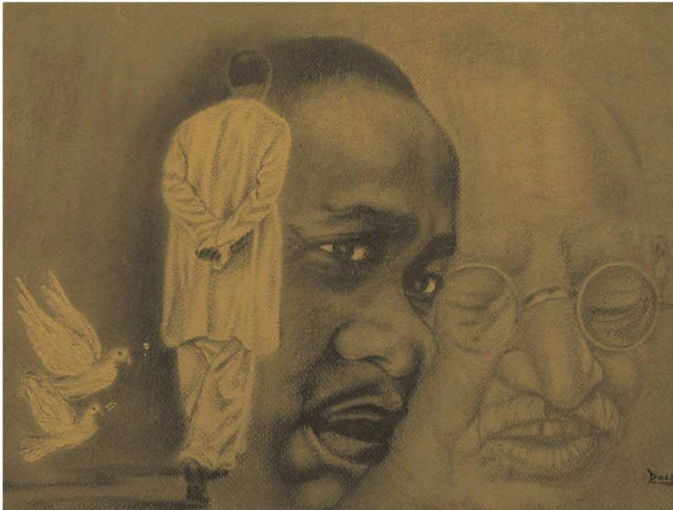


State University of New York Press
Series on Constructive Postmodern Thought, 2004

The Virtue of
NONVIOLENCE

FROM GAUTAMA
TO GANDHI



NICHOLAS F. GIER

Cover Art by Brij Kul Deepak (figure on far left is Abduhl Ghaffar Khan, sometimes known as the "Frontier Gandhi")

Click [here](#) for earlier versions of chapters published elsewhere (with permission from the journal editors).

Click [here](#) for the paper "Was Gandhi a Tantric?"

Summary of Book

Since the publication of Alasdair MacIntyre's book *After Virtue*, virtue ethics has become a major focus in contemporary moral philosophy. This book is a study in comparative virtue ethics, following the lead of Lee H. Yearly's groundbreaking *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (SUNY, 1990). Gier argues that virtue ethics is the best option for constructive postmodern philosophy and that Gandhi's own thought is best viewed in light of this tradition.

The book begins with an analysis of the concept of nonviolence in India as it originated in Jainism, spread to Buddhism, and was gradually taken up by Hinduism. Gandhi was the greatest 20th Century proponent of this Indian tradition, and Gier's principal thesis is that Gandhi shares a contextual pragmatism with Buddhism, especially in its more socially engaged schools.

Gandhi not only spoke of nonviolence as a virtue, but he also wrote about the unity of goodness and beauty in persons of high moral character. This is an inner moral beauty that comes from the courage of being true to one's self and being true to others. Evidence for an aesthetics of virtue is not strong in the Buddhist texts, so Gier turns to Confucian philosophy to draw comparative points with Gandhi. The book concludes with an assessment of the saints of nonviolence—Buddha, Christ, King, and Gandhi—and offers a charismatic theory of the nature of saints.

Pre-Publication Reviews:

"Professor Gier's *The Virtue of Nonviolence* is a tour de force of scholarship. He develops his main themes through argumentation that refers to the writings of Mahatma Gandhi, scholarly secondary sources on Gandhi (e.g., Raghaven Iyer, Ronald Terchek, Bhikhu Parekh, Ramashray Roy), Vedantic texts and secondary sources on these texts (e.g., Karl Potter), Buddhist texts, secondary sources on Buddhism (e.g., David Kalupahana, Damien Keown), the literature of post-modernism, contemporary ethical theory (e.g., Martha Nussbaum, Annette Baier, Susan Wolf, Robert Adams), and literary commentators on Gandhi (e.g., George Orwell). I do not know of another book with this weave of scholarship and argumentation. In addition, and what is perhaps more amazing, Professor Gier has written a book that is both clear and engaging."--Bart Gruzalski, author of *On Gandhi* and *On the Buddha*, both published by Wadsworth Publishers.

"Gier advances a strong case for a moral and political nonperfectionism by giving a close, careful, and informed reading of Aristotle, Confucius, Buddha, and Gandhi. Stimulating and well-argued, this book offers convincing arguments that stretch conventional ideas and labels." Ronald J. Terchek, *Gandhi: Struggling for Autonomy* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

"Gier's contributions to the SUNY Series on Constructive Postmodern Thought are significant for at least four reasons: (1) He offers a perspective fully informed by the Asian tradition, which is an important complement to the distinctively American focus of most process philosophy; (2) he challenges other constructive postmodern ethicists to reassess virtue theory as a worthy alternative to more standard approaches; (3) with his insightful chapters on ethics and aesthetics in the Gandhi book, he brings out some of the profound implications of Whitehead's aesthetic cosmology; and (4) he is able to explain [first chapter of the Gandhi book] the nuances of premodernism, modernism, and postmodernism in ways that a wider audience can understand."--David Ray Griffin, School of Theology at Claremont