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Gandhi and the Romans: On the Interrelationships of Cosmos, Memory, Founding Violence, and Freedom in the Pax Gandhiana/Romana

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Abstract: Rather than separating moral and political virtue through reason of state, the *Pax Romana* presents a sophisticated moral-political vision of the interrelationships between cosmology, memory, founding, violence, and freedom. Nevertheless, its complex integrative vision is also perilous to humanity, demanding a morality of forbearing the adverse consequences of endless cycles of political violence. *Pax Gandhiana* presents an alternative integrative vision engaging many of the same concerns as the Romans, such as cosmos, ubiquitous violence, and freedom. By contrast, however, its political vision demands forbearing the adverse consequences of repudiating as opposed to embracing the ubiquity of violence in the cosmos. Hence, *Pax Romana* and *Pax Gandhiana* rest on closely related but ultimately very different political visions. Consistent with Gandhi, my objective in this article is to show how the Romans provide us with an object lesson in why we should repudiate such violence, as guaranteeing our downfall into misery, chaos, and even madness.

Keywords: Cosmos, Founding Violence, Freedom, Gandhi, Memory, Social Instinct, Stoic Cosmology, Violence and Politics.

1. Introduction

Classical Roman political thought offers us an intriguing way to examine the "hypothesis that all branches of human life are closely related to ethics and they are impoverished conceptually and practically, and are perilous to humanity, if they are separated from ethics" (Nandhikkara). In *Pax Gandhiana*, Anthony Parel contrasts Gandhi with Machiavelli by

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emphasizing the latter's fascination with "the history of Rome and the Pax Romana it inaugurated." According to him, the Romans separated morality and politics, seeing political virtue as "anything that served reason of state" (8). One might suppose this separation of politics from ethics supports the above hypothesis of conceptual and practical impoverishment. After all, originating in a violent founding based on genocide and rape (Hammer), Rome was subsequently caught in ever increasing cycles of violence and immorality before its eventual fall. To this extent, Parel contends that the "Roman model is totally unacceptable" to Gandhi. Unlike the Romans, Gandhi "does not separate moral virtue from political virtue" (8). Consequently, Parel defines an alternative order of things, a *Pax Gandhiana*. This appropriately combines or unifies moral and political virtues, avoiding the violence and immorality he attributes to classical Rome.

Parel's contribution to Gandhi studies lies in his recognizing that Gandhi, like the Romans, has universal, cosmopolitan political goals. Nevertheless, his equation of Roman political thought with reason of state is too simplistic as well as thoroughly unhistorical. Contrary to Parel, we should consider how the Romans produced a synthesis of moral and political virtues, albeit one diametrically opposed to Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence. Indeed, recent classical studies convincingly demonstrate that the Romans did not separate morality from politics, but rather saw the perpetuation of Rome's political project as depending upon successive generations of Romans reclaiming the moral virtues of their founders (Hammer). These are virtues of fortitude in the face of adversity, pride and ambition in emulating or surpassing the great deeds of their forebears. To be sure, pride and ambition are more vice than virtue from a Gandhian perspective. Nevertheless, they are integral to Roman political life. Hence, the Romans do not separate morality from politics, but rather combine and unify them, even though their synthesis embraces a scale of violence rejected by Gandhi. A more historical appreciation for the *Pax Romana* changes the hypothesis that separating morality from

politics results in conceptual and practical impoverishment. Indeed, it demonstrates no political order is sustainable without a moral backbone. We should then ask what sort of a backbone we want to sustain the political order and the consequences of the moral virtues we cultivate for either impoverishing or enriching human ends and wellbeing.

Gandhi is more Roman in his view of the complex interrelationships of morality and politics than Parel realizes. Besides a passing acquaintanceship with Stoicism (Sorabji), however, Gandhi himself does not appear to have had any extensive knowledge of Roman political thought. This may account for the absence of any serious examination among contemporary Gandhi scholars of his relationship to Roman political thought generally. I take a limited number of steps towards redressing this scholarly deficit. My intention is not to provide a comprehensive guide to Gandhi and the Romans. Instead, it is to explore this relationship to shed some light on the question of how the morality and politics may be combined differently producing very different consequences for humanity.

I first discuss Parel's 'conceptual framework' for *Pax Gandhiana* in the *purusharthas* and Vedic metaphysics, contrasting its orientation to the integration of morality and politics with that of the *Pax Romana*. I then consider four key Roman writers on the overlapping themes of cosmology or metaphysics, historical memory, political founding, ubiquitous violence, and freedom from domination, appealing to both primary and secondary sources. I consider (i) Cicero on the reduction of cosmology to natural reason and social instinct, (ii) Virgil and Livy on the integral relationship of violence to politics, and (iii) Sallust and Livy on the relationship of liberty as nondomination to the indeterminacy of historical interpretation. Although Gandhi himself did not explicitly engage any of these Roman writers, I show that they all help reveal by way of contrast key features of Gandhi's political project and its considerable practical and conceptual advantages over the Roman project.

2. *Pax Gandhiana* and *Pax Romana*

According to Parel, *Pax Gandhiana* is a social and political order of "freedom and peace." This order entails the "realization of political truths" (11). Such truths are simultaneously ethical and metaphysical truths. Gandhi unifies ethics and politics through a metaphysical or cosmological vision of human ends and the interrelatedness of all life:

> … the whole gamut of man's activities today constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide social, economic, political and purely religious work into watertight compartments. I do not know any religion apart from human activity. It provides a moral basis to all other activities which they would otherwise lack, reducing life to a maze of sound and fury signifying nothing (*All Men*, 85).

Integrating such activities into an integrated whole, Gandhi creates a new order of freedom and peace, radically different from the Romans. In this respect, Parel appeals to Gandhi's "conceptual framework" (11), harkening back to the origins of Vedic civilization. This ancient and Asian framework consists of Gandhi's reinterpretation of "the old theory of the ends of human life – the *purusharthas*" (15). In this old theory, the "four great-ends" of the *purusharthas*, *artha* (wealth), *dharma* (duty), *kama* (pleasure), and *moksha* (spiritual liberation or transcendence), work "in unison" (18) with each other to realize a fully integrated human life. Nevertheless, according to Parel, the old theory's integrative vision was lost over time (3), as *moksha* became an increasingly *other worldly pursuit, separated from* worldly duties and, especially, political participation. For Gandhi, such participation or swaraj became the key to reintegrating the life goals of the purusharthas. In his words, "I could be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the *whole of mankind* and that I could not do *unless I took part in politics*" (*All Men*, 85; my italics). Gandhi thus sought a response to the disintegrative effects of other worldliness by reinterpreting the Vedic ideal of synthetic unity for modern times *through politics*. Indeed, Gandhi's emphasis on the integrative, or

unifying, role of politics supports Parel's account of him as, above all, concerned with combining *moksha* and *swaraj*.

Moreover, Gandhi combines these internal Indian influences with external foreign influences, which are most clearly seen in Gandhi's 1941 *Constructive Program* for post-independent India. As derived not from the Vedas as much as modern Western political thought, the *Program* includes the "consent of the people," a national constitution, and party politics seeking "political power through free and fair elections" (Parel 136; also see the 1931 Karachi Resolution of the Indian National Congress on "Fundamental Rights and Economic Changes," which Gandhi drafted jointly with Nehru). In these documents, Gandhi acknowledges certain positive features of India's exposure to Western political ideas, "such as individual liberty, equality, the right to self-determination, and the religious neutrality of the state" (Parel 53). Indeed, he rejected the hierarchy of traditional Indian political thought based on the four Varnas (for example, Boesche), not only demanding the political emancipation of Dalits, or untouchables, but also a living wage for industrial workers, protection for women workers, including their right to adequate maternity leave, the right to form labor unions, along with the imposition of progressive income tax (Gandhi, *Collected* 75, 146-66). In these respects, then, Gandhi saw Western rights as necessary to counteract the hierarchism of classical Indian civilization, realizing its goals of integrating humanity and its spiritual-political goals, despite his passionately decrying the materialism and consumerism of Western civilization in *Hind Swaraj*.

Crucially, though, *Pax Gandhiana* presents a novel politics of nonviolence or *satyagraha*. This is Gandhi's primary innovation, departing radically from the Roman model of an order of freedom and peace founded on the morality of justified violence. Indeed, by contrast, *Pax Romana* appeals not to the possibility of a nonviolent future, but rather a bygone 'golden age' (Hammer ch. 5) when morality and politics were synthesized – integrated or unified – through the *great but violent* deeds of Rome's ancestral founders.

Turning now to Cicero, I claim this appeal to Rome's violent founders is a function of Cicero reducing the cosmological or metaphysical content of Stoicism to natural reason and social instinct.

3. Cicero on Reducing Stoic Cosmology to the Natural Reason and Social Instinct

The importance of Cicero for my present study concerns his critical but not unsympathetic appropriation of Stoicism. Roman thought includes Stoicism as a philosophy not only of emotional detachment from the fruits of one's action in this world, but also of universal love and a cosmopolitan order unifying humanity. Gandhi is not directly related to Roman Stoicism. However, as Sorabaji has convincingly argued, Gandhi's political thought is a close relative of Stoicism. Originating with Diogenes (*Lives*) rather than Cicero, the stoic ideal of detachment from the fruits of one's actions is a relative of the classical Indian teaching of the *Bhagavad-Gita* that what matters is right action, not its fruit. This teaching of the *Gita* defines the orientation of Gandhi's politically engaged satyagrahi towards rejecting the fruits of violence and suffering the consequences of nonviolence. As for its universalism and cosmopolitanism, Stoicism appeals to the cosmology of a moral and rational order of the universe, an expanding circle of duties and obligations to others, ranging from filial relations to humanity, conceived as a cosmopolitan whole. Indeed, we might compare this Stoic cosmology to Gandhi's oceanic metaphor of expanding concentric circles of obligations from local to global, emphasized by Gray and Hughes (378).

Nevertheless, Cicero is a sceptic about the integrative potential of Stoic cosmology. His scepticism derives from his decidedly *social and historical interpretation* of Stoic natural reason. According to Hammer, Cicero reduces the Stoic moral and rational order of the universe to natural capacities for reasoning about the relationship between action and consequence. However, we can only deliberate about action-consequence relations from within those socio-historical contexts in which we happen to find ourselves by surveying "the course

of [one's] life whole life and [making] the necessary preparations for its conduct" (*On Duties,* 1.4.11). Indeed, Ciceroan natural reasoning is conditioned by a *social instinct* of affection for others: "an interchange of acts of kindness … [that} … cement human society more closely together, man to man" (*On Duties,* 1.7.23). This begins with those closest to us and, then, to diminishing degrees of affectional ties, extending ultimately to all humanity as 'distant others' (Wenar). The absence of any deep socio-historical context – based on shared origins and ancestry – at the outermost circle of the *Pax Romana* naturally limits its possible scope of jurisdiction. Indeed, Cicero recognizes exceeding this limit by extending Roman citizenship to conquered peoples, as the Empire expands, risks undermining the affectional ties of civic partnership in ancestry memory and cultural tradition (*On the Appointment of Pompeius,* 11.311-32). Such a natural limit to the political jurisdiction of *Pax Romana* is the consequence of Cicero's emphasis on the contextuality and historicity of natural reasoning. For, the "more abstractly we understand our relations to each other, the less meaningful those relations become" (Hammer 92; also see Sandel and Euben; for a critical view of Cicero on the natural limits of cosmopolitan jurisdiction, see Nussbaum).

Moreover, social context and history also explain Cicero's emphasis on ancestral exemplas whose models of action natural reasoning is "striving to make clear" (*On the Republic*, 2.39.66). If natural reasoning requires a social context shaped by history, then the appeal to ancestral exempla becomes not only compelling but unavoidable. It is compelling psychologically if we fear cultural decline brought about, at least in part, by imperial jurisdictional expansion and the weakening of socio-affectional ties, based on a shared past and common origin. However, it is also inevitable given Cicero's reduction of the moral and rational order of the universe to natural reasoning about actions-consequence relations within a socio-historical context. This thoroughly contextualist reduction of Stoic cosmology to such natural capacities leaves us without a transcendent perspective from which we might grasp our unity

as world citizens, at the outermost circle of humanity. Indeed, it demands we emulate the action-consequence calculations of the historical exemplas whose great deeds are steeped in violence. Such reasoning entails abandoning the early Stoic emphasis on detachment from the fruits of one's action, as the point of close relation between Gandhi and stoics like Diogenes. It entails abandoning such detachment to the extent the historical exemplas reason about the fruits of action, such as honour and glory, won through great but violent deeds.

For her part, Mantena stresses that Gandhi also "seeks to tie normativity … to empirical and historical contexts, to real constraints and real possibilities" (Mantena 456). Nevertheless, Gandhi is nothing like as reductive as Cicero concerning the cosmological or metaphysical backdrop to the expanding circle of social ties and obligations in his oceanic metaphor. By contrast with Cicero, Gandhi defines us not in terms of our social instinct, but rather our fundamental motivations as 'truth seekers' (Lal). Human beings are, above all, experimenters with truth. Our experiments with truth may well originate in those socio-historical contexts in which we originally find ourselves. However, we may also *transcend* these contexts – as origin of our reasoning about the relationship of action and consequence – through the method of 'passing over' diverse and apparently contradictory viewpoints on truth (Ambler 109). Transcending socio-historical context via this method is a function of Gandhi's conception of Absolute Truth, derived from classical Indian thought, along with some modern influences from Tolstoyan Christianity (Gray and Hughes).

On the one hand, Gandhi took from Tolstoy the idea that the "only way to know the truth … is through experimentation and experience" (Gray and Hughes 385), on the other hand, he fused Tolstoy with a range of concepts from classical Indian thought, especially the spiritual unity of Absolute Truth, God and self. As individual selves we perceive different aspects of the same ultimate reality: "What appear to be different truths are like the countless and apparently different leaves of the same tree" (Gandhi. *Moral and Political* 2, 163). Given the inherent limits of

our individual viewpoints, as "partial or relative" (Lal 3), we can never fully grasp the absolute reality or truth of our universal interconnectedness, across differences of experience, culture, and history. This leaves us vulnerable to *mistaking* our partial and relative grasp of truth for Absolute Truth. Moreover, conflating our partial viewpoints with such a Truth, implicates us *in violence* to the extent we "*coercively impose* [our] perceptions on others" (Lal 3). Indeed, violence creates *untruth* by blocking the only pathway any of us have to a greater apprehension of the Absolute Truth of unity and interconnectedness. Nevertheless, Gandhi contends that we may progress towards "greater insights" into Truth if we continually pass over "one point of view to another… [before] com[ing] back to [our] own point of view (Lal 15). Recognizing some truth "deposit[ed] in every heart" (Gandhi. *All Men* 72), Gandhi saw himself as a "votary of ahimsa" insofar as he was a "votary of truth" (*Autobiography* 5).

From the perspective of my present study, the import of Gandhi's conception of Absolute Truth is that - as *truth seekers* rather than inheritors of any singular culture and tradition - we can go beyond our immediate affectional ties and partial viewpoints, based on the particularities of experience, culture, and tradition. We can do so experientially to the extent we can cross and join our perspectives with those of many others shaped by different origins and traditions, gaining insights from different partial and relative truths into the Absolute Truth. In doing so, we may well pass over the perspectives of our ancestral exemplas, as integrating the moral, political, and devotional in a way that created the distinctive polity of Rome. Nevertheless, Gandhi's experiential method of passing over does not privilege them, and their great deeds, as *our only viable resources* for structuring our present political affections, as was the case with Cicero. As discussed above, Cicero's distinctively Roman appeal to ancestral exemplas was a consequence of his reducing Stoic moral and rational law to a *natural social instinct*, leaving him without an orientation to the transcendent. By contrast, Gandhi emphasizes just such an orientation to Absolute Truth through passing over both past and present viewpoints,

forging various new pathways to the Atman. Always beginning in the particularities of culture and history, such experiential pathways progressively move outwards towards greater unity and interconnectedness.

Nevertheless, Gandhi also recognizes limits to the scope of cosmopolitan political jurisdiction. Unlike *Pax Romana* as an imperial order or empire, *Pax Gandhiana* is an international system of independent nation states, each defining themselves in terms of their national constitutions and respect for human rights. In this respect, Gandhi's concerns with the limits of political jurisdiction are different from Cicero. Indeed, Cicero's concern is that the category of citizenship is devalued by extending it to an unlimited global jurisdiction, stripping it of the resonances of culture and tradition necessary for a lasting social bond. However, this is not Gandhi's concern to the extent his experiential method recognizes capacities for progressive identification with distant others; capacities Cicero does not recognize given his different emphasis on instinctual affection (*On Duties*) and the natural limits of cosmopolitan jurisdiction (*On the Appointment of Pompeius*). Instead, Gandhi sees the limits of political jurisdiction as having more to do with the greater potential for violence consequent on the extension of power from local to federal authority. Even within the national setting, Gandhi favoured a dispersal of authority preserving the autonomy of the smallest local units, *panchayats* (Allen, "Working toward," 1-5). In part, we might see this as a response to modern Western Enlightenment influences. For example, we might interpret Gandhi as responding to Kant's advocacy in his Perpetual Peace of federalism to offset the prospect for a world government to become a soulless despotism. Indeed, we might also interpret his reservations about unlimited political jurisdiction in the light of his participation in the movement for Indian national liberation (Howard).

However, I think we do better to interpret Gandhi's advocacy for the dispersal of political authority more as a concern with the practice of nonviolence. Larger, centralized jurisdictions gravitate towards violence, coercion, and indeed despotism, as a

condition for maintaining their cohesiveness and stability. Above all, this tendency has a moral-psychological foundation in pride. I argue next that Gandhi shared with Romans, such as Virgil and Livy, a remarkably similar moral-psychological vision of violence and its political implications. Despite – or perhaps because of – this similarity in how they apprehend the moral psychology of violence, Gandhi and the Romans reach very different conclusions about the prospect for creating a universal moral and political order of peace, and its salient characteristics.

4. **Virgil and Livy on the Integral Relationship of Violence and Politics**

While retaining Cicero's focus on memory as a key category of political life, Virgil and Livy emphasize violence in a way Cicero does not. To be sure, Cicero did not repudiate violence as incompatible with the stability and endurance of the civitas. In this respect, Cicero was no Gandhi, condemning, say, the Bonhoeffer plan to assassinate Hitler in favour of the exemplary power of nonviolence (Allen, "Reconciling Gandhi's Perpetrator," 9-32). Far from it, Cicero advocated assassination for at least some of his political opponents (Hammer ch. 5). Nevertheless, Cicero focused on Rome's relationship not to the political morality of violence as much as its *beauty*. As he saw it, Rome is like a beautiful but faded painting in desperate need of restoration. Only those steeped in Rome's history and traditions can discern its unique beauty; as such, they are motivated to restore or – figuratively speaking – 're-found' it. The endurance of 'Eternal Rome' is a matter of continual re-founding by successive generations educated in stories of the great deeds of its founders, as well as its subsequent history of unparalleled martial and engineering accomplishments. Cicero's aesthetic orientation to remembering the Roman past, however, is less pronounced in Virgil and Livy, both of whom see Roman politics not in terms of its beauty but endemic violence or, as Virgil put it, "the howl of insatiable Death" (*Georgics,* 2.490-92)

That said, however, Virgil does not see Rome, its founding and eventual ascent to empire, as uniquely related to violence.

Instead, violence is integral to all life. In his musings on pastoralism, labor, and *Cultus* or cultivation, Virgil insists life is always regenerated through violence (*Georgics,* 4.555-56). He grounds this – perhaps somewhat banal – observation in his homage to farming. Agriculture involves violently ripping open fields to sow seeds, creating a crop that feeds an empire. Nature is already 'red in tooth and claw,' but human *Cultus*, or cultivation, violently imposes order on nature, exponentially increasing the regeneration of life. The violence of *Cultus* is necessary for all great human achievement. Recognizing this necessity or inevitability of violence in *Cultus* changes the political significance of memory from the discernment of faded beauty, as in Cicero (*Tusculan Disputation*, 2.37.90). By contrast with Cicero, Virgil sees shared memory of how their ancestors and subsequent generations violently left their mark – on both the natural and political landscapes – as defining the Romans, that is, defining them as a people uniquely destined for greatness through the mad rush to take up arms (*Aeneid* 2.316, 355, 594-95, 711). On one interpretation of Virgil, such violence is *heroic and agential*, valorising Rome's imperial expansion under Augustus (Hammer 204). Indeed, remembering the inspiring examples of their ancestors, latter-day Romans heroically impose order and structure onto a natural world of barbarian peoples, which would otherwise remain randomly, chaotically violent.

Nevertheless, an alternative interpretation of Virgil – and one to which I am more sympathetic – is that he saw violence in more nuanced terms. As motivated by *pride* in equalling or surpassing the accomplishments of their ancestral exemplas, Romans cease to be heroes and agents. Instead, they become subjects of the crushing weight of memory concerning the violent deeds of their ancestors, as well as their own violence in perpetuating the historico-political project of Eternal Rome. This agony of violence becomes a pervasive, inescapable feature of Roman political life. Building upon Virgil's insights, Livy posits an integral relation between violence and politics; a cause for lament as much as celebration. Violence is integral not only to the founding of Rome – "Lucretia must die" (Matthes 31) but

also its reliance on the anger and frenzy of the mob to level dictatorship (Virgil, *Hist*. 7.40.1-2). The integration of violence and politics calls for an integration of moral and political virtue. Moral fortitude in bearing whatever adversity befalls us is the necessary companion of pride in emulating the great achievements of our ancestors. Such is the inevitable psycho-moral consequence of Rome's continual refounding and imperial expansion. Indeed, the Roman political project depends fundamentally on this integration of fortitude with pride and political ambition.

In what ways, though, is Gandhi's project like Virgil in how he apprehends the moral psychology of violence? Like Virgil, Gandhi begins with the – equally banal – observation that all "life in the flesh exists by some *himsa* ... [such that the] world is bound in a chain of destruction" (Gandhi, "When Killing," 279). Inherent to "basic bodily functions" (Mantena 459), violence regenerates life. As noted above, part of the problem of violence, for Gandhi, is that its justification assumes a false posture of infallibility. We are always limited to our fallible, partial, and relative viewpoints on Absolute Truth. Not inconsistent with Virgil and Livy, however, this posture entails a moral-psychological "problem of pride." After all, as Mantena puts it, "the extreme irreversibility of violence demands *hubris* in its undertaking and in its continued justification, a precarious subjective orientation that makes acknowledging errors of judgment and policy reversals difficult and rare" (Mantena 460). Consequently, the Roman moral virtue of "fortitude that accompanies violence is [nothing but] a brittle posturing, a papering over of ego-driven investments" (Mantena 460). In this respect, Gandhi "focuses on our false ego-constructions and ego-attachments, our endless ego-generated needs and greed" (Allen, *Gandhi after 9/11*, 196).

Indeed, on the second of the two interpretations of Virgil above, he might well agree with Gandhi that violence is an ego-driven investment, and that the brittle posture of fortitude leads only to "illusory and disastrous consequences for our self, and other human beings" (Allen, *Gandhi after 9/11*, 196). At any rate,

Virgil and Gandhi might agree these consequences are disastrous for us personally as inescapable sources of anxiety and strife. Nevertheless, in Virgil's Roman political vision, they remain adversities we must bear insofar as violence and politics are integrally related, or linked Gandhi's perspective is different, but not in the sense that he denies an integral relation of violence to politics. After all, not only is violence integral to all bodily life, but also the body politics of all those progressive constitutional states making up the *Pax Gandhiana*. For example, in the 1931 constitutional conference held in London, Gandhi asserted that self-defence is "the essence" of being a responsible state (Gandhi, *Collected,* 48, 304). In other words, necessary *self-defensive state violence* might well be a means for *regenerating* this international, or global order (Parel ch. 6). The difference, though, between Virgil-Livy and Gandhi consists in the latter's assiduously distinguishing between necessary and unnecessary uses of violence.

In effect, this means for Gandhi that pride is the impetus for violence. As Virgil and Livy acknowledge, pride in emulating and surpassing the great deeds of Rome's founders is necessary for regenerating the *Pax Romana*, as a military-imperial project of conquest and expansion. Indeed, pride is central to the moral psychology of empire. By contrast, Gandhi's project is to create and regenerate an international order of states in which the "better mind of the world" desires "universal interdependence" rather than absolute independence (*Collected,* 25, 481). Aside from its institutional features as laid out in the constructive program of human rights and national independence, *Pax Gandhiana* depends on creating different exempla *for founding*. As present rather than past exempla, the humility and self-suffering of the *satyagrahi* is necessity to establish a significantly different moral and political order, inclusive and expansive, although in a way that aims to constrain and minimize our potential for ego-driven political violence. That is, the *satyagrahi*'s example is necessary for founding – and continually refounding – the new international order of *Pax Gandhiana*.

Overall, then, Gandhi and Romans like Virgil see the *same political implication* for violence – unnecessary violence in the former's estimation – justified through pride and ambition. The implication is that pride and ambition result in cycles of violence, destruction, strife and anxiety. Seeing no escape, the Romans must look at the moral virtue of fortitude as the only viable response to violence for the citizens of *Pax Romana* (Hammer 38, 44, 81). For Gandhi, however, escape from the political world as "bound in chain of destruction" (Gandhi, "When Killing," 279) means starting anew with the founding of a nonviolent order. The founders of this order – that is, the self-suffering *satyagrahi* of the Indian national independence movement – exemplify escape from the violence characteristic of *Pax Romana* through self-suffering and soul-force. Consistent with the notion of transformational realism I discussed in the first section, the *satyagrahi*'s example of self-suffering, disarming imperial pride and ambition, need not be hopelessly utopian. Instead, it may involve complex strategic calculations of history and context, alluding to India's metaphysical heritage, concerning the *purusharthas* and the Atman, as well as engaging modern Western political ideas of individual and collective national self-determination.

In this respect, Gandhi's major political innovation perhaps lies in his aligning freedom, or *swaraj*, with the virtues of humility and self-suffering. Swaraj begins as an idea of discipline and "learn[ing] to rule over ourselves" (Gandhi, *Collected* IV, 155), as preparation for political activism "securing rights by personal suffering" (172). In other words, the *satyagrahi*'s self-suffering exemplifies the path forward to freedom through minimizing the total "amount of *himsa*" (Gandhi, "What is," 230) in the social and political order. This is a path integrating various classical goals of life or *purusharthas*, including *moksha* or spiritual freedom, as I have stressed from the beginning of my discussion. Gandhi scholars typically contrast *swaraj*, as the political route to the unity of the *purusharthas* (Parel ch. 2), with the Western liberal conceptions of private and public autonomy to the extent both substantially

detached from historico-cultural learning and virtue (Grier). However, I next pursue a somewhat different line of inquiry by contrasting *swaraj* with Roman liberty, as nondomination.

5. Sallust and Livy on the Indeterminacy of Historical Interpretation and Liberty as Nondomination

In contemporary political philosophy, Pettit revives the Roman republican idea of liberty as nondomination by contrasting it with liberal freedom as non-interference. In the context of the present discussion, non-interference is equally a contrast with *swaraj*. Indeed, the former is simply an idea of unimpeded freedom of action within the boundaries of law, whereas the latter depends on the *satyagrahi*'s strenuous cultivation of spiritual discipline and virtue. As far as Pettit is concerned, though, neo-Roman republican nondomination establishes a contrast with liberal interference by recognizing the law itself as an interferer (35). According to Pettit's neo-Roman theory, the law is a nondomination interferer if it promotes common as opposed to private interests (59). To this extent, it checks the arbitrium – or arbitrary will – of would-be despots or dominators (53). Nevertheless, Pettit's emphasis on the non-arbitrary rule of law fails to engage the key aspects of Roman political thought I have stressed throughout this article. That is, he fails to engage its appeal to cultural memory and past exemplas as the primary means to orient ourselves in our present political world. This failure to engage the Roman concern with memory is a serious deficit in a theory of freedom claiming Roman republican origins.

By contrast, recent classical scholarship presents a strikingly different conception of Roman liberty as nondomination appealing to the concept of the *mos maiorum*, or customs of the ancestors, in the histories of Sallust and Livy. Rather than a naïve popular propagandist (Paul), Sallust demonstrates a sophisticated appreciation for the paradox of memory (Hammer 146). The paradox is that remembering the past is always a present performance. In other words, memory consists in present acts of interpreting and reinterpreting our inherited stories or chronicles of the past. Indeed, memory as performative

is "open to continuous variations and interpretations (Arena 219). Consequently, for Sallust, memory is always potentially a mode of despotism or domination, as competing aristocrats sought their own potential or might (*The War with Calaline,* 38.3) through divergent interpretations of the *mos maiorum*. Whoever controls how we remember our past controls our present and future. Hence, Sallust presents Cesar and Cato vying with one another to control the Roman popoli (*The War with Calaline,* 53.5; 54.1). They did so by reinterpreting the past to shape present desire consistent with their opposed political agendas for Rome. Nevertheless, neither can completely control how the past is remembered by the popoli. After all, there are indefinite numbers of possible interpretations of the shared Roman past (Arena; Hammer; Drummond). Moreover, consistent with Sallust, Livy insists the popoli themselves are interpreters of the past based on their interpretation of Roman liberty, demanding consular election should be opened to plebeians (Livy, *History of Rome,* 6.34-42) Consequently, memory is also the *ultimate guarantee of nondomination*, based on the indeterminacy of historical interpretations across multiple different viewpoints or perspectives.

From a Gandhian point of view, though, what should we make of this alternative conception of Roman nondomination, appealing to memory rather than law? Perhaps the first and most obvious point is that Gandhi does also make an appeal to memory and historical interpretation, not concerning stories or chronicles of ancestral deeds, but rather the conceptual framework of Truth, God, and self, as discussed earlier. Moreover, he clearly interprets this framework to advance his agenda for a nonviolent social and political order. Indeed, this is a present-day interpretation based on passing over multiple contemporary viewpoints, including Tolstoian Christianity (Gray and Hughes 377-80) and Western rights (376). Indeed, Gandhi combines these seemingly disparate influences in a project of *swaraj* as nondomination for Indians. In other words, the British Raj cannot control how Indians reinterpret their own past to orient themselves to their present and future. For that

matter, we might also say the Russian Tsars cannot control how Tolstoy reinterprets Christianity, or how that contributes to orienting Christian and Hindu to an alternative vision of a nonviolent future. Pressing the point further, no one in the West can ultimately control how Gandhi's reinterpretation of India's metaphysical past might prompt Westerners to reinterpret their own political traditions, such as liberal tolerance for divergent cultural and religious traditions and viewpoints (Lal 17-18).

Swaraj align with nondomination to the extent Gandhi's sees political freedom and nonviolence as depending on the relativity, partiality, that is, the indeterminacy of multiple-viewpoint interpretations of Truth. To be sure, this is not a matter of looking backward to ancestral deeds and their meaning for us today, but rather forward to the possibility of our obtaining greater insight into the absolute truth of Atman. Moreover, as present exemplar of founding a new social and political order, the *satyagrahi* inspires and guides us towards such insight into the ultimate unity of our various life goals and humanity's moral, political, and spiritual interrelatedness. The difference is that *swaraj* is not a competition between rival political agendas for controlling the present by controlling the past. It is not an ego-driven competition for greatness. The *satyagrahi*'s example of passing over is grounded in the Vedic framework of unity and integration, telling the *satyagrahi* that some relative or partial "truth is deposited in every human heart" (Gandhi, *All Men*, 11). Consequently, interpretations of Truth may be indeterminate for all of us trapped in this bodily life subject to its perceptual limitations. However, no viewpoint is entirely false and, as such, we should not treat any as rivals to be beaten in a naked competition for power, driven by pride and ambition. On the contrary, the metaphysics of unity and interrelatedness prescribe the very different virtues of humanity and self-suffering.

6. Conclusion

We should repudiate the morality of violence. The Roman synthesis of moral and political virtue demonstrates that

violence guarantees our downfall into misery, chaos, and even madness. This is perhaps most powerfully expressed by Seneca account of how pride and ambition lead not only to despotism but also "insanity" (Hammer 276), when reason is "hampered by no bonds' (*On Benefits,* 3.7.5) and the openness of competing reinterpretations of the past leave us be no bearings in the present (Arena). From a Gandhian perspective, the problem with the *Pax Romana* based on the morality of violence is perhaps best expressed by the Roman historian, Tacitus, quoting, or rather paraphrasing, Calgacus, an enemy of Rome.

> These plunderers of the world [the Romans], after exhausting the land by their devastations, are rifling the ocean: stimulated by avarice, if their enemy be rich; by ambition, if poor, unsatiated by the East and by the West … the only people who behold wealth and indulgence with equal avidity. To ravage, to slaughter, to usurp under false titles, they call empire; and where they make a desert, they call it peace (*Agricola*).

This Roman 'desert of peace' is, above all, a function of pride and ambition in emulating, or surpassing, the violent deeds of forebears and founders, and the unboundedness of moral-political interpretation.

Indeed, we may identify two key Gandhian lessons to be taken from the *Pax Romana*: (i) Humility in repudiating the fruits of violent political action and self-suffering in bearing the consequences of nonviolence are necessary preconditions for avoiding endless cycles of and destruction and ultimately madness. (ii) Gandhi was right to insist upon a metaphysical or cosmological framework of Absolute Truth to frame the multiplicity of partial and relative viewpoints – or interpretations – and focus us on the unity of humanity despite its many differences based on history and culture.

Beyond this, however, the comparison of Gandhi and the Romans potentially contributes to Gandhi studies by encouraging us to think about Gandhi as a serious political thinker. Recent work on Gandhi's political thought has tended to focus on his relationship to contemporary political theories,

such as political liberalism (Lal) or agonism and deliberative democracy (Sparling). However, much more work needs to be done by Gandhi scholars establishing Gandhi's relevance to political thought by examining its bearing upon the long history of political philosophy, both East and West.

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