# "TO LEAP BEYOND YET NEARER BRING": FROM WAR TO PEACE TO NONVIOLENCE TO NONKILLING

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In 1980 at a Yokohama regional meeting of the International Peace Research Association (IPRA), a question was raised as to whether it would be possible for IPRA to take up the subject of "nonviolence" as part of its work. The reply of a distinguished colleague from Europe was that IPRA should not be associated with "pacifism" since it would "discredit peace research."

Yet in 1986 a Nonviolence Commission was convened within IPRA by Theodore L. Herman and in 1996 IPRA's sixteenth general conference held in Brisbane, Australia, with Ralph Summy as organizing committee chair, was devoted to the theme of "Creating Nonviolent Future." Many people have contributed to this rapidly accelerating interest in nonviolence: men and women throughout the ages who have sacrificed for nonviolence and peace; the millions who have engaged in remarkable recent nonviolent struggles in many countries; and the growing numbers of violence-appalled people who are beginning to take nonviolence seriously. In the shadow of Tolstoy, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Petra Kelly--encouraged by recent Nobel peace prize laureates explicitly committed to nonviolence, and informed by the pioneering scholarship of Gene Sharp (1973), Johan Galtung (1992), John Burton (1979), Robert J. Burrowes (1996), Michael True (1995), and others--servants of peace and justice increasingly are seeking out nonviolent alternatives.

## "To Leap Beyond Yet Nearer Bring": From War to Peace to Nonviolence to Nonkilling

"To leap beyond yet nearer bring." You will recognize this line from American poet Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*:

> *Not words of routine this song of mine*
> *But abruptly to question, to leap beyond yet nearer bring*
> ("Song of Myself," 42)

We "leap beyond," hopefully Nearer [to] bring," by raising a question. As Bertrand Russell has observed, "Philosophy begins when someone asks a general question and so does science" (Russell,1977: 10). The question is, "Is a nonkilling society possible? If not, why not? If yes, why? Since a "nonkilling society" is not a common term in English or perhaps in any other language, we need an initial explanation. Let us take it to be a society with three defining characteristics, each with

two parts. First, there is no killing of humans and no threat to kill. Second, there are no weapons specifically designed to kill humans and no justifications for using them. And third, there are no social conditions that depend upon threat or use of killing force for maintenance or change.

Let us recognize at the outset four principal objections, among innumerable others (Morrisey, 1996)[1] to the possibility of such a society. First, killing is inherent in human nature. Second, defensive killing for survival of self, society, and cherished values is a justifiable natural right. Third, economic scarcity will always predispose to conflict and killing. And fourth, other values such as freedom and ending structural or psychological violence are more important than nonkilling. From this familiar perspective, a nonkilling society is impossible, undesirable, and even immoral. In a word, it is absolutely "unthinkable."

But let us consider at least seven grounds for taking seriously the possibility of realizing nonkilling societies from local communities to encompass all humankind.

**First, nonkilling human nature**. Most humans do not kill. Of all now living, and of all who have ever lived, only a small minority have been killers. Consider the homicide statistics of any society. Consider also the fact that women--half of humanity--generally have not been engaged as military killers. Consider further that only a minority of men actually kill directly in military combat, and that of those who do perhaps as few as two percent can do so without extreme guilt and remorse (Grossman, 1995: 43-50; 180-85). Killing constitutes deviance from basically "nonkilling human nature."

**Second, nonkilling roots in the spiritual heritage of humankind**. Granted that religions have been engaged to incite and bless unspeakable slaughter (Thompson, 1988). But within each faith the main message has been to respect life and not to kill. In Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, ahimsa paramo dharma (nonviolence is the highest virtue). In Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, "Thou shalt not kill." The test need not rest only upon selected scriptural passages, but needs to be seen in light of teachings as a whole, and in the lives of faithful in each tradition who have found inspiration for nonkilling commitment.[2] What a few can do, potentially millions of others can do also. Suppose the principal message of God, the Creator, however conceived, has been "O humans, hear my Word! Go find another human and kill him or her!" Even if a commandment such as "Thou shalt not kill" had been invented by oppressors to keep the oppressed in submission--or by the oppressed to defend against despotism-both imply the receptivity of nonkilling human nature to a nonkilling spiritual appeal.

**Third, science: contemporary science from ethology to neuroscience increasingly calls into question the assumption that humans are inescapably killers**. An ethologist-anthropologist finds in humans a "biological norm filter" somewhat akin to the Biblical commandment "Thou shalt not kill" (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1979: 240-41). A pioneering neuroscientist discovers a "Source" of nonviolence reachable through meditation in the evolving human brain.[3] Psychiatrists expert in homicide and violence in the United States conclude in 1970: "Already we may know enough for man to close his era of violence if we are determined to pursue alternatives" (Daniels et al., 1970: 441). And we have the ringing declarations of the interdisciplinary 1986 Seville Statement on

Violence, including: "IT IS SCIENTIFICALLY INCORRECT to say that war or any other violent behavior is genetically programmed into our human nature" (Adams, 1989: 113-21),[4] to which can be added new anthropological interest in discovering conditions for nonviolent societies (Bonta, 1993, Sponsel and Gregor, 1994).

**Fourth, nonkilling public policies**. Despite our violent political traditions, remarkable examples of nonkilling human potential are found in abolition of the death penalty, recognition of conscientious objection to military service, and even the existence of countries without armies. Fifty-seven of 194 world countries and territories have abolished the death penalty for all crimes (Appendix A). Forty countries recognize in law some form of conscientious objection to killing in military service (Appendix B). Twenty-six countries have no armies, although eleven of them have defense treaties with other states (Appendix C). Each instance of political acceptance of nonkilling principle is of surpassing scientific and public policy interest.

**Fifth, nonkilling social institutions**. Viewed globally many social institutions expressive of nonkilling principles already have appeared in human experience. If creatively combined and adapted to the needs of any single society--through social learning processes of emulation and innovation--an experientially-based approximation of a nonkilling society is even now conceivable. To note but a few examples:

> *Spiritual institutions*: Not only Jains of the East and Quakers of the West, but nonkilling communities of every faith, including the Communaute de L'Arche in France, the Simon Kimbangu Church in Africa, and the worldwide conscription-resisting Jehovah's Witnesses. The multifaith nonviolent International Fellowship of Reconciliation reaches out to all.
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> *Political institutions*: Britain's nonviolent Fellowship Party since 1955;[5] and the unique Gandhi-inspired Transnational Radical Party--growing out of Italy's Partito Radicale--since 1995 recognized with NGO Category I consultative status by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations as "a nonviolent, transdivisional, cross-party organization."[6]
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> *Economic institutions*: A nonviolent capitalist mutual investment fund that will not invest in war industries (Pax World Fund); a nonviolent labor union (the United Farm Workers of America); and a nonviolent community development institution (the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka).
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> *Educational institutions*: An entire university dedicated to nonviolent service to society with a peace brigade (shanti-sena) instead of training for military service [Gandhigram Rural Institute (Deemed University), Tamil Nadu, India];[7] a college offering a minor degree in nonviolence (Colorado College, USA): and a pre-school devoted to nurturing

nonviolent creativity in the youngest of children (Danilo Dolci's Centro Studi e Iniziative in Sicily).

*Security Institutions*: Police without firearms (Britain); virtually unarmed citizenry (Japan); a prison without armed guards (Finland); an unarmed zone of peace (Sitio Cantomanyog, Philippines); a movement of "small vows" for nonviolent problem-solving in everyday life (Acharya Tulsi's Anuvrat Movement, India); an Association for nonviolent social defense (Bund fur Soziale conflict intervention (Peace Brigades International); and a research center on nonviolent political struggle for democracy and security (Gene Sharp's Albert Einstein Institution, Cambridge, Massachusetts).

*Training institutions*: The Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti (N. Radhakrishnan, New Delhi); Peace Brigades International (Narayan Desai); The Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Nonviolent Social Change (Bernard LaFayette, Jr., and Captain Charles Alphin, Atlanta); the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (Hildegaard Goss-Mayr); War Resisters' International (Howard Clark); Mouvement pour une Alternative Nonviolent (Paris); Servicio Paz y Justicia (Adolfo Perez Esquivel); International Network of Engaged Buddhists (Maha Ghosananda, Cambodia; Sulak Sivaraksa, Thailand); and Training Center Workshops (George Lakey, Philadelphia).[8]

*Problem-solving institutions*: Amnesty International (nonviolent defense of human rights, worldwide abolition of the death penalty); Greenpeace International (nonviolent environmental defense, nuclear disarmament); War Resisters' International; Global Demilitarization (Oscar Arias-Sanchez); the Movement to Abolish the Arms Trade; and the movement for Nature/Gunless Society (Reynaldo Pacheco, Haydee Yorac, Philippines).

**Sixth, nonkilling historical precedents**. Reexamining history we discover remarkable manifestations of nonkilling human capabilities. These may be found even in the history of the United States of America whose violent political tradition takes pride in righteously victorious killing. Americans have killed for revolutionary independence, Civil War integration, continental conquest, imperialist expansion, and victories over monarchism, nazism, fascism, and communism--to emerge after two centuries as "the world's only military superpower" and "the world's leading economy." Yet Americans are also inheritors of a largely unknown nonkilling tradition.[9] Some Americans refused to kill on both sides of the American Revolution and Civil War, and have resisted killing in every war in their history--including 72,354 conscientious objectors to W.W.II conscription from 1940 to 1947, representing at least 231 religious denominations plus other philosophical and humanitarian beliefs (Anderson, 1994).[10] Twelve of fifty American states currently have abolished the death penalty which, however, remains in force for Federal crimes.[11]

Nonkilling precedents in other countries invite discovery. In Japan, for example, "in the [Buddhist] Heian period (794-1192) capital punishment was not practiced for about three hundred and fifty years" (Hajime, 1967: 145). In Russia, following the Bolshevik Revolution, one of the first

decrees, later reversed, was to abolish the death penalty. And in 1919, after an appeal to Lenin by the Tolstoyan V.G. Chertkov, religious conscientious objection to military service was recognized in a decree that apparently persisted in law through ensuing civil war and W.W.II, although it was inconsistently applied and objectors were sometimes executed (Edgerton, 1985: 162). As in the American case, such signs of nonkilling potential amidst historical conditions of violence invite serious reconsideration.

**Seventh, nonkilling lives.** Ultimately confidence in the possibility of a nonkilling society rests upon the nonkilling biography of humankind--upon demonstrations by courageous individuals and groups of transformative personal and social action. Viewed globally, historically, andin contemporary life such examples are so numerous and inspiring as to defy adequately respectful summation.[12] And as the late great Gandhian educator, Dr. G. Ramachandran, has observed, "The unknown fighters for nonviolence are more important than the known fighters for nonviolence To recall but a few of the known:

> *Among war resisters*: the Austrian Catholic peasant Franz Jagerstatter, beheaded for refusal to fight for Hitler (Zahn, 1964); the American Vietnam veteran Brian Willson, whose legs were cut off by an ammunition train in California while resisting shipment of arms to Contra killers in Nicaragua; and the Israeli Mordecai Vanunu, persecuted and still imprisoned for revealing Israel's nuclear weapons program.
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> *Among generals*: World War I British general Frank P. Crozier, author of *The Men I Killed* (1938); the French World War II hero general Jacques de Bollardiere become Gandhian fighter for the abolition of nuclear weapons and war (Boubault et al., 1986); and the Pathan Gandhian, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, demonstrating capacity to combine nonviolent Islam and martial tradition in nonviolent struggle for Indian Independence by his 100,000-strong nonviolent army, the Khudai Khitmatgars *Servants of God.* (Tendulkar and Khan, 1967; Easwaran, 1985).
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> *Among political leaders*: first American Congresswoman Jeanette Rankin, voting against United States participation in World Wars I and II (Josephson, 1974); German Petra K. Kelly, insisting upon Nonviolence" as a fundamental principle in creation of a new kind of political party, Die Gruenen (Kelly, 1992; 1994); Indian Marxist J.P. Narayan turned Gandhian proponent of nonviolent "total revolutions for structural change (Narayan, 1978a; 1978b; Prasad, 1985), and Burmese Aung San Suu Kyi, speaking nonviolent democracy to military power (Suu Kyi, 1991).
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> *Among artists*: Austrian novelist Bertha von Suttner, *Die Waffen Nieder* (Lay Down Your Arms, 1889); the Indian novelist Chaman Nahal, *The Gandhi Quartet* (1993); the German graphic artist Kathe Kollwitz, *Nie Wieder Krieg! (War Never Again!,* 1924) and Thou Shalt Not Grind the Seed Corn" (1942); and the American folk singer Joan Baez ("We Shall Overcome," 1990).

*Among pairs*: Kasturba and Mohandas Gandhi; Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin; Coretta Scott and Martin King; Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez.

*Among groups*: the anti-nuclear Greenham Commons Women's Peace Camp; the Plowshares Eight (Norman, 1989; Berrigan et al., 1978; Prasad et al., 1985); Australia's *Social Alternatives* collective; and countless others.

## Conclusion

Is a nonkilling society possible? For at least these reasons, we answer "yes":

- Most humans do not kill;
- Spirit serves as source of nonkilling inspiration;
- Science provides knowledge for liberation from lethality;
- Nonkilling policies and institutions already exist;
- History provides examples of nonkilling precedents; and
- Nonkilling lives celebrate capacity for personal and social transformation.

To recognize possibility is not to guarantee certainty, but to make problematical the previously unthinkable. If taken seriously, the possibility of nonkilling societies will lead to the research, education- training, institutionbuilding, democratic action, public policy development, and creative cultural expression needed to bring them about.

And so, for one brief moment, we "leap beyond" to "nearer bring"--from war to peace to nonviolence to nonkilling--and back to nonviolence, peace, war, and to the abolition of lethality with all of its related structural and environmental threats to the survival and wellbeing of humankind. The spirit, science, and skills of all are needed.

*Om aloha allay shanti love shalom*

## Notes

1. This is an erudite critique of pacifism from antiquity to the present in favor of just war-fighting by a "American commercial republics" into the indefinite future. It has over 2,000 extensive endnotes and a bibliography of more than 1,500 sources.

2. For example, T.K.N. Unnithan and Yogendran Singh, *Traditions of Nonviolence* (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1973); John Dear, *Our God is Nonviolent* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1990); Richard McSorley, *New Testament Basis of Peacemaking* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1985);

Kenneth Kraft, *Inner Peace, World Peace: Essays on Buddhism and Nonviolence* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); Glenn D. Paige, and Sarah Gilliatt, eds., *Buddhism and Nonviolent Global Problem-Solving* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, Matsunaga Institute for Peace, Center for Global Nonviolence Planning Project, 1991)--available on Internet http://www2.hawaii.edu/uhip/; M. Tayyabulla, *Islam and Non-Violence* (Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1959); Glenn D. Paige, Chaiwat Satha-Anand (Qader Muheideen), and Sarah Gilliatt, eds., *Islam and Nonviolence* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, Matsunaga Institute for Peace, Center for Global Nonviolence Planning Project, 1993); Michael Tobias, *Life Force: The World of Jainism* (Berkeley, Calif.: Asian Humanities Press, 1991); Murray Polner, and Naomi Goodman, eds., *The Challenge of Shalom: The Jewish Tradition of Peace and Justice* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1994); and Evelyn Wilcock, *Pacifism and the Jews* (Lansdown, England: Hawthotne Press, 1994).

3. Part of the "pentamental brain" theory being developed by Dr. Bruce Morton, Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics, University of Hawai'i, Honolulu, HI 96822, USA.

4. One of the signers, Federico Mayor, now Secretary-General of UNESCO, has contributed a magnificent appeal for global transformation from the old "culture of war" to a new Culture of peace": Federico Mayor with Tom Forstenzer, *The New Page* (Aldershot, England and Brookfield, VT: Dartmouth/UNESCO, 1995). For a nonviolent spiritual harbinger by another inspired UN global thinker, see Robert Muller, *New Genesis* (Ardsley-on-Hudson, N.Y.: World Happiness and Cooperation, 1989).

5. Ronald Mallone, General Secretary, The Fellowship Party, 141 Wollacombe Road, Blackheath, London SE38QP, UK.

6. Olivier Dupuis, Secretary, Transnational Radical Party, 866 United Nations Plaza #4014, New York, NY 10017.

7. The GRI shanti sena in the era of GRI-founder Dr. G. Adams, David (1989). Ramachandran is described by its faculty chief organizer N. Radhakrishnan, *Gandhi, Youth and Nonviolence: Experiments in Conflict Resolution* (Mitrapuram, Kerala: Centre for Development and Peace, 1992).

8. Resources for nonviolence training are surveyed in the *International Journal of Nonviolence*, 2, 1 (December 1994), entire issue.

9. See: Peter Brock, *Pacifism in the United States: From the Colonial Era to the First World War* (Pnnceton: Princeton University Press, 1968); Charles Chatfield, ed., Peacemaking in American History, *Magazine of History,* 8, 3 (Spring 1994), entire issue; Robert Cooney, and Helen Michalowski, eds., *The Power of the People: Active Nonviolence in the United States* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1987); Louise Hawkley, and James C. Junke, eds., *Nonviolent America: History through the Eyes of Peace* (North Newton, Kan.: Bethel College, 1993); Stephen M. Kohn, *Jailed for Peace: The History of American Draft Violators, 1658-1985* (New York: Praeger, 1987); Staughton Lynd and Alice Lynd, eds., *Nonviolence in America: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995); Pam McAlister, ed., *Reweaving the Web of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1982); Lillian Schlissel, ed., *Conscience in America: A Documentary History of Conscientious Objection in America: 1757-1967* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968); and Michael True, *op. cit.*

10. Twenty-five thousand accepted noncombatant military duties; 11, 996 agreed to work in Civilian Public Service camps; and 6,000, refusing to cooperate in any way, were imprisoned.

11. Alaska, Hawai'i, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Except for Federal cnmes there is also no death penalty in the District of Columbia and the territories of American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

12. *The Biographical Dictionary of Modern Peace Leaders* (1,133 pp.) records the peace work of 717 people from 39 countries who lived from 1800 to 1980. It constitutes a one-volume liberal arts education in peace studies. Extension to nonkilling global discovery is needed. Among beginnings: Pam McAllister, *You Can't Kill the Spirit: Stories of Women and Nonviolent Action* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1988); Michael True, *Justice Seekers, Peace Makers: 32 Portraits in Courage* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1985); Michael True, *Thirty More Justice Seekers, Peace Makers* (Mystic, Conn.: Twenty-Third Publications, 1992); Glenn D. Paige, Lou Ann Ha'aheo Guanson, and George Simson, *Hawai'i Journeys in Nonviolence* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, Matsunaga Institute for Peace, Center for Global Nonviolence Planning Project, 1995).

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## Appendix A

### Countries and Territories without Death Penalty (n=57)

Andorra
Angola
Australia
Austria
Cambodia
Cape Verde
Colombia
Costa Rica
Croatia
Czech Republic
Denmark
Honduras
Hong Kong
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Kiribati
Liechtenstein
Luxembourg
Macedonia
Marshall Islands
Dominican Republic
Mauritius
Ecuador
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Guinea-Bussau
Haiti
Micronesia
Moldova
Monaco
Mozambique
Namibia
Netherlands
New Zealand
Nicaragua
Norway
Palau
Panama
Portugal
Romania
San Marino
Sao Tome and Principe
Slovak Republic
Slovenia
Solomon Islands
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Tuvalu
Uruguay
Vanuatu
Vatican City
Venezuela

Source: Amnesty International, *The Death Penalty, March 1996* (AI Index: ACT 50/04/96). Abolitionist for all crimes (57); abolitionist for ordinary crimes only (15); abolitionist de ficto, no executions during past ten years (28); total abolitionist in law or practice(100); retentionist (94).

## Appendix B

### Countries and Territories Recognizing Conscientious Objection to Military Service (n=40)

Austria
Australia
Belgium
Brazil
Brunei
Canada
Croatia
Lebanon
Lithuania
Netherlands
New Zealand
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Czech Republic
Russia
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
French Guyana
Germany
Greenland
Guyana
Hungary
Italy
Ivory Coast
Latvia
Slovakia
Slovenia
South Africa
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Trinidad and Tobago
Ukraine
United Kingdom
United States
Uruguay
Zaire

Source: Michael Kidron, and Ronald Segal, *State of the World Atlas* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1995), pp. 96-97; and Amnesty International, *Conscientious Objection to Military Service* (AI Index POL 31/01/91). Acceptable grounds for objection vary widely from narrow (religious only) to liberal (religious, philosophical, ethical, moral, humanitarian, or political). Also varying widely are provisions for alternative service, ability of soldiers already in service to claim conscientious objection, and degree of reliability in actual implementation of the laws (Howard Clark, War Resisters' International) .

## Appendix C

### Countries without Armies (n=26)

No Army (n=15)

Costa Rica
Dominica
Haiti
Kiribati
Liechtenstein
Mauritius
Maldives
Monaco
Nauru
St. Kitts and Nevis
St. Lucia
San Marino
St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Solomon Islands
Western Samoa

No Army/Defense Treaty (n=11)

Andorra (Spain)
Cook Islands (New Zealand)
Iceland (USA)
Luxembourg (NATO)
Marshall Islands (USA)
Micronesia (USA)
Niue (New Zealand)
Palau (USA)
Panama (USA)
Tuvalu (UK)
Vanuatu (Papua New Guinea)

Source: Christophe Barbey, *Les pays sans armee* (Cornnagens, Switzerland: Editions Pour de Vrai, 1989) and correspondence, May 23, 1996.