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DIALECTICS OF POLITICS AND ETHICS IN GANDHI AND TAYLOR
Connections, Dilemmas, and Convergences

Joshy V. Paramthottu♦

1. Introduction

Evolution of 'secularism' and the decline of the social role of religions can be seen as instrumental in changing the paradigm of ethics and politics in modern times. Apparently, the relationship between religion and politics came up with a contemporary predicament of secular ethics in politics as against religious ethics which was its primary or earlier form or foundation. The *ambivalent* nature of Indian secularism – political and religious (ethical) has its history against the background of the western secularism which arose against the background of Christianity. At this juncture, an analysis of Charles Taylor and a re-reading of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi can be relevant in our attempt to understand the dialectics of ethics and politics in the present times.

'Political Ethics'[1] have been debated for decades without finding any definite conclusions. Perhaps more politicians

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[1]Political ethics (also called political morality or public ethics) is the practice of making moral judgments about political action, and the

might approve of the statement like "when the end is good … it will always excuse the means"[1] than it used to be a few decades in the past. Definitely Gandhi will stand for his political and ethical principles and to a greater extend Taylor would also do the same. They too can be seen as discussion pointers of living ethically and acting politically.[2]

2. Nature of the Dialectics between Gandhi and Taylor

Both Gandhi and Taylor have written extensively on topics or questions that diverge and converge on similar concerns. My focus is on specific areas where I believe we find clear connections, convergences and important differences. The fear of an engulfing influence of western materialism and industrialism, specifically of Great Britain, was the background against which Gandhi brought to light his alternative conception of a self-identity with a specifically moral definition. For him, the term *irreligious* is inter-changeable with immorality. With his footing in the North-Atlantic context, Taylor has a similar fear, but without any specific 'outside threat' as Great Britain, of the influence and articulations of materialistic, naturalistic, and atomistic trends that definitely

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study of that practice. As a field of study, it is divided into ethics of process (or the ethics of office), focussing on public officials and the methods they use and ethics of policy (or ethics of public policy) dealing with judgments about policies and laws. Both draw on moral and political philosophy, democratic theory and political science. http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/dft/files/political_ethics-revised_10-11.pdf <08.26.2013>.

[1]Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Bk. I, ch. IX, London: Routledge, 1883, 62ff.

[2]Melissa A. Orlie, *Living Ethically and Acting Politically*, London: Cornell University Press, 1997.

has roots in the scientific development and enlightenment thinking. He sees a decline of religion, especially Christianity with which he is mostly associated, together with a decline in our understanding of self-identity. For both Gandhi and Taylor politics and ethics are closely related aspects of human self. Politics cannot be separated from its 'moral/ethical' implications since human search for 'authenticity' can only be achieved on the basis of the moral evaluations on human actions and attitudes inclusive of political activities. Here I present some of their connections or agreements, dilemmas and convergences in view of finding aspects where one can read them especially to have insights on politics and ethics.

3. Connections and Comparisons

Gandhi and Taylor can be read from a number of distinct perspectives, as political philosophers, moral philosophers, and religious thinkers. Neither of them claims to have achieved a finished product of thought from their writings and activities. However, they articulated their positions convincingly. Here I present some areas of connections and comparisons which will help to find a bridge between their worlds of ideas.

3.1. *Moral Sources* for a Phenomenology and Ontology of Morality

Taylor's *Sources of the Self* has an outer source and inner source. Self, understood as being in a moral space, is inevitably intertwined with such sources. The way human being understand the concept of 'good' and the way they are related to the 'outer' moral source which is bigger than an individual self, is significant for Taylor. "Selfhood and the good," Taylor states, "or in another way selfhood and morality, turn out to be

inextricably intertwined themes."[1]Any external activity of the self inevitably influenced by its notion "good" or "ethics" including its involvement in active politics. In this existential milieu, a self is not capable of defining itself without retrieving and narrating the bigger picture of moral sources to which one is embedded and engaged. Taylor regrets that the connection between the *outer* sources and self has been given *a narrow* definition in most of contemporary moral philosophy. He says, "This moral philosophy has tended to focus on what it is right to do rather than on what it is good to be, on defining the content of obligation rather than the nature of the good life;[2] and it has not conceptual place left for a notion of good as the object of our love or allegiance…" (SS 3). There is a necessary and universal foundation of morality which Taylor intends to articulate in order to reaffirm what he views as losing ground to modern, limited definitions of self-identity. "We are dealing here with moral intuitions which are uncommonly deep, powerful, and universal" (SS 4). Taylor contends that while we feel certain moral intuitions at depth approaching what we might call instinct, in fact moral life extends beyond instinct to a relation with transcendental being. He argues that "a moral reaction is an ascent to, an affirmation of, a given ontology of the human" (SS 5). The ascent of morality goes beyond its

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[1]Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989, 3 (Henceforth SS will be given within the body of the text).

[2]Apparently political ethicists have emphasized the concept "right" more than the concept "good." That which is legally right need not necessarily be good for the human society. I think political liberalism has been influenced by this tendency where they are quick to legalize things without considering its pros and cons.

rational, sociobiological, psychological, political and natural scientific explanations since there will always be an *inarticulacy* proper to its very nature. Taylor warns that,

> … it doesn't follow from this that moral ontology is a pure fiction, as naturalists often assume. Rather we should treat our deepest moral instincts, our ineradicable sense that human life is to be respected, as our mode of access to the world in which ontological claims are discernible and can be rationally argued about and sifted (SS 8).

The use of *should* in the foregoing statement indicate the way Taylor persuades his readers of positions to which he is committed. A phenomenology of a moral realism which was, is, and will be, arguable is explicit in Taylor's work.

In his book *Ethical Religion* Gandhi seems to have shared Taylor's willingness to root moral life and action in a transcendental relation, and even to therefore use morality and religion interchangeably:

> The common idea is that morality and religion are distinct things; still this chapter seeks to consider morality as a religion. Some readers may think the writer is guilty of confusion. That reproach may come from two sides from those who regard religion as more than morality, and from others who thinks that, where there is morality, there is no need for religion. Yet the author's intention is to show their close relationship. The societies spreading ethical religion or religious ethics believe in religion through morality.[1]

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[1]http://www.mkgandhi.org/ethical/morality_religion.htm and also in *Ethical Religion*, Section on "Morality as a Religion." Accessed 12.08.2013.

Here again we see an appeal to the *inescapable background* out of which 'good' customs and practices developed and preserved through history. There are *religious* people involved in *immoral* deeds and *irreligious* people involved in *moral* deeds. Hence, the question is to define good from a necessary and universal ontology of morality by which to relate action to value and transcendence.

Though Gandhi preferred to consider religion and morality as intertwined, he does clearly distinguish between morality and religion. For example he says that the seed of morality is watered by religion and without water it withers and ultimately perishes and so, "it will be seen that true or ideal morality ought to include true religion."[1] Gandhi's concept of Truth and its interchangeability with the concept of God makes it easier for him to distinguish between morality and religion while nonetheless refusing any real separation between them. Taylor struggles to give a better ontology of morality, whereas Gandhi simply provides one. All of the above notwithstanding, it does seem that Taylor's commitment to religion is not far from Gandhi's position in finding moral foundation for politics and social action.

His work *A Secular Age*[2] has developed a narration of the conditions of secularity in relation to the conditions of religion, especially Christianity. After explaining the external *sources of the self*, demonstrating the *new reflective forms* of religion, it is suggested that we may return to religion and God in a new

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[1]http://www.mkgandhi.org/ethical/morality_religion.htm and also in *Ethical Religion*. Accessed on 12.08.2013.

[2]Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007, (Henceforth SA will be given within the body of the text).

way, in order to ultimately find the real foundation of good and indeed morality itself. It is apparently clear that all the world religions are in solidarity with substantial moral principles. Hence, Gandhi and Taylor being political activists and thinkers, the themes of morality and religion go hand in hand in them. The decline of one or the other will have an impact on the other political involvement.

3.2. Ambivalence of the Secular and the Spiritual

There is an ambivalence of the secular and spiritual in both Taylor and Gandhi, which shows up frequently though never quite compromises the prominence of the spiritual. As we have seen, Gandhi does not separate between religion and morality as done by many modern scholars engaged in rational debate on politics and ethics. Instead, he appeals to three resources for discussing religion: reason, faith, and commonsense. He considers the second of them to be the heart of it, and never believed in the power of rational argument to convince one of religious truth. His Indian cultural context is simply at work here, in this outline of the sources of an identity where the secular and sacred are closely intertwined. Chatterjee states,

> His personal experience of living in a society where the distinction between sacred and profane was a somewhat unnatural one, and where people of very different ethnic types and ways of life were actually living side by side, gave him a unique advantage in thinking out what the shape of a future community might be like.[1]

Gandhi touched the point of contact between his conception of religion and selfhood and political identity, at different

[1]Chatterjee, *Gandhi and the Challenge of Religious Diversity*, New Delhi and Chicago: Promilla and Co. Publishers, 2005, 10.

instances of his life. He always tried to achieve a *spiritualized politics* which is not to be confused with *theocratic politics.* Personal moral values of the politician and their impact and influence in the making of a modern society were major concerns here. He underscored:

> In my opinion unity will come not by mechanical means but by change of heart and attitude on the part of the leaders of public opinion. I do not conceive religion as one of the many activities of mankind. The same activity may be either governed by the spirit of religion or irreligion. There is no such thing for me therefore as leaving politics for religion. For me, every, the tiniest, activity is governed by what I consider to be my religion.[1]

Gandhi's religion and his understanding of the principles of morality are inseparable. Immorality is what he means by irreligion which is explicit in his work *Hind Swaraj*.[2] Religion is the proper foundation of morality and irreligion is the foundation of immorality. But it is not just a matter of morality alone rather ultimately it is a matter of self-realization. The distinction between secular and spiritual demonstrate human orientation from the immanent to the transcendental. There is a balanced middle between the political and spiritual which Gandhi's pursuit of life inspires one to accomplish. In time of political turmoil, ideological schism, and religious fanaticism, Gandhi appeared to be a secular person with deeply spiritual insights who put forward his own political and economic ideas together with great ideals of religious pluralism for the

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[1]Iyer, ed., *The Essential Writings of Gandhi*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, 125. A Letter written on May 30, 1932.

[2]M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other* Writings, ed., Anthony Parel, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

building of a new India. His style was integral, his aim was harmony, his pursuit was for truth, his life was for service, and his life goal was to attain self-realization.

Taylor's navigation between the secular and spiritual is identifiable in his numerous works, most clearly in his *The Varieties of Religion Today* but also in the *Sources of the Self* and *A Secular Age.* In *The Varieties of Religion Today*, after analyzing the Jamesian position of religion he comes out with his own take on it, setting forth his account of the contemporary religious situation, using a genealogical method to show how it has grown out of previous religious dispensations in European history. Taylor is not convinced by the extreme secular narrative of the modern enlightenment thinkers. The first step is to call for an unbiased outlook and open mindedness on the part of modern thinkers, so that one may see a bigger picture of reality that itself modernity sees. This is the effort of *Sources of the Self*, which takes the added step of identifying moral sources which he sometimes calls moral inquiry or inescapable frames.

Taylor also appeals to postmodernist thinkers who trust less in the power of philosophy to prove the existence of truth than in the power of language to persuade us of the possibility of belief.[1] He observes that what were once naïve forms of religion have become reflective in our times, when the distinction between the immanent and transcendental, or the natural and supernatural, is clearly identified in a manner that permits people to choose one or the other in a way that was

[1]John Patrick Diggins, "The Godless Delusion," Review of *A Secular Age*, by Charles Taylor, *New York Times*, December 16, 2007, Book Review, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/16/books/review/Diggins-t.html?pagewanted=all.

quite unthinkable in former times. In these and other cases, a distinction is first recognized before an integral harmony is sought. As we have seen, this frank *integral pluralism*[1] is also be found in Gandhi's thinking and action, though of course neither modernity nor secularity are quite the same in India as in Taylor's North-Atlantic.

4. Dilemmas in the Dialectics between Gandhi and Taylor

None of the points of contact or parallel lines that I have identified in the work of Gandhi and Taylor can take away the fact that there are important differences. Taylor is largely a professor in the academic world and on the other hand Gandhi an activist and political figure. Gandhi was an Indian and Taylor a Canadian; Gandhi was a Hindu and Taylor a Christian; Gandhi is remembered as a towering spiritual authority and Taylor is one of the most famous intellectual figures of our times. Gandhi was a strong critic of the western civilization and Taylor is a product of the western civilization; Gandhi was passionate about his religious life and Taylor is more passionate about his philosophical and political aspects of life as compared to his religious beliefs; Gandhi was a pre-modern person with many modern ideas and Taylor is a modern person with many post-modern, post-analytic, and post-religious concerns. They lived in different times, spoke different languages and worked in different cultural contexts. Let us look some more closely at some of this.

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[1]Fred Dallmayr, *Integral Pluralism: Beyond Culture* Wars, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2010.

4.1. Differences of Emphasis, Articulations, and Purposes

Gandhi, it may seem, tends to sacralise the secular and the moral aspects of human beings, whereas Taylor's orientation seems to be toward a spirituality that recognizes and does justice to both the ethical and the secular. Gandhi depended heavily on his religious tradition, practices, and experience to infuse his private life. In other words, his private life and his political action were oriented toward a transformative sacrality. This makes him an example of what Richard Kearney means by 'sacramental-praxis,' as a model for doing political activity with a religious foundation.[1] It also means that in his thinking and in his writing, he resorts to a *descending method* of narration, where religious and moral flavour that comes from the Absolute eventually makes the secular relatively sacred. Taylor, in contrast, seems to develop an *ascending method* of narration, where the secular feels itself limited and limiting in its secularity, and searches for something that will make its flourishing meaningful and transcendental. His appreciation of the secular immanent frame does not prevent him from exploring an openness toward transcendental realities. Above all Taylor looks for an intellectual contribution to the modern world, and perhaps therefore hesitates at the prospect of a developing a robustly religious ontology and phenomenology. Gandhi never had this reservation or hesitation, and spoke out often, many times prophetically, about his morality, and in fact that they rest on religion. Gandhi was not seeking to develop an ontology and phenomenology of morality, rather a re-reading of Gandhi after reading Taylor makes it clear to us that

[1]Richard Kearney, Anatheism: Returning to God After God, Insurrections: Critical Studies in Religion, Politics, and Culture, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

Gandhi has resources to support an ontology and phenomenology which Taylor carefully and deliberately brings about.

Both seem to have in view some complex relationship of 'transcendent' and 'immanent.' This is developed with special care in *Catholic Modernity*,[1] where Taylor re-interprets the Gospel in order to stress its plural, secular, and worldly emphasis in order to make the secular some way open to the sacred. This holds for both the *ascending* and *descending* methods, mentioned earlier.

4.2. Moral Realism and Practical Idealism

Taylor undertook his narrative of a comprehensive theory of morality and self-identity by way of retrievals made within a wider range of moral sources than what modern secular reason tends to accept. There are numerous narrower and one-sided theories of morality and self-identity. Most of these are, according to Taylor, erroneous, biased and unconvincing. Still, whatever its practical implications, the project of Taylor is basically an intellectual one. His grand narratives can take the reader into numerous streams and strata of human intellectual, moral, and religious developments. His effort, and also his skill concentrate on making a reader engage with authors, themes, and concerns in a different way.

When one turns from Taylor to Gandhi, one sees enacted many of the elevated moral, cultural, political and religious concepts the philosopher has retrieved and proposed for our

[1]Charles Taylor, *A Catholic Modernity? Charles Taylor's Marianist Award Lecture, with Responses by William M. Shea, Rosemary Luling Haughton, George Marsden, and Jean Bethke Elshtain*, ed., James L. Heft, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

consideration. Here the contrast is between intellectual/rational theories of ethics for modern self-identity, and a realistic or pragmatic exposition of similar ethical concepts in one's own life. And of course, what can be articulated with intellectual precision is often quite inarticulate of the moral life the person attempting to live by it. This is far from questioning Taylor's capacity to measure up to his own concepts, but only to underline Gandhi's spiritual and public interest in being an example of what he said – Gandhi lives out what Taylor is theorizing.[1]

The tension between rational moral concepts and concrete action is a Kantian theme. When Kant states that 'when I choose for myself, I generate a principle for everyone to follow,' he basically leads us forward in an attempt to reconcile personal experience and choice with a principle of universal relevance that might not be either convincing or satisfactory at the level of moral life, even if it is rationally consistent. Much of Taylor's work can be considered to respond to exactly this danger where rationality and its autonomy is solely the decisive factor of human moral aspirations. A rationally 'generated' morality is not convincing since it is again mechanistic and proceduristic in the way it uses reason. Taylor's self is more connected and inter-dependent compared to the autonomous self of Kant. Likewise, but now at a practical level, Gandhi's notion of *satya* and *satyagraha* seems to offer us a better way of universalizing morality by showing us how to internalize personal choices in a religious understanding that can be conducted into the public realm. In

[1]Gandhi once said, "I am not a visionary, I claim to be a practical idealist." M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, Ahmedabad: Navjivan, 1919-1932, 11-8-1920.

Gandhi we find an example of what Taylor attempts to describe, and neither can be reduced to only a defence of rational principle. Gandhi would reframe Kant's moral statement in a form something like 'when I choose for myself, I set an example for everyone.' When one sets an example one is not purposely generating a principle.

4.3. Autonomy, Authenticity, and Holistic Harmony

Both Taylor and Gandhi give importance to the autonomy of the self and state. Freedom of the individual and the state is never far from their minds. Taylor's *Politics of Recognition* distinguishes equal dignity for all and recognition of difference of ethnicities. The former concerns (self) autonomy and the latter state concerns (self) authenticity. The distinction is important, for liberal politics ignores many differences in order to make autonomy possible and Taylor opposes the concept autonomy. However, he does not handle this distinction between 'equal dignity' and 'recognition of difference' with complete consistency. As Maeve Cooke has observed,

> there is an unacknowledged tension in Taylor's essay[1] between the ideals of autonomy and authenticity, and these results in contradictions and confusions in his account of the politics of difference. Furthermore, Taylor's reading of the politics of difference is marred by his failure to distinguish sufficiently carefully between various

[1]Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition" in *Multiculturalism and the "Politics of Recognition,"* ed., Amy Gutmann, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, 1-112.

> interpretations of the demand for recognition of specific identity.[1]

Taylor seeks a method of standardization that recognizes qualitative distinctions between goods and which would be grounded in an ontology that transcends particular contexts and sets of values. His approach is of course narrative, and aimed at opening practical links to transcendental conditions.

Gandhi gives priority to authenticity, of which autonomy is a tool. Yet in both cases – or in any movement toward autonomy: national, political, economic, spiritual – Gandhi is oriented finally to self-realization. But at that point, the idea of autonomy, of self-rule, ceases to be strictly political and instead becomes metaphysical where both autonomy and authenticity becomes means to his self-realization in the sense that he has better access to the Truth. Here one gets the deep roots what Gandhi means by 'self-rule' which again appears quite close to what the *Bhagavat Gita* means by *sthitha-prajna* which refers to a self-ruling, spiritually free person. But this is achieved not through others and not by freeing oneself from others but instead by performing – or entering into agreement with – one's own *dharma* and *karma*. This notion is fully holistic and integral, as is the freedom it entails.

In summary, then, Gandhi's understanding of authenticity, unlike that of Taylor, is not a child of the Romantic Period but rather an offshoot of his assimilation of self-rule with self-realization, on which he depended heavily in his *Experiments with Truth*. In simple terms, we might say that Taylor's understanding of authenticity does not reach to the level of Gandhi's self-realization, but Gandhi's practice of self-

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[1]Maeve Cooke, "Authenticity and Autonomy: Taylor, Habermas, and the Politics of Recognition," *Political Theory* 25 (1997), 256-258.

rule is inclusive of Taylor's notion of authenticity. At some point he grows up to the level of even abandoning both autonomy and even authenticity not for any intellectual theorizing but for his own self-realization.[1]

5. Conversions and Convergences

I have come to propose some points of convergences on the basis of analysis and reflection of the philosophies of Taylor and Gandhi.

5.1. Exclusive Perspective of Ethics and Secularism to Inclusive Ones

Western secularism has developed from the context of Christianity. Historical instances like renaissance, reformation, counter-reformation, and enlightenment effected the disintegration of Catholicism in the Europe. The evolution of secularism as a movement against the existing religion can be traced back to this particular context. This unique context and the particular form of secularism (anti-religious or exclusive secularism) cannot be attributed to any other context in the world. Encounter with a single religion can never be a reason to speak about the origin and development of secularism in India. In India, I argue, secular constitution was formulated in order to equally recognize all the religions. Constitutional reservations and special recognition of minorities can be seen as a problem and as a prospect of Indian secularism. The

[1]Chatterjee unravels a deeper possibility of understanding Gandhi's use of terms 'self-realization' and 'God-realization.' This can be understood as the distinction between *Ātman*/*Brahman* identity and their realizations. Chatterjee, *Gandhi's Religious Thought*, 108.

principle of recognition is better taken care of in India though its limits have to be acknowledged.

Western liberal notion of secularism tend to move to a purely humanistic, naturalistic, rationalistic, and finally individualistic direction, without seriously caring for the religious needs of the people. I am not convinced of the potentiality of western secularism to meet the religious needs or expectations of the people since it originated as an anti-religious movement. Here I propose a conversion from an 'exclusive secularism' to an 'inclusive secularism.'

5.2. A Post-Secular Turn to a Post-Religious Affirmation of Religion

Much of this investigation has concentrated on politics and ethics, but not without taking notice of the religious dimensions of Gandhi and Taylor. Contemporary social, political, and religious thought includes a growing number voices claiming that secularism, especially in the western world together with a kind of politics and ethics it propagates, has come to an end and hence we are passing to a new stage. Habermas, in this line, has emphasized the need for a perspective capable of mutuality. He states "Both religious and secular mentalities must be open to a complementary learning process if we are to balance shared citizenship and cultural difference."[1] Thoughts like this seem to concede that the modern claims for 'secular religion'[2] and 'civil religion'[1] have

[1]Jürgen Habermas, "Secularism's Crisis of Faith: Notes on Post-Secular Society" in *New Perspectives Quarterly* 25 (2008), 17-29.

[2]'Secular religion' is a term used to describe ideas, theories or philosophies which involve no spiritual component yet still claim to possess qualities similar to those of a religion.

proven unable to diminish or redefine the importance of traditional religion around the world. In fact, as Habermas rightly states, "As the well-to-do, developed societies become progressively more secular, a world society is becoming increasingly religious as a result of higher birth rates in the poorer developing countries."[2]

I hope to have shown that Taylor's suggestion of a new modern moral identity in fact goes beyond the tenets of secularism; to that extent, he too is a post-secular thinker. But for Taylor, secularism brought home a more reflective religion. Moreover, it called the traditional religions to give more emphasis to the ordinary life of the faithful and their worldly human flourishing together with their spiritual orientation in a life after death. We might also say, with great care, that he is thus post-religious, in so far as he interprets and re-affirms religion in a new way, after a long process of dialectics between the secular and the spiritual, and has accepted that abandonment of a time and a way of life in which traditional religion is taken for granted as the ultimate frame of all meaning.

The thesis of "Morality without religion"[3] has occupied many thinkers for a long time. From the dawn of philosophical

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[1]In the eighteenth century, with the growing secularization due to the Age of Enlightenment, Rousseau called for a 'civil religion' based on the duties of the citizen, to provide a non-metaphysical alternative to traditional religion.

[2]Habermas, "Secularism's Crisis of Faith," 6.

[3]Certain kinds of *Morality without Religion* designate the aspect of philosophy that deals with morality outside of religious traditions. Modern examples include humanism, freethinking, and most versions of consequentialism. Ancient roots of the same trend can

thought, there has been a tendency to attempt to free philosophy from theology and myth, on the understanding that the latter served only to support moral development until intellectual maturity no longer needs them. Now, a post-secular outlook enters into positive dialogue with religion, knowing the pathos and positives of religion, though without pretending to simply dissolve the complementarily of the secular and the spiritual' that has motivated much of this present study. Perhaps this is clearer in Taylor's work. But there is an implicit awareness of or may be anticipation of, the spiritual-secular ambivalence in Gandhi's willingness to use the terms 'religion,' 'politics,' and 'morality' as if interchangeable. At important moments, 'religion' seems to have a deep and fundamental meaning, inspiring, as we have seen, the action in which it is enacted:

> Religion is dear to me, and my first complaint is that India becoming irreligious. Here I am not thinking of Hindu, the Mohamedan, or the Zoroastrian religion, but of that religion which underlies all religions.[1] We are turning away from God.[2]

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be seen in Scepticism, Epicureanism, Stoicism, and the *charvaka* school of thinking in India. For most such outlooks "Man is the measure of all things." This position also can be identified as *morality without a God*.

[1]"[…] religion which underlies all religions" is a very important concept in Gandhi's political philosophy. Throughout his book *Hind Swaraj* religion can be seen as understood in two senses: as a sect or organized religion and as an ethic which is grounded in some metaphysics. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, 42.

[2]Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, 42.

Gandhi's notion of religion has gone beyond particular traditions, castes and tribes. This notion of a 'religion which underlies all religions' frames true action in the moral and political sense, but is or could be always embodied in and through particular traditions that are in the world. Gandhi extensiveness of the understanding of God is comprehensive enough to include almost everything as we see it in his following statement:

> God is that indefinable something which we all feel but which we do not know. To me God is Truth and Love, God is ethics and morality. God is fearlessness, God is the source of light and life and yet. He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist. He transcends speech and reason. He is a personal God to those who need His touch. He is purest essence. He simply Is to those who have faith. He is long suffering. He is patient but He is also terrible. He is the greatest democrat the world knows. He is the greatest tyrant ever known. We are not, He alone Is.[1]

Gandhi thus has a more forceful argument for religion than does Taylor, for whom religion is more of an unmistakable – and important – source, than an immediate practical necessity. Taylor's tendency to even go beyond Christianity and particularly Catholicism will place him a parallel to Gandhi's vision of religion that underlies all religions. In simple terms, while Gandhi gives the impression of looking to religion for the one conception of goodness that can save us, Taylor readily sees 'good' even where 'God' seems not to come into the picture.

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[1]Gandhi, *Young India*, 5-3-25, 81.

As I understand, there is an ongoing 'anti-foundationalism' in Taylor as he continues to retrieve and narrate his story which also can function as a legitimization of his post-metaphysical turn. It is well-known that the late modern attacks on metaphysics aim mainly at the metaphysics that proposes to found all meaning, including religious meaning. In his essay "Overcoming Epistemology," he opposes a mode of philosophy which he calls 'foundationalism.' Human knowing cannot be a disengaged from the life, the activity of reason. In his *Sources of the Self*, where Taylor exhibits a post-metaphysical view and yet an inclination toward at sympathy with theism, he states,

> I am obviously not neutral in posing these questions. Even though I have refrained (partly out of delicacy, but largely out of lack of arguments) from answering them, the reader suspects that my hunch lies towards the affirmative, that I do think naturalist humanism defective in these respects – or, perhaps better put, that great as the power of naturalist sources might be, the potential of a certain theistic perspective is incomparably greater ... But I recognize that pointed questions could be put in the other direction as well, directed at theistic views. My aim has been not to score points but to identify this range of questions which might sustain our rather massive professed commitments to benevolence and justice (SS 517-518).

At this point, I argue that one may say that the specific sense in which Taylor's thinking is post-metaphysical represents the necessary link between his understanding of the transcendental frameworks of morality and his own personal theistic commitment to Catholicism. It also explains why he can involve his Catholicism, as the mediating context for his own thinking and acting without dealing directly with the concept

of Christian God or of Jesus. Though he was against metaphysical foundations which restrict the meaning of 'transcendence' to mere epistemological and ontological concerns, he has great concern for a metaphysics that respects transcendence that sometimes goes beyond ordinary realms of rationality. This is explicit from his argument for *inescapable frameworks* and his conception of dialogical selfhood.

6. Conclusion

The wide range of themes and topics common to Gandhi and Taylor makes any attempt to study them a 'tough road to travel.' For me this has been a challenge for my own pursuit of truth, which always has an aspiration for new horizons and a fusion of different ones. Both Gandhi and Taylor have inspired thousands and perhaps millions in their pursuit of the meaning of an authentic self and its relative achievements. While Taylor's scholarly comprehension and acuteness excite the reader, Gandhi's emphatic articulation and demonstration of the importance of *experiential* aspects of truth also call powerfully to us. The way they navigate between, and thus normalizes what is otherwise great ambivalence between the secular and the spiritual, religion and politics, ethics and politics, and immanent and transcendental give us much that is important to consider in a new, richer way. The genuineness of their pursuits and realism they express have the power to inspire generations to come.

Perhaps they are most inspiring for us today for integrating politics and ethics, which we accept as modern conditions of our being. An analysis of Gandhi and Taylor from the perspective of politics and ethics has been insightful in many respects. This also has unravelled numerous aspects of the human self-authenticity and its interaction with politics,

ethics and religion. With all his elaboration Taylor admits that he is not competent to engage with the non-western world. Even master narratives like that of Taylor's can be a mere intellectual (instrumental) exercise. Even his attempt at *re-enchantment*[1] does not seem to have its impact on the modern world for deeply engaging with God, world and human self. Perhaps the way Taylor wants to re-engage with society, nature and religion could be done better with the model of Gandhi's engagement and disengagement. 'Godless delusion' of Taylor still gives an ambiguity of the importance of religion in his *A Secular Age*, though he wants the self to endorse the goods from it. Taylor's reaffirmation of a moral ontology for the modern world is a positive inspiration for a modern reader. Taylor's contribution to pluralism and multiculturalism through his concept of *The Politics of Recognition* and Gandhi's single most contribution to politics and ethics through the concept of *Nonviolent Resistance* ever remain relevant for our dialectics on politics and ethics. It may be that no intellectual will ever again do quite what Gandhi was able to accomplish, and it may be that one great example is enough. But we still need to re-read and re-define such figures for our times. Here Taylor can help us. I think he can be a good interlocutor to have a conversation between the west and India for a constructive program for the future. He is a prolific writer and a skilled academician whose work in politics may make him unusually sympathetic to Gandhi.

Gandhi's life and teaching continue to influence the world, especially through nonviolent resistance to forces rampant

[1] "Re-enchantment" is a term which Taylor borrows from Akeel Bilgrami.

everywhere. Only time will prove the lasting worth of any philosopher and his works. Thomism no longer dominates as it once did. Post-modern thinking has already receded. Secularism has been tested and is still being tested. Post-secular, post-religious, and post-metaphysical transitions hint at limitations within secularism. Regardless of these erosions, changes, and transgressions, it is my belief that Gandhi and Taylor will continue to influence us, since they did not limit themselves to mere parts, but rather tried to bring the greatest number of parts into a whole. Something of this effort will remain, even if other features become obsolete.