Religious echoes in secular dialogues
Global glimpses of peacebuilding

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Introduction: the question of God in the globalizing age and the digital revolution

This chapter analyzes the role of religion and spirituality in relation to nonviolence and peacebuilding in contemporary global society. Indeed, every revolution implies an intent in the breaking of tradition to date by challenging a way of being, producing, thinking, seeing, relating to one another, and in many cases even the question of God in human life. The very nature of a revolution is a critical evaluation of a society’s status quo. This is expressed as irruption and disruption. Irruption is the violent appearance of something that was previously not there; it is a sudden—though not necessarily constant—presence and it is therefore subject to ending in confusion. Disruption, on the other hand, is the alteration of empty stillness that annuls the future, creating spaces for and stimulating conditions for change and invalidating the possibility of diverse futures. Disruption is also an aperture and a possibility. However, it can also be ephemeral when there is no clarity on what is being questioned. Without critical reflection on the apparent novelty of an idea, disruption can become mere irruption. It is in this light that a critical reflection on the role of religion in contemporary social relations is called for (Woodhead 2011). For this reason, a revolution experienced without critical reflection is possibly a form of desensitization, a mere descriptive exercise and adoption of revolutionary ideas without a set of values to guide people towards global or cosmopolitan citizenship, as described by the German philosopher Kant (1992). The revolutions that we are experiencing today—whether religious, technological, digital, industrial or social—demand a critical analysis from each of us.

Critical analysis of our beliefs within the current technological revolution, regarding religion and its effects in the global age, can be centered on different relationships. Let us consider the following question: How have ideas of God been transformed in the era of non-biological intelligence, such as superintelligence (Bostrom 2014), the homo digitalis, the burnout society (Han 2012), hyperhistory, the infosphere (Floridi 2014), and the fourth industrial revolution (Schwab 2016)? This inquiry cannot be considered in a vacuum isolated from its context because religious ideas and practices are also understood as a connection with its historical moment. In
human nature lies teleological (Gr. *telos* or end) potential. It is the flourishing of human capacity that remains dormant, latent, waiting to express itself. These capacities become manifest in a context that activates them such as in the case of the contemplative experience of God, or religious beliefs amidst the noise in social media. If the place of religion reflects the kind of society that we are building, then what society are we building amidst the connectivity among physical devices and software, digitalization, and hyperhistory (Floridi 2015)?

There is an assumption within contemporary societies that almost thoughtlessly and as if it were harmless, the life mediated through screens, personal devices, and all the different forms of information and communication technologies is part of the lives of a considerable part of humanity today. However, the use and growth of this technology does not apply equally to all the members of humanity, although its effects do. This assumption is a symptom, rather than an error, because it reflects an imbalance and an unconscious yes between the sacred in human life, the question of God, and the shaping of the apparent digital identity of each person, region, practice, or experience through mechanisms that quantify what seems to be our way of existing and thinking. The assumption also lies in the belief that the ubiquity of technological devices in every aspect of life, hypercommunication, and the existence of automated industry are the actual destiny of the human race. Is it the only future that we should expect? These beliefs should be questioned, not in opposition to technological development, but as a demand for a future that does not negate the best of human beings.

An inescapable task underlies the indomitable idea of global societies and investment in the development of technological innovations: critically reflecting and using technology that changes the way religions interact in globalized and plural societies. The disruption of ICT has facilitated the democratization of access to information, education, and even the way religions interact between them. Interreligious studies and approaches to spirituality have a lot to investigate in thinking the place of ICT in the interfaith dialogue of young people around the globe. Even studies on spirituality should consider the technological, hyperconnected context of this time to understand the religious identity and spiritual life of young people (Vecoli 2018). However, the disruption also includes cases whose implications should be considered carefully such as an artificial intelligence that does the work of its own teacher or the place of artificial intelligence in solving problems (Silver et al. 2017). What implications can be derived from these examples? This question acquires even more importance if we consider these implications alongside the development of artificial intelligence and the category of high-level machine intelligence (HLMI), which refers to the very possibility that artificial intelligence may not only displace—that is, automation and the solution of more and more complex tasks—but even surpass human activity in technical, commercial, and service tasks (Grace et al. 2017).

**Religious echoes in secular dialogues (REinS)**

Today there is a more complex and global framework to understand not just the place of religions in society but many areas of our experience and its impact for the future of humanity. This framework is interconnected with a long list of highly complex variables such as human relations with technology and the desire for peace given the violence in contemporary society. This framework emerges in a new paradigm of being religious in the 21st century along with the global risks created by human beings. One important problem in this framework that jeopardizes current societies is violence brought about by ethnic or religious conflicts. We are witnessing around the globe that violence has increased social, religious, and economic costs. At the core of new interactions between religions, ancient
spiritual traditions, and social change lies hope for peacebuilding by reappropriating religious experiences for a better world.

Violence and conflict have increased the risk for the future wellbeing of global societies. For instance, the increasing pattern in regions such as Latin America (Jaitman 2017) shows how violence can reshape the socio-political and religious landscapes through forced migration and associated psychological damages. While the costs and impacts of violence on the socio-economic spheres have not always been measured clearly, recent studies reveal the complexity of the global network of violence and how it impacts especially in Latin American Gross Domestic Product—3.55% of regional GDP is a significant impact for the region (Jaitman 2017).

This chapter thus reflects on the following question: Can the religious and spiritual experiences enhance secular practices for peacebuilding in a global society? Thinking about the place of religion in the world, we observe how some religious practices, ideas, beliefs evolve in secular environments and mobilize human values and virtues in action. Such process results in a type of religious echo that pervades the social and cultural ways for solving challenges and problems in our time. What is a religious echo in a secular dialogue? An echo signifies dynamism which manifests in how people think and act to respond to social change. It implies a practical stance in relation to peace culture (specifically the inextricable link between nonviolence, humanism, education, and ethics as foundations for constructing global citizenship reducing social inequality and violence). When religious or spiritual practices evolve in secular conditions and making meaningful echoes in concrete cases, they initiate a dialogue between the religious and the secular. This dialogue enables flexible ways to support, adopt, and apply ideas, beliefs, and experiences from religious contexts to respond to social changes and problems. Dialogue potentially establishes a constructive agreement between religions (Cornille 2013; Leirvik 2014) and between religious practices at the heart of secular needs. This means that religious echoes in secular dialogues (REinS) do not mean the disappearance of religions but the re-signification of ways for experiencing the sacred.

There are some cases in India, Latin America, and the United States that illustrate the relevance of nonviolence and construction of peace using the idea of REinS. These cases are the peace action Archive of the Earth authored by Bazzezato Deotto (2018) and Tosepan Titataniske Cooperative Union (Ramírez Cuevas 2014). Other cases for studying REinS are as follows: A film named Gandhi in México (UNAM 2013), which is a documentary on ahimsa, nonviolence, and projects in violent contexts on the basis of a Constructive Programme (Gandhi 2016) and the Lakota movement in Standing Rock, United States (Ruiz Guadalajara 2016). These cases contain a common dialogic character which allows religious practices to relate to secular experience. The second commonality is that they provide ways of doing peacebuilding.

This part of the chapter proposes to give a rationale for studying REinS in the context of global societies, which are facing multiple conflicts and forms of violence. It is an attempt to describe and analyze what happens to religion in the global society. In order to answer this issue, I describe some patterns of REinS which have been observed with the empirical cases noted earlier:

1. The deep meaning of REinS is about the question of God in a globalizing society.
2. The dynamics of interreligious dialogues in plural societies are underscored by REinS.
3. REinS can be approached by analyzing data from participants of religious and ancient spiritual communities, and from peacebuilders, activists, and NGOs through the lens of interreligious hermeneutics.
4. One observed pattern for REinS is the religious dialogue that evolves in secular contexts without interrupting religious values.

5. REinS involve an interreligious dialogue that triggers answers and practices rooted in the religious identity and spiritual practices of each participant.

6. REinS show interreligious and interfaith approaches which can help in analyzing the future of religions in global, plural, and hypercommunicated societies.

7. REinS are an attempt to understand how current facts affecting society and technological developments are reshaping religious and spiritual experiences.

Following the aforementioned patterns, there is a specific concern on studying REinS. To approach religion in global society needs to consider the facts of technology reshaping human experience such as ICT, infosphere, artificial intelligence, and hypercommunication. They transform the ways in which people relate to each other. Let us see a brief outline of these facts keeping in mind the three cases of REinS, nonviolence, and their impact on societies.

Three cases of REinS: from violence in society to religious encounter

Thinking of violence as a social cost on the economy implies rethinking different scenarios associated with violence. What is the cost of violence associated with migration, unemployment, social inequalities, and poverty? The social dimension is turning to religiosity, or diverse spiritual practices, underscoring the importance of the construction of a culture of peace and daily practices of nonviolence. This can be the way to understand how new interactions between religions, ancient spiritual traditions, and secularity create better conditions of life. Each observed case of REinS involves an interreligious dialogue that triggers answers and practices rooted in the experiences and identity of each participant.

The first started with the ‘Archive of the Earth’ in Gujarat, India. After the Gujarat riots in 2002 (Mishra 2012), it fostered an interreligious understanding of peace within twelve religious communities of Ahmedabad and the Tribal Bhils. The communities were Brahmans, Kumaris, Buddhists, Catholics, Hare Krishna, Jains, Jewish, Parsi, Protestants, Sikh, and Vedantins. Such an event happened at the very heart of Gandhi’s activism on nonviolence and peace (Bazzetto Deotto 2018). A major significance of this case is an interreligious encounter that became of a way of addressing violence. Echoes from religious and spiritual traditions appeared as a creative interreligious encounter. Arts and artistic expressions were the key to sustaining such echoes. The second, the Standing Rock Movement in the United States, was a type of interreligious dialogue, an interchange of practices between ancient Lakota spiritual ideas and practices of *ahimsa* from South Asia. Such a movement against the Dakota Access pipeline (Skalicky and Davey 2016) shows us how Lakota and Gandhi’s *ahimsa* can be a response to avoid the destruction of sacred spaces of the Lakota people. However, Trump’s administration broke up and arrested these actions and the movement as a whole.

The intermingled religious, spiritual, social, environmental, and political ideas were guided by a pattern from Lakota’s notion of the sacred along with an environmental awareness and at some point from Gandhian *ahimsa*, that both also evolved into a secular way to answer the violence brought about by the Dakota Access pipeline (Campbell 2017). The third example is an interreligious dialogue between ancient Nahuatl spiritual beliefs, Totonacus, and Gandhian *ahimsa* (*sava dharma prarthana*) in the Northern Sierra of Puebla, Mexico. This Union Group of Nahua and Totonac integrated aspects of Catholic Saint...
San Isidro Labrador, protector of workers. Each year, when celebrating the day of San Isidro, a type of syncretism and religious parade that encompasses another expression from South Asia occurs: the design and creation of a mandala. The mandala of the Tosepan Group represents the nonviolent work against conflicts and violence over the year. In these three cases, we can advance, at least, a set of complementary underlying characteristics for explaining the proposal of REinS:

1. Each of these cases is an attempt to respond to violence and conflict in global society.
2. Each of these cases observes the appropriation of beliefs, practices, and experiences from different religions and spiritual traditions which were then used to respond to social problems like violence or socio-political and economic conflicts.
3. Each appropriation is a kind of interreligious dialogue for finding a concrete way to create a religious echo in secular contexts.

The three cases of REinS offer a brief outline of challenges to world religions in global and plural society (Juergensmeyer 2009). Two brief thoughts emerge out of this scenario. On the one hand, religious practices are in dialogue and globally interconnected with the problems of the 21st century. On the other, how religious and spiritual practices originated in Indian tradition are meaningful for other religions in a global context of shared challenges of what the societies are facing today.

**A fourfold framework for reapproaching REinS**

What else should be considered in analyzing the three cases of REinS presented in the last section? Global society has four dimensions which play a role in helping us appreciate REinS. The first is infosphere, which is how technology is changing how it is to be human in this century. In essence, we want to know how religions and spiritual traditions are affected by the onlife (Floridi 2015). This bubble of information reshares human experience at different levels including the religious and the spiritual. In 1971, the term infosphere was used by R. Z. Sheppard in *Time* Magazine. He described it as an encircling layer of smog. His conceptualization helped us to understand something that we inhabit but probably are not aware of and how it reshapes our social, human, and religious dimensions. Sheppard (1971) wrote: ‘In much the way that fish cannot conceptualize water or birds the air, man barely understands his infosphere, that encircling layer of electronic and typographical smog composed of clichés from journalism, entertainment and government.’ The data and the flow of information that shape our perception of reality are to be mainly considered in this ‘encircling layer’ or bubble. What is infosphere today and how should it be considered in the study of religions in global society? It is inherently linked to diverse global risks. This includes the relationship of consumption to the environment as well as the development of artificial intelligence that can manage the everyday increase in big data and information in contemporary societies (Beckstead 2014).

Floridi (2014, 2015) offers another way of analyzing the infosphere. It is the biosphere of information that takes shape through technological tools. It is an ecosystem that has transformed our interactions in social, cultural, religious, economic, and political contexts. The limit between life online and offline (Floridi 2014, 2015) is becoming increasingly narrower. How do we exist in the infosphere? How do we feed its increasingly important presence in our social, religious, political, economic, and cultural lives? Many problems for many disciplines emerge and should be considered by current studies on religions in a global scenario. For instance, we must think about the development of voracious individuality,
a promoted egocentrism that simultaneously calls for a digital ethics and global citizenship in 21st century. The ethical base, called infraethics by Floridi (2014) in *The Fourth Revolution*, identifies the abilities shared by human beings that are prior to the very action during which this ethical conscience is applied. It is thus important to reconsider religiosity and ethical consciousness in global society.

The second dimension is what shapes or reshapes relations in societies. The numbers and future scenarios that will impact social interactions are the loss of jobs expected for the coming years (Mackinsey 2017). Jobs and unemployment as categories of analysis for the study of social problems and contemporary violence are useful. Unemployment, as a result of automation, should be a category of analysis of inequality. How then will artificial intelligence and automation matter for religion in global society? The main changes we are witnessing in this century are related to technology and its impact on the environment and economic life. For instance, automation magnifies inequality, with only the privileged getting richer. Diverse problems knit together the topic of global unemployment (ILO 2019; McKinsey Global Institute 2017, 2019) and express its multifactorial complexity at present when technological innovations, robotics, and automation are creating important changes in the workplace.

The third dimension is artificial intelligence, which has implications on religious life in general (Kimura 2017) and on the idea of God or spirituality in particular (Ting Guo 2015). Some studies give us tools to understand a glimpse of the future of societies and the risks related to technology (Future of Humanity Institute 2018). Thinking of a future with high risks for humanity requires valuing and developing skills as a type of literacy. Why should this be considered? Thinking about the developments in artificial intelligence and superintelligence (Bostrom 2014) makes us wonder if there is any room for the idea of God, religiosity or ethics, and morality. One answer is from Indian thought in which religions and the arts can perhaps trigger creativity, critical thinking, contemplation, awareness of the environment, and conscious silence without mediation of technology.

The fourth dimension approaches RELINs as a way to study religion and society in the future. We recognize that there are challenges to the tenability of religious life in the future. Radical Life Extension, for example, implies human-controlled longevity (Kostick 2019). Technological innovation is therefore not neutral when it comes to its impact on social and religious life (Rivers 2012). But what do I mean by the future? The future I am referring to is that which is born, as a possibility, in the present. There is no future, but only a present. Yet there is no present without the possibility of the future. As a possibility, the future means construction in this present. The future of religions and spirituality is what we are constructing at this moment, for instance the development of super non-human intelligence as Nick Bostrom has pointed out in his ground-breaking study *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies* (2014). From these developments in artificial intelligence, what is the place of God or religious and spiritual ideas? Another concern in using future as the fourth dimension is to recognize how technological innovation has intervened in our human relations, which warn us of the urgency to establish an ethics appropriate to our era (Floridi 2013). Through these subjects, ethical concepts of social justice and equity emerge from deep human and social roots. We cannot forget the changes to the environment and the imminent irreversible effects we can observe today.

**RELINs and peacebuilding in global society**

What is the relation between the three cases of RELINs, the fourfold framework, and peacebuilding in a global society? We can identify some common patterns between the three cases as well as intersections with the fourfold framework that offer glimpses of
peacebuilding. The first is an observed commonality found in interreligious and spiritual exercises about ideas and practices in these cases of REinS. We can identify a creative dialogue between South Asian traditions, which support *ahimsa* and nonviolence. These relations evolve through a process of interreligious dialogues based on art and experiences of *ahimsa*. In the case of the ‘Archive of Earth,’ this process is led by peacebuilders who are involved in their own religious traditions or spiritual practices. The second pattern observed is a 21st-century reinterpretation of practices of *ahimsa* or nonviolence in the social dimension. Many examples can be studied directly in Gandhi’s social and political program (Desai and Vahed 2016). The third pattern observed is how *ahimsa* is taken as a living practice, not as a Sanskrit concept. In other words, the *ahimsa’s* social impact is a creative, dynamic, and living experience that attempts harmony between human beings.

*Ahimsa* and its background are rooted in ancient religious and philosophical traditions of India. Jainism is a clear example of this as well as Buddhism and Hinduism. The case of M. K. Gandhi and his reading of Indian religious and philosophical traditions is a bridge that connects time and antipodes, traditions of thinking, and lifestyles. It represents the persistence of Gandhian *ahimsa* in our time. It must lead to the discovery of the potential of the infinite inner knowledge.

What we observe with the three cases of REinS involves a double movement. As a starting point there are conditions from multiple social dimensions that trigger a response. These social dimensions are rooted in religious identity. The dialogues then create conditions for responding in a secular way to a specific problem. ‘Archive of the Earth’ (Gujarat, India), Standing Rock Movement (United States), and the activities in Sierra Norte of Puebla (Mexico) were mostly triggered by conditions of violence. In these cases, the group of practices were based on Indian traditions such as the two practices I have identified as echoes of religious traditions: *bhavana* (or creative contemplation) and *ahimsa* (or nonviolence). Both practices are intermingled and related, in some cases, to meditative practices, contemplative, creative, as it is explained in the idea of ‘educational poetics’ (Martínez Ruiz 2019), and the case of *ahimsa* as being related to artistry (Bazzeato Deotto 2018).

In the case of Sierra Norte de Puebla, the people developed a better understanding of *ahimsa* as they applied nonviolent practices to their daily lives. For instance, one of the major achievements has been the intervention in Mexican regions where people live with ancient Náhuatl and Totonacu traditions vis-à-vis their Catholic practices. There is an important match between different pre-Hispanic practices and spiritual beliefs and experiences from Gandhian *ahimsa* to protect the earth and environment (Ramírez Cuevas 2014). How this balance is represented in REinS and how such balance allows the recognition of human interreligious potential promote the continuity of life. Both ideas and their corresponding experiences are founded in experiences of the sacred and, in other cases, in the field of ethics.

These cases show how intermingled religious and spiritual practices and eagerness for social equity and justice can promote secular interactions. They provide avenues to be more aware of environmental and ethical concerns. Indeed, Gandhi saw the difficulties of arguing for such an internal truth that ignores the force of violence from the already existing nonviolent strength in the human being. His vision and action integrated a common yearning for a better society. At this point, the echo and the relevance of Gandhi’s *ahimsa* in our times leave us with a contemporary challenge. How do we confront social inequality through practices rooted in spiritual or religious traditions? And how do we encourage practices for peacebuilding?
In the context of violence, a common desire in global society is peace. Beyer (1998) noted at the end of 20th century that the global religious system is about justice, freedom, gender equality, and truth. Such desire runs through the cases of REinS and makes them worthy of the sky that shelters all people engaged in peacebuilding. Ahimsa or nonviolence also implies the constant renewal of andreia, the Greek word for courage. Courage and constant renewal is a twofold rhythm: a desire to go forward and the return to borders. How does such courage nourish religious interactions and spiritual practices in global society? Technology, artificial intelligence, the infosphere, hypercommunication, and globalization are drafting an interconnected world along with a recent pushback to nationalism in our global society. Is it a symptom of our times? Probably such symptom can offer us an explanation as to the place of religion, religiosity, spirituality, and ancient traditions in reshaping today’s human experiences about the sacred. A common yearning in the three cases of REinS is how courage can be the impulse behind the willingness to practice nonviolence and to fight peacefully for peace.

Where do yearning and courage for peacebuilding come from? Is it a deep religious experience or a social activism? This is hard to say. In Gandhian terms the satyagrahi—who makes truth its force—is practicing ascetics of which strength, inner equanimity, and courage are the outcome of such practices. All of these allow satyagrahis to fight by nonviolent means for peace, practicing and training themselves in the methods of nonviolence. So, what does Gandhian ahimsa represent in the context of REinS?

1. A potent force that must begin with manas, which in Sanskrit means the mind.
2. Nonviolence is not merely a physical action. Mind and inner strength are the core sources for peacebuilders (Gandhi 2008).
3. Mind and spiritual practices are clearly central for ahimsa. ‘He who has not overcome all fear cannot practice ahimsa to perfection. The votary of ahimsa has only one fear, that is of God’ (Gandhi 2008, p. 111).

Nonviolence is made of silence: REinS and the noise in the infosphere

In The Fourth Revolution: How the Infosphere is Reshaping Human Reality, Floridi introduces some questions about current concerns. He asks:

What are the risks implicit in transforming the world into a progressively ICT-friendly environment? Are our technologies going to enable and empower us or will they constrain our physical and conceptual spaces, and quietly force us to adjust to them because that is the best, or sometimes the only way to make things work? .

(Floridi 2014, p. vii)

The idea of infosphere as a biosphere, a bubble made by data, information, devices, ICT, connectivity, hypercommunication, but not limited to online interactions, is a category that helps us understand the effects of these technologies in human experience and social interactions, as both are at the basis for understanding how ideas and practices in religions are affected by technological developments.

To study what is happening to religion in global society, we need to consider the power of technologies in reshaping, constraining, empowering, or forcing us to adjust our experiences and the concepts in our lives. Of course, such study could be highly complex.
I offer one example of the conceptual basis of these relations that could contribute to understand why ICT is related to current proposals for peacebuilding as well as a way to illustrate another approach to REinS from the outlook of ICT impacts in social relations: ‘Can ICTs help us to solve our most pressing social and environmental problems, or are they going to exacerbate them?’ (Floridi 2014, p. vii). Practices of nonviolence and peace are made of silence, inner strength, and truth. But on the contrary, we are building not just a beneficial infosphere but a noisy and violent biosphere of data and information. Probably the cases of REinS are grounded in general in silence. What is the role of silence as a religious or spiritual echo in secular cases for peacebuilding?

According to Radhakrishnan (1994), within the self lies truth, the state of freedom, a state full of consciousness and silence, stillness, and therein—as in many religions—lies the undivided nature that gives life to this universe. If the self is a pure being and, therefore, is not disturbed by noise, it is confirmed in the non-dualistic tradition of India that therein lies the truth. That is close to other traditions because the vital search for truth and liberty stimulates the capacity to maintain desire, strength, resistance, and impeccable nobility through nonviolence, ahimsa. It is this impeccable nobility, one of the fragrance of truth presence, that underlies the participative will of those who practice ahimsa (Martínez Ruiz 2018).

The experience of ahimsa reveals that nonviolence consists of silence, devoid of the noise of digital hypercommunication. So, peacebuilding, as observed in the three cases of REinS, reveals the interconnected unity between human beings. The state of unity is also characteristic of the strength that underlies the nonviolence and yearning of peace. Even a glimpse of peace through ahimsa practices reveals to us—amidst the sophisticated slavery and violence of these times—the signs of freedom. Signs that suddenly bring to light an experience that is becoming sharper, clearer, unquestionable, full: the memory of truth that already lives within us. What we see in the three cases of REinS are glimpses of truth and freedom.

The experience of working for nonviolence in environments of violence requires a method that continuously guides us. Greek philosophical thought calls this method odos. Indian tradition refers to this idea using several terms, such as the Sanskrit marga (path) (Monier-Williams 1999). The roads or paths towards truth and freedom are many, just like the methods used to construct nonviolent societies. Moving along these paths requires a method infused with the force of truth relevant to contemporary societies. This underscores the importance of the method that creatively guides the lives of those who assume the role of builders of nonviolence.

What is then one of the methods for peacebuilding underlying REinS? A method that rests upon the force of truth, satyagraha, which is the mental, social, ascetics force that manifests practical ahimsa. The method is framed by discipline, as the ascetics. Satyagraha and ahimsa require an impeccable, demanding, perfected discipline. At the same time, this discipline leads us to a glimpse of freedom. Ahimsa is a set of practices for our time; satyagraha is a method for the construction of peace and both appear in the 21st-century version of REinS. Ahimsa is expressed not as a concept but in an artistic way stimulated by the rhythms and pauses of art. Rhythms capture the beauty of a life offered up to nonviolence.

Satyagraha becomes a method for life and ahimsa a way of life for peacebuilding in the middle of noise, consumerism, and violence of sophisticated societies. Through practical focus, satyagraha, and ahimsa, this scope breaks with the condition of something to be stored away. Like an object, satyagraha becomes a method for life and ahimsa a way of life amidst noise. Dictated by the rhythms of silence (full experience devoid of the infosphere’s noisy and aesthetic pleasure), its words, images, and evocations capture the sounds of the earth,
stillness of peace, and the exemplary actions of a human being like Gandhi. This fragrance fills the path and the method for peacebuilding so that others may recreate the force of truth—an aroma so powerful that it can construct a nonviolent, plural, and global society. That is why *ahimsa* is made by silence and truth. Paradoxically, what we are doing today is a race to increase the noise in the infosphere. The practices of peacebuilding are religious echoes.

**Concluding remarks: religious echoes and the youth**

Working to reduce inequality and recognizing the state of plenitude that already exists within us can help to work on nonviolence, and peacebuilding is my first concluding remark. The proposal that I offer for consideration here is the persistence of *ahimsa*, from a religious background to be interpreted in secular contexts. That is to say that REinS are related to a simple question: What is the message of Gandhian *ahimsa* for the youth of today? How can we achieve a culture of peace that a young person longs for? How should we consider it from the perspective and necessities of contemporary youth?

*Ahimsa* in the case of ‘Archive of the earth’ (in India), or the alliance between Tosepan Cooperative Union (in México) and OraWorldMandala, are examples that demonstrate the desire for nonviolence (Bazzeato Deotto 2018). In both cases we saw the victory of *ahimsa*, an emphasis on mental equanimity, detachment, nonviolence, truth, creativity, imagination, and the arts as expression of what has been learned. To this end, the yearning for peace was considered the point of departure in the secular process. Meditative practices began by acknowledging something that already exists in the human being. Should not such an experience perhaps be a right for the young people of our times?

Right now, it is worthwhile to question which kind of citizenship and religiosity we expect young people to construct and which we are promoting with our current social models or ideas on global, plural, and interconnected society. Such questioning in REinS cases should be studied in the light of realities such as the infosphere, artificial intelligence, unemployment, and the future. Youth and digital technologies constitute a web of contradictions, but they do not necessarily cancel each other out. They are involved in an exchange power capable of transforming religious life in a complex web of technological risks. And yet religious echoes reveal that a different form of human existence is completely possible in global society. Children and youth can work for peacebuilding and freedom.

Our time requires new paths to generate specialized and refined knowledge that critically evaluates the imposition on youth of lifestyles guided by standards of consumption. What I mean is that we need to nourish human development for modern youth through paths that are not entirely guided by economic rationality or by noisy hypercommunication. Alarming social inequalities make us reconsider the price of unfair societies that lack creative and imaginative liberty and critical thinking. The practices of *ahimsa* by Gandhi constitute the most relevant projects of peacebuilding in the 20th century, whose persistence carries over into our century (Gandhi 2016). The current duty, as it is described in REinS cases, is not to see those practices of *ahimsa* as archaeological remains, but to rethink our way of directing the future of contemporary global society.

The enormous duty we have before us in our plural, global, and multireligious societies is similar to that which Gandhi assumed in his historical context. We are in the midst of an uncontainable fragmentation of thought, and the dismantling skills and critical capacities for an *êthos*. Gandhi, upon his return to India from South Africa, assumed the huge challenge of transcending differences through *satyagraha*, rooted in Indian thought. This leads to an ancient, and simultaneously contemporary, search that is the basis of REinS: the search for
truth and knowledge (Gandhi 1921). This means learning and recreating the lives of sages of ancient religious and spiritual traditions. Truth and knowledge appear to young people, perhaps, as glimpses that would allow them to reach higher goals. One of these, which can no longer be postponed, is to create a society that strives for nonviolence and peace. It is a society that upholds human dignity, equality, and the integration of spirituality in everyday life. In such scenarios Reins can be nourished as a method for peacebuilding in global societies for the coming decades. Religious echoes are great bridges that today help us avoid the freefall towards estrangement and dehumanization in our societies.

References


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