fair negotiations can be undertaken. Gandhi said: "We cannot wait thirty years for our adversary to change, so we must apply *satyagraha*".

Similarly, the basic principles have their roots in religious, spiritual, humanist, cultural, social, economic and political traditions, in their broadest and most plural sense. For example, Christianity sees in the life of Jesus a nonviolent model, especially in the passage which refers to "respect for the enemy"; Buddhism sees it in "compassion" and "detachment"; the autochthonous peoples of the whole world have grown and survived with their great integration with Mother Earth, the *Pacha Mama* in the Quechua language, and with *Lekil Kuxlejal* in the Tzeltal tongue. Islam has proclaimed, in the words of Mohamed, "do no harm and you will suffer no harm", one of the most important principle of nonviolence which unifies the majority of traditions: do not do to others what you would not wish to be done to you. If this were made real, the world would surely be a different and much more humane place.

Resistance and Disobedience as Moral Weapons

When we approach civil resistance[3] we invariably refer to the characterizations of its strategies, or tactics of its actions.[4] Therefore, we will start with some conceptualizations of the implications of "resisting" and "disobeying", key pre-requisites for reflection on this kind of action.

This means, first and foremost, to broach two fundamental issues: the implications of the actions of resisting and disobeying. Foucault was right when he pointed out: "From the very moment in which a power relationship is established, the possibility of resistance also comes into being. We are never totally trapped by power: there is always the possibility of modifying its domination under certain conditions and by means of a precise strategy". (Foucault, M., 1980) It is possible to define the nature of resistance initially as "passive" –the fact of not carrying out certain orders—or "active" –mobilizations or direct violations of some law, some public venue, or direct disobedience of an order--. Both types of resistance imply actions of gradual disintegration of the cooperation which is taken for granted among certain systems, groups or persons.

In passive resistance, an inverted balance is established with the identity of the other which seeks to achieve continuity; it is a relationship between opposed powers but who do not wish to reach the breaking point; on the other hand, in the case of disobedience (active resistance) this balance is broken. En some of the forms in which

resistance is expressed, these can be, according to Gandhi, "covert or day-to-day" (which is characteristic of resistance to dictatorships or totalitarian regimes, or among ethnic minorities), where viable conditions do not exist to carry out overt, massive, public confrontations, so the tactic is adopted to develop symbolic, habitual or private forms of confrontation; or they can be "open and civil" in which an individual ceases to comply with an unjust regulation. They can also be carried in various fields simultaneously: cultural, legal, economic, social, parliamentary, military, religious, sanitary, philosophical, etc.

In *Hind Swaraj,* Gandhi also associated the issue of resistance with that of force: "It is beyond discussion that a petition without the backing of force is useless... A petition founded on force is the petition of an equal, and when a demand is transmitted in the form a petition, it shows its noble intentions. Petitions can be bolstered by two types of force. One is: 'We will harm you if you do not concede what we are asking for'; this is the force of weapons. The second form of force can be expressed thus: 'You can govern us to the extent that we accept to be governed; (if our petition is not satisfied) we will have nothing more to do with you'. This type of force can be described as the force of love, or the force of the soul (or the force of truth), or even in more popular but less precise terms, passive resistance. This force is indestructible... The force of weapons is helpless if it is opposed to the force of love, or of the soul". (Ameglio, P., 2002).

To resist is simultaneously and deeply linked to disobedience because, from its very inception, it presents a rupture with some aspect of the dominant social order, in which we have been built and domesticated by upbringing (as distinct from discipline) by family, school, socialization, work, politics... and in all other facets of life centered on a primary value, in the words of Juan Carlos Marin: "Anticipated obedience to apply a punishment when an authority demands it", when "in reality, the punishment masks a confrontation which is made to look like an act of justice" (Marin, J.C., 1981).

In other words, we are trained from birth to view obedience –both in its abstract and absolute principle and its concrete day-to-day application—as an important social value, and to punish its violation – in multiple ways (Piaget, J., 1985)—quite insistently and mechanically, depending if the person who demands it from us is recognized as a legal

or moral authority in that moment, so that we accept his/her petition as legitimate.

Thus, implicitly, it becomes normalized; the relationship between obedience, punishment and the wielding of authority becomes legalized.[5] It follows that a passive obedience attitude is then adopted, because it is rewarded as a virtue, both in the family and at school, and because it is normalized socially ("they all do it"). It also protects against punishment and can entail rewards because, on the whole, it reproduces the social order to which we adhere, and in which we believe blindly is the best, and the only viable option, especially after the proclamation of "the end of history".

Another relevant angle of this process is the way in which the idea that "authority is necessary" has become part of the culture of broad social segments. In accepting this, potential adversaries are transformed into followers of established order. According to Gramsci, this phenomenon can be expressed as an "ideological catch" of the popular sectors, which is achieved my means of an "invitation to complicity" (Lombardi, L.M., 1975) by the hegemonic classes. These forms of complicity and challenge, emerging from the construction of obedience and the resistance of society have also been analyzed by the dissident socialists. Particularly, Vaclav Havel states that "...Each one helps the other to be obedient. They are both objects of a control system, but at the same time they are both subjects. They are both victims and instruments of the system". The system is not simply a social order imposed by one group on another, but ·...something that permeates all society". Thus, we see that our obedience reproduces the whole domination system and, according to Havel, "This is more than a simple conflict between two identities. It is something worse: it is a challenge to the very notion of identity". To face this, power is corroded by cultural resistance, which creates an alternative culture; sometimes, to resist from a pre-political stance creates subsequent conditions for political action, and "a life which is independent from society", or "parallel structures" within a "second culture". These parallel structures are the space in which the experience of resistance begins to take form, in an attempt to live in the truth, in disobedience to what is established by authority. (Havel, V., 1992)

Let us, then, delve a bit deeper into the complexity of the actions involved in disobedience (Ameglio, P., 2019). Stanley Milgram, an

American researcher who has attempted to get to the bottom of the conditions involved in social obedience which underlay in the nazi genocide of the Second World War, stated correctly that "...Disobedience is the last resort to end a tension... It re-formulates the relationship between subject and authority... (It creates a) totally unknown trait in the relationship which (is) expected after the split... (It is) a very difficult road which only a small minority of individuals is capable of traversing to its bitter end". (Milgram, S., 1980) Thus, disobedience is not a destructive act but, on the contrary, a profoundly creative, innovative deed, which recovers a degree of our liberty, as it enables us to break with a state of dependence which does not allow us to exercise our complete identity; it is also hugely original because it proposes a new social relationship which calls into question the pre-existing order. The capacity for building original rupture and public disobedience situations, which was the hallmark of many nonviolent movements was their ability to integrate two elements which can be extremely hard to blend: unjust situations were always confronted radically (going to the root of the problem), but at the same time there was always an attempt to humanize the adversary to a certain extent, offering him/her the possibility of a realistic, fair and sincere dialogue. Therefore, we observe how active nonviolence is also a way to disarm the adversary in the midst of intense violence and confrontation. What is happening is the fracture of a relationship of implicit collaboration, based on a legal framework, on a tacit agreement which, in those particular given circumstances, is reproducing social injustice. This situation develops over time in a highly complex process: the construction of a "moral territory" by society, which rebels ethically, principally by means of its moral reserve and weapons (Marin, J.C., 1996)[6], with which the struggle is located in a field which is favorable to the historic accumulation of that culture in the majority of the population.

Juan Carlos Marin adds that "...to the issue of moral weapons, which is extremely complex, we must incorporate this notion of becoming aware..." This author, when he examines the three stages emerging from Jean Piaget's research on the construction of moral discernment, and the incorporation into the self which we all do of a system of behavioral criteria, points to something which is very important for understanding the implications of Gandhian actions in greater depth: "The third stage is a sort of phase in which there is a displacement of the center... It

achieves an extreme of development when the social links which are built are autonomous social relationships... among equals.". (Piaget, J., 1985), in which the starting point is the crisis of previous authority and the constitution of an independent authority. It is no longer the autistic authoritarianism of the first stage, but rather it is centered on the individual: 'I make my own rules'; and it ends with the crisis of that, and the hypothetical historical 'opening up' of each individual towards collective construction..." This process is constructed by Piaget "...As a peculiar environment which he calls the 'becoming aware'" (Marin, J. C., 1996), bearing in mind that "...becoming aware involves the construction of an original knowledge, and that this original knowledge implies a crisis, a process which, although it is collective and social, is experienced individually". (Marin, J.C., 1986). Gandhi and Zapatismo have developed this approach in their dissemination of the principles of autonomy (*swaraj)* which, even while it is a community project, and can achieve regional and national scope, inevitably starts with the construction and action of a single individual, in his/her day-to-day life. One of the central traits of disobedience is its epistemic and moral capacity to build bodies capable of confronting the inhumanity which social order has unleashed upon him/her.

Nonviolent Civil Resistance: Knowledge, Power and Bodies

In Mexico, in recent years, the idea of nonviolent social struggle associated with peaceful civil resistance, has become broadly disseminated and frequently used, including in this concept all forms of struggle for territory, identity, culture, human rights, natural resources and bodies, principally waged "in defense of", in the face of some attempt at plunder, expropriation, repression or extermination. Resistance is attempted using all possible means, from culture, knowledge, or whatever resources the group involved in the conflict can muster in terms of organization, movement, in a broad spectrum of tactical and strategic alternatives, which can include armed struggle to extreme nonviolence.

We will examine now a series of core elements, gleaned from our own concrete experiences, both in Mexico and other countries, accumulated over several decades, concerning certain characteristics of civil

resistance actions, which enable us to classify these actions clearly within a "nonviolent strategic offensive" (Ameglio, P., 2010).

English theoretician on this issue, Michael Randle, states that "...Civil resistance is a method of collective political struggle based on the idea that *governments depend, basically, on the collaboration, or at least the obedience of the majority of the population...*and on the loyalty of the military, the police, and the civil security organizations. The procedure consists of mobilizing the civil population so that it will withdraw that consensus, to try to undermine the adversary's sources of power, and to do so with the support of third parties". (Randle, M., 1998).

In his *Constructive Program for India,* Gandhi stated from the very beginning his basic idea concerning power in the relationship between the people and authority in terms of social strife:

 "For a long time we have been accustomed to thinking that power flows from legislative assemblies. I consider this belief to be a grave mistake, founded on inertia or the effect of some form of collective suggestion. A superficial study of British history has led us to believe that power is entrusted to the people by parliamentary assemblies. The truth is that power comes from the people and, for a determined period, is wielded by the people's representatives, who have been chosen. The parliament has no power, it cannot even exist, independently from the people. During the last twenty years, I have tried to convince the people of this simple truth. Civil disobedience is the key to power. Let us try to imagine a whole population refusing to accept existing laws, and prepared to accept the consequences of this insubordination. (Ameglio, P., 2002)

And the Mahatma himself added:

"Even the most authoritarian government finds it impossible to hold onto power without the acquiescence of their populations. It is true that, on many occasions, despots can gain the consent of their citizens by the use of force. But when those citizens no longer fear the tyrant, his/her power crumbles. Democracy is not made for those who endure like sheep. In a democratic regime, each individual zealously defends his/her liberty of thought and action". (Gandhi, M., 1985)

Another key element of this description is to be found in *the conception of force, in its material, psychological and moral dimensions* which, in nonviolent struggle, emerges from moral accumulation and acquires

relevance when it is articulated collectively with other material forces which are similar in non-cooperation and civil disobedience. Thus, we can observe that, in terms of bodies, *the struggle is initiated at a level of moral confrontation,* in which the central and determining factor is to exhibit before the masses and the adversary's forces that their acts and attitudes are inhuman and unjust. Therefore, it is of capital importance to ensure, before any action is undertaken, that *it is backed by a "moral force", that it can gain the support of more people, that it represents social legitimacy and legal order, and that the use of "moral weapons" and the "moral reserve"* /Ameglio, P., 2011) *by a mobilized society is moving towards the field of struggle, and not only that of solidarity.*

(QUERIDO PIETRO: POR FAVOR, REVISA ESTE ÚLTIMO PÁRRAFO A PARTIR DE "THEREFORE…". RECLUTÉ A TODAS MIS NEURONAS, PERO NO ESTOY SEGURO DE HABER DADO JUSTO EN LA TECLA).

The link and congruence between the end and the means (Gandhi, M., 1985)[7] is one of the principal weapons for the accumulation of moral force. Frequently, what we criticize in our adversary is reproduced on our own side, with which we are handing him/her an even greater triumph, without even being aware of such a paradox: striving with his/her logic and actions, but for our own objectives. This is one of the primary forms in which the other infiltrates us.

Thus, the conflict is activated initially in terms of moral legitimacy, and the presence, then and there, of material force: *physical bodies and spaces which disobey what is inhuman* and carry out very different forms of *interposition of bodies and nonviolent objection* in the most overt way possible and accumulating the greatest measure of support possible from those around them. The moral pressure blends with the physical. The moral component, furthermore, has a double effect, as it affects morale and is linked to moral issues: the central matter of contention is almost always couched in moral terms, and it is fundamental to win this discussion, which is closely related to the means and the strategy of the struggle.

St this point, we must face another key issue for action: *how to attract more bodies and more public support to the cause,* how to translate it into terms and common needs of many other people, *how to break the encirclement or the imprisonment* in which authority tends to place us as its first tactic, as the dominant power is that which encircles, and not

that which is encircled. It is strategically important to attract allies outside our movement: among sectors of the adversary, among those who are neutral or not directly interested in the problem; apart, of course, from maintaining the lucidity and strength of our own people.

But this is only a first phase, which must be supplemented by another one, which is even more difficult: *get the population to instill the act of abuse in its own identity,* and consequently feel at least morally affected and thus with a greater readiness to mobilize. At this point, we frequently must face reflections concerning the incorporation of elements of the identity of others into my own identity, with a broader and more complex examination of my own personal and family interests, *the management of fear and the necessary efforts to prevent fear from turning into terror.*

Another fundamental point of view which is not always obvious, and much less well-known is that *there are different levels of action*, not only on our own side, but also in the camp of the adversary, and the options for our own actions require reflection and open explanation, with the object of attracting support and reinforcing awareness of: a) the risks involved considering the asymmetry of forces with the adversary; b) the social and historical legality and legitimacy of the contemplated act; c) the possible gradualness (or lack of it) in the achievement of the proposed objectives. Analysis of the conjunction of these elements or, sometimes, the forced pre-eminence of one of them, is fundamental for the constitution of any act of civil resistance.

To complete these points, it is also useful to consider different tactical levels when working with the civil population. The first coordinate must always be space and time: the analysis of short periods of time, or long ones, the places in which protests will achieve greater public exposure and where the body of the adversary has a greater interest or is more fragile, the ratio of our own moral and material forces compared with those of the adversary. This would be the "reality principle" (Ameglio, P., 2019) from which to start. It is here, in this context of reflecting on the present nature of the other, and a self-reflection on our own objectives and strengths, in which we must insert the strategies and tactics of civil resistance, starting by defining different levels of planning: *establish clearly the time, space and actors* to which the actions are addressed. In the time variable, there is an interaction between the personal, the collective and the social times, apart from those of the

direct adversary. The decision on the place in which the tactical action is to be carried out is fundamental, and general one of the most carelessly established, or left to routine; we usually wind up going to the same places: public parks, instead of the places where the individuals we want to reach and affect in their identities and their families live, work and act. Thus, it is far more difficult that they may see or hear us, and feel the pressure we are trying to exert. So the space variable is closely linked to the subjects (or objects) towards which the actions are aimed, because this choice –according to the topographic logic we mentioned earlier—determines the place selected to establish the measure of forces.

Gandhi and many other social campaigners in the Continent (¿SE REFIERE A ASIA?) based on a vast experience in the field, stated categorically that nonviolent struggle must establish *clear objectives, accessible to the majorities, very specific and realistic,* with measurable results and gradual in their accomplishments, not directed at abstract, maximalist and generic aims such as "the struggle against neoliberalism", "against globalization" or "against militarism". Usually, in its initial stages, the struggle is against something we do not want; we strive against something, not in favor. In this sense, it is important to underline one of the primary characteristics of active nonviolence: *lay bare publicly the truth and legitimacy of each demand voiced in the conflict.*

In the relationship with the adversary, a basic principle which permeates nonviolent action is that of "political judo, or jiu-jitsu" (Sharp, G., 1984). Here, the apparent strength of the adversary, and the mistakes he/she makes in using it, are applied against him/her; this requires the public construction (and its dissemination in the media) of *epistemic fractures in the people (or, if possible, in authority itself)* caused by the very words, actions or documents wielded by the adversary which unmask its illegal and abusive acts. This gives rise to another of the central traits of nonviolent struggle: *disarming the adversary.*

In this sense, a very important prospect is the capacity to *reach (pressure) the adversary* on a sensitive or fragile moral or material issue which is vital to his/her social identity. This, in its turn, can be supplemented by an attempt at dialogue with the more positive parts of the adversary, with his/her conscience, but in such a way that he/she does not feel threatened physically because, if this were to happen,

his/her reaction would gravitate immediately towards physical violence. The objective here is to *humanize both the struggle and the adversary*, surmounting the stage of hatred and prejudice. This is why it is so important to have a good descriptive and analytical picture of the individual on the other side of the table, to be familiar with him/her in all his/her complexity and identity, not simply following stereotypes, but with access to different forms of registering, measuring and comparing his/her actions; in other words, to have a clear reality principle of the confrontation, not only on one's own side, but on the side of the adversary. This illustrates the central importance of the empirical register, as closely related to facts and as objective as possible, avoiding any dependence on "logical empiricism", in which reality is substituted by discourse and the logic emerging from it, always encouraged by power and which is so damaging to social struggle and its actors, due to the divisions and partial or total defeats it causes.

Nonviolent Civil Resistance: Levels of Action

Martin Luther King himself, when referring to actions with the "nonviolent weapon", referred to "its strange power to transform and transmute those individuals who have submitted themselves to its discipline, providing them with a cause which is superior to their own selves". (King, M., 1989)

We consider that the primary nonviolent weapons are the body and reflection: a body that thinks. "We had no other alternative but to prepare ourselves for direct action in which we would present our bodies as instruments for the presentation of our case before the conscience of the local and national communities". (King, M., 1989)

Delving a bit deeper in the level of direct action in social struggle, the actions of nonviolent civil resistance (Ameglio, P., 2002) increase their intensity when it is demonstrated that one given level is not enough to achieve the objective of this struggle. These actions can encompass from the field of solidarity with those who struggle to that of social confrontation on the side of those who struggle. Solidarity and confrontation are not the same. We must not consider them necessarily as parts of a positive or negative hierarchy, but rather as levels of possible involvement for those who act, which depend on the kind of attention the adversary bestows on each individual, and the

identification of a given adversary according to his/her social identity, something essential to identify correctly where one's own body is and how to defend oneself better in consequence.

In an initial characterization of the different types of nonviolent social struggle, ranked according to the intensity of the confrontation and its relationship with the existing legal order, we posit (partially following Jean and Hildegard Goss-Mayr, but principally on the base of personal experience in many civil resistance workshops) the existence of four possible levels, each related to the others and which frequently interact simultaneously or, alternatively, in escalating form, but not necessarily in sequence, in cases in which the first level proves insufficient to reach a fair agreement between the conflicting parties. Progressively, the levels of active nonviolent struggle could be classified as follows: a) information and dialogue; the ideal situation would be that conflicts should be settled at this first level, in which efforts are made to reach agreements in meetings with the adversary; if this is not possible, the conflict is made public, in which disagreements are opened to more people (forums, statements, media, conferences, leaflets…); b) direct or popular action; the conflict becomes open to society and the general public, with organization of demonstrations in public spaces (marches, caravans, meetings, brigades, pilgrimages…) to put pressure on the adversary and attract a greater following among the general public; c) social, economic or political non-cooperation; explicit suspension of responsiveness to some of the causes of oppression or with some material element which lends strength to the adversary (boycotts, strikes, hunger strikes…), but without violating legal order; d) civil disobedience; in the face of failure of all the previous attempts to reach a satisfactory agreement, it is necessary to resort to actions which transgress and call into question openly and deliberately some law or regulation which reproduce conditions of inhumanity and injustice (non-payment of certain taxes, occupation of land, blockage of streets…), even in the face of corresponding legal sanctions. "Civil disobedience (whether individual or collective) is an imprescriptible right of any citizen; he/she cannot forgo it without forgoing, too, his/her human condition". (Gandhi, M., 1985)

More specifically, we know that civil disobedience has been a significant element in western history, especially as from the XIX century, with the struggles of workers, peasants, and for political, civil and social rights;

we could aver, with a straight face, that this type of action is one of the principal engines of progress towards a more human condition in our culture; without that capacity to confront massively a legal order which expropriates the humanity of many, we would all be, from a cultural point of view, much closer to the Stone Age. Besides, in principle, this type of social struggle, when termed "civil", is reminiscent of the struggles for citizenry by great masses of individuals who had been excluded from many rights within the dominant capitalist social order which in the XIX century –and even today under different guises—were associated with the image of the soldier, because the citizen was considered an unarmed soldier, while the soldier was an armed citizen, in the midst of frequent civil wars and adventures of imperial conquest (Marin, J. C., 1996).

One of the most common and costly errors we have observed for decades in this country is that of associating –mechanically and automatically—nonviolence with civil disobedience, ignoring that the latter is merely the last stage of the former, which cannot be improvised nor organized hurriedly, without much planning and early preparation, with the aim of building the moral and material forces necessary to ensure its legitimacy and the radical nature of its support among the masses, in the face of equally radical and legalistic reactions and provocations by the adversary.

Without much doubt, the most classic author on this classification by types must be Gene Sharp. In his vast work (three volumes) in which he describes historically 198 separate actions, he states that techniques for nonviolent action can be grouped and divided in three major categories: social protest (demos, declarations, petitions) and persuasion-distribution of information (press, forums, leaflets, symbolic actions); social, economic and political non-collaboration (strikes, boycotts, civil disobedience); nonviolent interventions (sit-ins, occupations-invasions, blockages, parallel governments), "but not as rigid divisions, but rather as general indications", according to the changes in the situation as a result of their application, because one technique may change into another in the course of the action. (Sharp, G., 1984)

Conclusions and Messages of Nonviolent Struggle in Mexico

As we mentioned earlier, the principal nonviolent weapons have their roots in an accumulation of "moral strength" which, simultaneously, derives from the growth of "material strength" and "permanent firmness" (which frequently means refusing to budge from a certain place until demands have been met) to achieve the aims pursued by the action as a whole. This is why it is so important to ensure that the true motives of any endeavor should be very visible and well-known – through the media and public actions—so that social pressure forces authorities to provide a fair solution. Historic experience indicates the major importance of acquiring allies, and the support of leaderships with greater "social power" and/or mass demonstrations are strategic, because they constitute a key nonviolent weapon which has been described as a "moral reserve" which, if it "places its bodies" on the streets and public spaces, in resolute actions which are proportional to the violence they confront, they will find that the authorities are better disposed towards satisfying their demands. In this sense, it is important to point out that there are two spirals-scales-thermometers to measure these actions: one is the degree of nonviolence and civil resistance; and on the other hand, the violence and the war –which can be expressed in many different ways—and there is also a key ratio between one and the other which must be measured before making tactical or strategic decisions for the coming confrontation.

In this sense, it is also fundamental to keep in mind that acts of nonviolent civil resistance undertaken by a group, movement, or a single individual must try to maintain a proportional intensity with the violent actions developed by the adversary because, if this is not achieved, the effect of the pressure will be insufficient. Also, it is obvious that our own actions must be measured according to the force and support to which we have access, thus avoiding risks, provocations, repression and unnecessary defeats.

However, on occasions, in trying to achieve an important objective in the face of extremely violent acts by the adversary, it is possible to reply with symbolic or discursive acts, which register with very low intensity on the nonviolent scale which, we know beforehand, will not exert any pressure on the adversary in our quest for justice. Behind this strategy, which has been hotly debated during many decades of struggle, there is not only a strategic reasoning but also a moral one, apart from the decision to avoid a "simulation of struggle".

The capacity to attract and enlarge part of the "moral reserve" of a country is of primary importance to break the "asymmetry of power" which frequently exists between conflicting forces. However, in cases such as the Mexican situation, in which civil society faces a high level of war and impunity, with the complicity between organized crime, all levels of authority and certain business sectors, support at a symbolic and verbal level by the moral reserve addressed to the families of victims, is not sufficient. It is indispensable that this moral reserve should "put its bodies on the line" in non-cooperation and civil resistance actions, which are proportional to actions of such intense violence.

It is precisely due to this lack of involvement in actions which require higher intensity and bodily presence in public spaces that the "moral frontier" (Ameglio, P., 2016) of inhumanity has advanced so much in Mexico in terms of the normalization of war and impunity. This why the families of victims, along with peoples and communities defending their territories, cultures and resources have had to struggle many times alone, facing great risks of repression and frequently extermination, in their quest for truth, justice and reparation. These families have been through many different stages in the last ten years, from gaining visibility, both in magnitude and dignity, all over the country, to organize themselves collectively and individually as defenders of human rights, to initiate countless legal actions and social mobilizations to pressure authorities and other individuals and institutions involved in the disappearance of their loved ones... At present, they have concentrating on searching and digging personally to uncover clandestine graves.

An important example of raising the level of nonviolent actions in the face of such extreme degrees of impunity, foot-dragging and complicity of authorities with organized crime are the Search Brigades for Missing Persons, which have been undertaken in practically all Mexican states, and which commence every week in different districts, headed by family members of missing (frequently murdered) persons, sometimes with the reluctant support of some authorities, sometimes without. These families and their supporters have decided to "take into their own hands, without asking for permission" (as Zapatista Commander David proclaimed in Oventic, in 2003), the search for their loved ones in the field, alive or in clandestine graves, in an autonomous nonviolent direct

action of non-cooperation (To cooperate would have been to go on waiting until the authorities decided to undertake the search), doing what the state should have, but has not done, more because of complicity than lack of resources. Thus, thousands of clandestine burials and human remains have been unearthed all over the country.

In this sense, the struggle has grown considerably; however, the main challenge now is to exert an even greater pressure to accelerate and optimize the identification of the remains of bodies and bones found in the clandestine graves. Without this. The quest is frustrated at its half-way point, and the personal, family and social drama grows more acute. It is in this present stage in which support must be garnered from the broadest possible spectrum of social sectors, starting –from example— with church hierarchies, university faculties, intellectuals and artists with a certain "social power", who must "put their bodies on the line", as well as their material, humane and spiritual resources, and express our determination, and our "moral and material outrage" –powerful nonviolent weapons if we can channel them strategically—(Arendt, H., 2005; Hessel, S, S., 2010) at the service of the families and their organizations to exert real pressure and "permanent firmness" on the authorities. Whenever possible, it is desirable that a proportionality of intensity should be maintained between our collective actions and those of the adversary, in relation with both the partial and the final objectives of the confrontation –from both the tactical and strategic points of view—which involves a very subtle art, and a very complex epistemic and moral challenge for the construction of justice and peace: that the spiral of nonviolent civil resistance should prevail and stop the spiral of violence and war.

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(QUERIDO PIETRO: NO ENCONTRÉ UNA OBRA DE FOUCAULT CON ESTE TÍTULO. MI TRADUCCIÓN ES, POR LO TANTO "INTUITIVA").

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Notas a pie de página

[1] I am the author of the three texts. (See References): *Gandhi y la desobediencia civil. Mexico hoy... Ecuación de la resistencia civil mexicana: DC +PC =EZLN; Paz desobediente: No cooperación hacia las órdenes inhumanas.* A summary which could supplement these texts can be found in *La noviolencia y la Resistencia...*

[2] This intellectual and moral slogan, coined a long time ago by Dr. Juan Carlos Marin, was included in the Final Declaration of the XXII Congress of the Latin American Sociology Association in Concepción, Chile, October 1999.

[3] Reflections contained in this subchapter are based largely on chapter 5 of Ameglio, P. (2002)

[4] According to the considerations of Dr. Juan Carlos Marin concerning the "encounter theory":

"The notion of strategy is only pertinent when we are talking about the entirety of a social force; the conception of tactic should only be used when we are referring to a partial sector of that social force... Without an *encounter* –a relationship between forces—the notions of tactics and strategy don't make sense, in terms of their links with the war plan... Strategy refers to the spatial and temporal distribution of the encounters... While tactics apply to the art of these encounters... The construction of force is possible only by means of a strategy which depends on certain specific confrontations which must take place... A strategy can only exist, and deserve the name of such, as long as it is of a political-military nature..." (Marin, J.C., 1981: pp. 34-35, 43, 53, 59).

5 Foucault expatiates on this relationship:

"The fact that the felony and the punishment are communicated, and that they come together in the form of the atrocity, was not the consequence of some sort of Hammurabi's Code, obscurely admitted. It was the effect of the punitive rites of determined mechanisms of power: a power that not only refuses to disguise the fact that it is exerted directly on bodies, but that also glorifies and is reinforced by its physical manifestations; a power that asserts itself as an armed entity, and whose functions in terms of order are not entirely separated from the functions of war; a power that uses its laws and the duties of its citizens as personal links, the rupture of which is an offense which demands revenge; a power for which disobedience is an hostile act, the beginning of a rebellion which is not, at its inception very different from a civil war". (Foucault, m., 1991: p. 62)

6. J. C. Marin points out that: "All mass movements, absolutely all of them, are movements whose essential material force emanates from its moral weapons, never from conventional and/or non-conventional weapons". (P. 26) This conception of moral weapon obliges us to study –within the framework of politics or the theory of power—*the moments, the places and the timing of the confrontations.* The concept of moral weapon is linked to the possibility that one of the parties in conflict will triumph in the clash of bodies" (p.49). Broadening this approach, the author suggests that "The material forces (weapons) of the moral weapons (forces) are the bodies. This conception is very important because it comprises the "beginning" of the bridge between politics and war. But it is not true that bodies in any condition are weapons which confer material strength; certain social conditions are necessary for the bodies to bestow material strength on the social forces" (Marin, J.C.1981: p.97). For this reason, in the face of corporal discipline caused by the expropriation of the energies of these bodies propitiated by the domination system, the nonviolent struggle which makes use of its "moral weapons" strives for autonomy, cooperation and the liberation of those bodies –which represent a mediation in social relationships— which resist the power of the authorities.

[7] Gandhi (1985) said that "the means are like the seed, and the end is like the tree. There is an ineffaceable link (between them)". (P.:114)