Gandhi’s Corporeal Nonviolence: Ascetics, Warriors, and Ecological Citizenship

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In this essay, I argue that a clearer understanding of Gandhi’s nonviolent politics requires attending to his treatment of the body. Such specific attention to the corporeal elements of Gandhi’s nonviolence will reveal that he provides us with an unexpected source of ethical thinking about contemporary political problems. Many readings of Gandhi have focused, not incorrectly, on the ascetic component of his nonviolent project. However, I intend to argue that there are several problems with focusing solely on the ascetic components of his project, to the neglect of others. Gandhi’s nonviolence incorporates elements of both the brahmin or ascetic, as well as the ksatriya or warrior. While Gandhi is often read as a denier of the body, we cannot ignore those elements of his project that seek to center the human body as the very locus of political action, making his thought warriorlike, aggressive and confrontational, rather than simply ascetic and world-denying.

Thus, reading Gandhi through the lens of what I call his “corporeal” strategies of nonviolence reveals a concern with the role of human embodiment in politics that is more than simply ascetic. I will argue that this long-overdue emphasis on the warriorlike component of Gandhi’s nonviolence has a particular resonance in speaking to debates about the contemporary crisis of environmental degradation. Gandhi provides us with an ethico-political response to this crisis which is focused on the centrality of human embodiment. To respond ethically to our current environmental crisis may be a Gandhian endeavour, but one that reads Gandhi in a very specific way: as an advocate of a warriorlike and corporeal nonviolence. He reminds us that there is a new way in which political action can revolve around the primacy of embodied and warriorlike exchange. This way is neither violent nor does it require brute, martial strength, but rather relies on disciplined and conscious self-scrutiny, sacrifice, and the capacity to endure embodied pain through self-suffering. Gandhi can thus be read as an advocate of a certain form
of “ecological” citizenship, focused on the fulfillment of obligations to the political community through the scrutiny of one’s corporeal consumptive behaviours, as well as through the literal placement of one’s own body on the frontlines of political contestation.

**Gandhi’s corporeal strategies of nonviolence**

Gandhi has long been seen as someone who wants to transcend or erase bodily needs in service of truth-seeking. But less well-recognized is that aspect of Gandhi’s thought which seeks to center the body in an active and engaged manner, as the very locus of political life. Following Ashis Nandy’s use of a characteristically Indic binary, I will show how Gandhi’s approach to the body is both *brahminical* (ascetic) and *ksatriyatic* (warriorlike). That is, it incorporates both the lifestyle of the monastic renunciate who withdraws from worldly, sensual needs, as well as that of the warrior who embraces the body and corporeality as central to political exchange.

Gandhian nonviolence has two main elements: nonviolence as the primary mode of truth-seeking, and nonviolence as the primary instrument of political action and change. I refer to these as the corporeal strategies of nonviolence. In both of these strategies, I will show, corporeality and embodiment play a crucial role, for Gandhi places the condition of human embodiment squarely at the center of politics and political action.

1. **Nonviolence as a mode of truth-seeking: the Brahm in or ascetic**

Gandhi’s nonviolence is connected to the most fundamental human task which, for him, is truth-seeking. For Gandhi, the spiritual quest for truth served as the driving purpose for all other realms of life, especially for the political. Moreover, the pursuit of *ahimsa* or nonviolence was crucially connected to this quest for truth, and Gandhi repeatedly suggests that while truth is
the end, *ahimsa* or nonviolence is the means. Truth and nonviolence are so intertwined, that it is practically impossible to disentangle them.iii

It is important to note here that *ahimsa* was a term Gandhi borrowed from Jainism, which was highly influential in Gujarat where Gandhi was born and raised.iv Broadly speaking, *ahimsa* means the complete absence of violence and ill-will toward all forms of life. Minimally, *ahimsa* means a refusal to do harm: “in its negative form,” Gandhi claims, “it means not injuring any living being, whether by body or mind.”v But for Gandhi, nonviolence was understood in a broader sense, as more than simply non-injury. Beyond the negative constraint, nonviolence was for him also a total ethical system which referred to the cultivation of certain virtues. *Ahimsa*, in the most expansive sense, means the willingness to treat all beings as one’s very self, a complete absence of ill-will, and goodwill toward all life.vi For Gandhi, the pursuit of this *ahimsa* was an entire way of life wherein constant self-examination and rigorous discipline are combined with virtues such as humility, sincerity, and selfless service to others. *Ahimsa*, Gandhi claims, “is a great vow….severe penance is required for its practice.”vii

How does the body fit into this search for truth through nonviolence? Strict adherence to total *ahimsa* constitutes a systematic training of the individual will, leading to a transformation of the mind. This training of the will, which increases the individual’s ability to see the truth, is strengthened by conscious, disciplined self-suffering through austerity and self-control.viii Through this conscious suffering, Gandhi claims, “we understand more clearly the difference between what is everlasting and what is not; we learn to distinguish between what is our duty and what is not…the evil within us diminishes from day to day.”ix The monastic virtue of renunciation allowed the truth-seeker to withdraw attention from the senses, and thus focus her mind and moral vision on the all-important goal of truth. The more consciously one chose to
experience the suffering induced by such withdrawals, the more clarifying insights and spiritual alertness would be produced.\textsuperscript{x}

Gandhi was known for his adherence to a strict form of asceticism he called brahmacharya: control over all the senses in thought, word and deed.\textsuperscript{xi} He imposed the strictest standards of austerity on himself, and the variety of self-disciplinary strategies that went into Gandhi’s own relentless pursuit of ahimsa — particularly in the realm of celibacy — are well-known. Gandhi believed that no sphere of life, whether it was diet, nutrition, sexuality, hygiene, or medicine, was exempt from the requirements of total ahimsa. His lifelong struggle to gain control over his senses and over his sensual desires is nothing if not well-chronicled.\textsuperscript{xii} He conducted these ascetic struggles publicly, wrote extensively about them, and often urged others to engage in similar struggles. He took a vow of celibacy in his forties, and renounced all sexual activity. He fasted extensively and struggled with his diet, aiming eventually to subsist on as little — and as unprocessed — food as possible. He was keenly interested in nature cures, and was convinced that most ailments could be cured by the ingestion of fewer, rather than greater, quantities of food and medicines. He wrote about personal hygiene and sanitation (tooth-brushing, bathing, bodily waste disposal), and was actively opposed to waste of all kinds. His insistence on reducing one’s sartorial needs to the bare minimum — exemplified by his own loincloth made of cloth he had spun himself — is well-known. All of these struggles, he repeatedly emphasized, were related to nonviolence understood in the broadest sense, as a method of seeking truth through asceticism.

2. Nonviolence as the primary mode of political exchange: the kshatriya or warrior
Despite its ascetic and otherworldly moments, Gandhi’s nonviolence has an activist, confrontational and warriorlike quality, which uses the body as a tool of political action. This activist concept of truth-seeking in politics is still ascetic, in that it continues to call for the restraint of the passions and the desires, but it also places the body at the center of political exchange and action in two ways. First, Gandhi considers self-suffering as integral to nonviolent political action. A crucial component of Gandhi’s nonviolent method is the practice of satyagraha, which literally means “holding firm to the truth,” or “truth-force.” As the practical accompaniment to ahimsa, satyagraha includes the political tactics of resistance, such as civil disobedience and active non-cooperation in the form of strikes, fasts, sit-ins, and deliberate law-breaking. Crucial to the practice of satyagraha is conscious, disciplined and public self-suffering in service of a particular political position.

This conscious disciplined suffering must be deliberately provoked, through public acts of opposition to a particular regime of untruth. In undertaking satyagraha, the activist must be willing to suffer nonviolently, undergo punishment, and invite legal sanction if necessary. Suffering allows the activist to demonstrate the strength of her conviction, while simultaneously acknowledging the potential fallibility of her moral position. Self-suffering in satyagraha is also a discursive act, in that it attempts to achieve the moral conversion of the adversary. It serves as the test of true conviction, for if one believes so strongly in the validity of a political position, and wishes to persuade others of it, then one should be willing to suffer for it, in a way that harms only oneself. In so doing, one has engaged in a non-verbal yet powerfully persuasive form of discourse about the strength of one’s beliefs, for an act of self-suffering sends the following message: “This is how strongly I feel about this. I am willing to suffer for it, not only to show you the strength of my conviction, but also because I respect you as a fellow truth-
seeker, and would like to try and persuade you of the truth as I see it. I don’t intend to harm or to humiliate you.” As such, it is a discursive act conducted through corporeal means.

The use of the body as an instrument is a necessary step in nonviolent political action, for it is the very condition of embodiment that allows human beings to act with conviction in the political arena, while speaking volumes about their conviction. Nonviolent political action has meaning primarily because of the possibility that the political actor may eventually have to undergo physical pain as a test of her conviction, as a demonstration of her moral authority on the matter. Thus, Gandhi considers the condition of embodiment—and the vulnerability to physical harm that it entails—as central to the capacity for correct political action. Unlike both Machiavelli and Hobbes, who (in different ways) use this vulnerability as the bargaining chip against which to secure political cooperation, Gandhi seeks to use the body as tool for demonstrating the strength of moral and political convictions in the arena of conflict. And, unlike much of post-Enlightenment liberalism, which seeks to minimize physical vulnerability by protecting the body as an inviolable sphere and grounding political exchange in the “higher” human capacities of intellect, speech and discourse, Gandhi insists that meaningful political exchange must include corporeal involvement, for it requires consciously putting the body at risk to the attacks and violations of others.

But there is a second sense in which Gandhi places the body at the center of all political action and exchange. He also made it a point of publicizing every minute (and potentially distasteful) detail about his bodily self-discipline.\textsuperscript{xvi} He seemed to suggest that it was only in discussing the most primordial aspects of sensual life that he could appropriately pursue\textit{ ahimsa}. Most of his confessional writings pertain to the experiments he conducts in each of these realms. His struggles with celibacy over the years—both within the context of his marriage, as
well as the notorious experiments involving sleeping naked with his young nieces as a test of his self-restraint—are well-documented. Equally confessional and detailed are his writings on topics such as nutrition, health, diet, and even masturbation and excretion. Two writings by Gandhi which receive little attention in discussions of Gandhi’s thought are *Key to Health* and *Self-Restraint vs. Self-Indulgence*. Both were written as advocacy for the public health of the nation, and contain detailed musings on questions such as diet, nutrition and sexuality.\textsuperscript{xvii}

Elsewhere, Gandhi wrote extensively on the health value of goat milk, the use of earth poultice to cure constipation, the relationship between breathing exercises and “self-abuse,” and the importance of proper mastication.\textsuperscript{xviii}

This publicizing of intensely private acts was, I submit, more than the quirk of an eccentric personality. Gandhi was involved in a larger campaign that connected political engagement and self-discipline with the conscious public expression, monitoring and self-surveillance of visceral needs and primordial urges. Gandhi’s goal seems to be to highlight these primordial elements in service of seeking truth through *ahimsa*. As Joseph Alter asserts, Gandhi’s concern with his body cannot simply be understood as an obsessive compulsion to exercise self-control; rather, for him, nonviolence was, an issue of public health.\textsuperscript{xxvix} Moral reform and public health were intertwined, and the political strength of the nation seemed to depend for Gandhi quite directly on the micro-politics of bodily self-discipline. His advocacy of bodily self-control, through intricate discussions of nature cures, mud packs, hip baths, breathing exercises, and recipes for encouraging celibacy, suggests an intimate relationship between the corporeal functions and the pursuit of nonviolence. A strong, healthy nation, Gandhi suggests, requires strong, healthy citizens, whose health and robustness is a result of their ability to discipline their bodies.\textsuperscript{xx}
But even more fundamentally, Gandhi seems to suggest that it is only in carefully surveying and monitoring one’s own bodily functions—one’s base, corporeal urges—that one can pursue the political goals of nonviolence and the service of the nation. Those who wish to engage in the political duty of pursuing nonviolence must pay careful attention to and publicly struggle with their diets, their sexual habits, their health and their excretion, so as to develop both the physical and moral strength to pursue the truth, and the political will to fight injustice and serve the nation.\textsuperscript{xxi} By publicly revealing one’s struggle with one’s innermost desires, one also demonstrates the will to acknowledge (rather than conceal) one’s flaws and improve oneself.

In this way, Gandhi brings embodiment squarely to the center of political life. Joseph Alter tells us that Gandhi conceived of morality as a problem in which Truth and biology were equally implicated.\textsuperscript{xxii} For Gandhi, the problem of politics is at once both moral and biological, both sensory and suprasensual. Politics and political engagement become intimately connected to those bodily appetites and functions, that are normally relegated to the realm of the uncivilized, the savage, or the unclean.

In the classical Hindu tradition, the ascetic figure of the Brahmin, characterized as contemplative, withdrawn from the world, passive, and focused on overcoming sensual pleasures, is often contrasted with the kshatriya or warrior, who is martial, aggressive, passionate, active, and in touch with the world of sensuality. The politics Gandhi advocates may certainly be ascetic in that it ultimately focuses on the conquest of desire, and unconditional acceptance of the violence of the Other; indeed, the ascetic elements of Gandhi’s ahimsa tend to receive far more attention that the warriorlike ones.\textsuperscript{xxiii} But this reading of Gandhi’s nonviolence reminds us that to act politically in service of truth or justice is a two-pronged effort: ascetic in its self-denial, austerity and renunciation, but also warriorlike in its aggressive, active
confrontation with bodily desires, and its literal placement of the body on the frontlines of political contestation. Gandhi not only asks the political agent to locate her own body at the center of political contestation, he also intimates that a moral politics must incorporate both ascetic and warriorlike elements. This warriorlike action involves two processes: on the one hand, provoking the opponent by breaking laws and inviting physical pain and suffering as a way of highlighting one’s conviction; and on the other, confronting one’s own visceral and primordial self, aggressively and publicly scrutinizing it, and confronting those parts of it that refuse to be tamed.

*Environmental ethics and Gandhian corporeal nonviolence: the focus on ontological holism and asceticism*

In what may seem like an unlikely turn, I now argue that this corporeal nonviolence can speak to the problem of environmental degradation. However, such an effort must proceed with caution, acknowledging the temptation to read into Gandhi’s thought assumptions about environmentalism which are seldom directly supported by textual evidence. While Gandhi’s life and writings have clearly served as tremendous inspiration for many environmental activists and movements, some analysts make the leap to assume that Gandhi was naturally concerned with environmental preservation. In fact, Gandhi was remarkably silent on the question of the inherent value of nature, or of human beings’ relationship to their external environment. Still, given his focus on asceticism, his emphasis on nonviolence, and his critiques of modern civilization, it is quite tempting to read into Gandhi’s thinking an environmental ethic based on a mistaken set of assumptions.
First, some analysts attribute to Gandhi a belief in the inherent value of all living things, a continuity between human and non-human forms of life, and thus a prohibition on violence toward all living beings, all taken as the logical foundation for Gandhi’s preoccupation with the problem of sustainability. South Asian philosophical traditions—Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism—by which Gandhi was inspired are routinely characterized as less violent and anthropocentric, more holistic in their cosmologies, more sensitive to the continuities between the human and non-human worlds than the Judeo-Christian traditions. For instance, Hinduism is said to have a pronounced ontological continuity between divine and particular living beings, as well as between human and non-human life. Where the Abrahamic faiths are said to be God-centric, in that the divine Creator is above all else, including nature, and the worship of anything in nature is considered sacrilegious, no such prohibition is found in Hinduism, where divinity is manifested in the form of the natural elements and non-human life, and thus sacralized.xxv Bhikhu Parekh explicitly attributes such a view to Gandhi, suggesting that it forms the basis of a “cosmocentric” philosophical anthropology which “establishes a more balanced and respectful relationship between him and the natural world.”xxvi

Other scholars turn to the importance of karmic theory within these traditions. All beings are mutually dependent upon one another, for any living being could be a relative, a loved one or great sage in another life. In turn, this sense of mutual interdependence and connectedness gives rise to nonviolence toward all living beings.xxvii Because all life is sacred, and because human beings find themselves in continuity with other forms of life, injury to any form of life is a violation of that interconnectedness. Arne Naess, who coined the term “deep ecology” and readily admits his debt to Gandhi, takes this even a step further: self-realization is the goal of
human life, and since self-realization means realizing your identity as one with all living beings, violence against any living being is violence against the self.\textsuperscript{xxviii}

Steeped as he was in both the Hindu and Jain traditions, Gandhi is often said to demonstrate this reverence for the interconnectedness of all life, and from these assumptions, some scholars expect to find in Gandhi’s thought an environmental ethic.\textsuperscript{xxix} It may not be wrong to attribute to Gandhi this reverence for all life. Gandhi may have occasionally stated that the nonhuman world was of some inherent value, or that animals have the same moral worth as human beings.\textsuperscript{xxx} But the few statements found in his writings on the value of nature or the nonhuman world are randomly scattered, and scarcely amount to a reflective ontological position on the relationship between human and non-human life. Any thorough examination of Gandhi’s thought reveals that he makes little reference to ecology, nor does he echo the Vedic tradition’s emphasis on the divine manifesting itself in the form of nature. Hermeneutically speaking, one cannot assume that his rare references to the relationship between the human and non-human worlds constitute a discernible foundation for environmental concerns.

What is overwhelmingly evident instead is a persistent and self-conscious concern with the very human goal of truth-seeking. It is in this sense that we may call Gandhi’s thinking somewhat anthropocentric: his thinking is squarely focused on the requirements of human life, and despite his emphasis on \textit{ahimsa} or nonviolence toward all beings, what is of ultimate importance is the human being’s goal of truth-seeking. The few vague hints Gandhi gives us that he may understand the natural world as inherently valuable pale in comparison to the repeated emphasis on the value of human life and the importance of its goals.

A second common way to read Gandhi as a resource for environmental ethical practice is by turning to the kind of asceticism described earlier. It has been argued for instance that
adherence to the *sramanic* or renunciatory versions of Hinduism and Jainism leads to the practice of virtues like austerity and non-possession (*aparigraha*). Stories of Gandhi’s frugality with respect to natural resources and his mania for what would today be called recycling are legendary. This is evidenced by some of the rules of his *ashram*: “The split twigs used for toothbrushing should be washed well, and collected in a pot. When they dry up, they should be used for starting a fire, the idea being that nothing which can be used should be thrown away.” Gandhi had strict instructions to his *ashram* staff to re-use all the envelopes in which mail was received. This impetus toward austerity is seen as somehow connected to his concern for nature, because consumptive patterns and behaviours are seen as central to our ability to conserve resources. But Vinay Lal also reminds us rightly that it is Gandhi’s practices and conduct, rather than his writings, which suggest “an ecological vision of life.” As Lal himself implies, this is very different from claiming that Gandhi’s asceticism emerged from any philosophical commitment to the preservation of natural resources. Rather, as we have seen, his primary philosophical commitment was to truth-seeking, of which asceticism was an important instrument. Construed in this way, Gandhi can only be seen as an unintentional advocate for environmental preservation, rather than expressing a commitment to asceticism for the purpose of conservation.

A third presumption is that Gandhi’s critique of modern civilization, and its accompanying prescriptions for the revival of rural, non-industrial life, are evidence of his environmental concerns. Heavily influenced by Ruskin and Thoreau, Gandhi was fiercely critical of modern industrial development in *Hind Swaraj*, and recommended the village as the ideal form of economic and social organization. His writings are “littered with remarks on man’s exploitation of nature” and we have his famous pronouncement that the earth has enough to
satisfy everyone’s needs but not everyone’s greed. As we shall soon see, however, Gandhi’s critique of modern civilization was precisely that it violated conditions for human flourishing, rather than the fact that it was destructive of nature. While Ramachandra Guha is right to suggest that there are “ecological undertones to his moral critique of western industrialization and urban-industrial development,” it should be recalled that Gandhi’s concerns about modern industrial civilization are also, in a sense, anthropocentric: modern industrial civilization is problematic for him because it violates conditions for the ideal forms of human life.

My point, then, is not that we cannot read environmental concerns into Gandhi’s thought. Gandhi would certainly have found environmentalism worthy of consideration, and many of his prescriptions regarding the ideal forms of social and political organization lend themselves to insights about sustainability. But this is rather different from claiming that such insights are prima facie already present in Gandhi’s thought, because Gandhi found nature to be of intrinsic value, or because the purpose of the ascetic life is to conserve natural resources, or because modern industrial civilization is destructive of nature. Rather, given his relative silence on environmental issues, insights about sustainability will have to be excavated from his thought, accompanied by a keen sense of intellectual honesty about the hermeneutic exercises required in this endeavour. In so doing, we may find ourselves transplanting elements of Gandhi’s thought into the framework of our modern concerns, perhaps different from his. Given that “environmentalism” is itself a recently-constructed mode of knowledge and inquiry — an entirely new episteme that is only a few decades old — any such inquiry has perhaps to be creatively anachronistic, and somewhat ahistorical. As Vinay Lal reminds us, it is undoubtedly possible to see the environmentalist in Gandhi, “particularly if one is willing to engage in certain
I would submit that it is only through engaging self-consciously and cautiously in such exercises that we may attribute environmental insights to Gandhi.

**Environmental ethics and Gandhian corporeal nonviolence: the focus on warriorlike and public self-suffering**

I wish to argue now that the most potent implications of Gandhian nonviolence for environmental ethics go beyond the presumptions described above. In fact, it is Gandhi’s specifically corporeal understanding of nonviolence which is relevant to the crisis of sustainability. A Gandhian response to environmental degradation, I will argue, asks us to look at the structuring of corporeal desire. It requires not only an aggressive confrontation and struggle with corporeal desire, but a willingness to understand corporeal desires as public in a certain sense, as prone to distortion and manipulation, and ultimately, as amenable to conscious attention, scrutiny and re-cultivation.

In what sense might this be the case? First, Gandhi’s corporeal nonviolence reminds us that what we do with our bodies in the realm of the “private” can in fact have tremendous ramifications for collective life. Recall that Gandhi refused to relegate certain aspects of bodily life to the private sphere, insisting on publicizing what seemed like intensely private and distasteful details of bodily life. His insistence on bringing into public view those baser parts of humanness obscures the distinction between public and private by making each minute detail of corporeal life heavy with political implications. In a strange convergence, Gandhi shares with feminist thinkers—in particular with Foucauldian and/or poststructuralist feminists—the insight that the body is necessarily a site of political exchange, action and contestation.
Earlier modern constructions of the public-private dichotomy relied on the idea that “biological ties, particularly those of the sexes, are relegated to family. They are not only non-political, they are also protected against the intrusion of politics.” The separation of the oikos from politea goes back to Greek life, and modern political thought solidified this idea that the private domain was defined by the bodily and the biological, by such things as ties of blood, sexual needs and desires, reproduction, gendered division of labour among the sexes. Indeed, Hannah Arendt, following Hegel, is perhaps the most famous exponent of such a view. It is with the emergence of the late modern feminist movements that the personal famously becomes political, and the politicization of gender brings about a necessary blurring of boundaries between public and private. What was once within the realm of oikos—family relations, reproductive labour, sexual interaction—is now ineluctably in the realm of the polis.

Gandhi is similarly engaged, I believe, in the project of demonstrating that things considered private and personal—bodily functions, dietary habits, waste disposal—must be seen as heavy with collective political implications. To see the personal as political and the body as the locus of political contestation need not imply taking literally Gandhi’s call for public confessions about masturbation or excretion habits. Rather, from the perspective of environmental ethics, it involves seeing the most basic corporeal impulses to feed, clothe, shelter and nurture our bodies as political acts, because of the manner in which they involve the consumption of resources. Decisions once considered strictly private when seen from the perspective of the oikos-politea dichotomy—what to eat, where to obtain food from, how to dispose of bodily waste, what sorts of clothes to wear—can be seen as necessarily political, because they ultimately bear on our (mis)management of steadily dwindling collective resources. A warriorlike Gandhian response to crisis of environmental degradation would allow an
increasing blurring of the *oikos-politea* dichotomy. On this view, we may no longer be able to insist that certain kinds of behaviours and choices pertaining to corporeal things are private, and therefore immune from public or political consideration. Moreover, a healthy political life, on this Gandhian view, might necessarily involve our ability to struggle with what are often considered private behaviours and desires.

This brings us to the next environmental insight of Gandhi’s warriorlike corporeal nonviolence, which is that desires are elastic and easily manipulable, requiring conscious attention and scrutiny as such. It is sometimes tempting to read Gandhi’s understanding of the body as utterly primitive, visceral and animalistic, presided over by the less primitive and more refined faculties of self-control and self-monitoring. Many contemporary feminists, following Foucault, attend carefully to the way in which power constructs those desires and urges thought to be “natural” or “presocial.” Gandhi, in contrast, sometimes seems to hold a simplistic view of the body as “natural”, of primitive desires and urges as “given,” to be tamed by a cultivating moral faculty.

But if we read Gandhi’s critique of modern civilization, it becomes clear that he is keenly attentive not only to the ways in which desires can be artificially constructed, but also to the ethical impact that this construction of desire may have on human life. In his seminal text, *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi articulates an extensive critique of modern civilization, and provides an alternative vision of conditions under which human life can flourish. Although some passages are surprisingly crude and polemical, his critique can also be read as a remarkably prescient diagnosis of the effect of modern culture on the concepts of need and desire.

The problem with modern civilization for Gandhi was threefold. First, it made bodily and material welfare the object of life. Because it elevates the pursuit of material wealth and...
makes available newer and more complex forms of such pursuits, modern civilization prevents human beings from pursuing the truth, by unbridling the passions and increasing the potential indulgences available to humankind. Second, the proliferation of machinery, modern technology and mass production restricts the human capacity for manual labour, artificially increasing human needs and taking away human self-sufficiency. In passages that are oddly reminiscent of Marx, Gandhi connects humanness with manual labour, and decries the manner in which modern machinery enslaves human beings to one another and to the control of the producer. By forcing humans to be dependent on others for fulfilling their most basic needs, machinery takes away the human being’s basic freedom to be self-reliant for their own sustenance.

Third, the urbanization of modern civilization destroys the simplicity and self-sufficiency of human life. Gandhi idealized the village as the most basic unit of social, political and economic organization where people could lead simple lives in which they provided for themselves through their own labour. Of course, the only way the village could continue to be the source of sustenance would be if people’s material needs and desires were kept from growing, and were restricted to the level of what they could produce manually.

What I wish to emphasize here are not Gandhi’s recommendations for manual labour, living in villages, or eschewing anything produced by machinery. Rather, I suggest we look for the theory of human flourishing that lies implicit within his critique of modern civilization. When read in conjunction with his call for self-scrutiny and surveillance of corporeal desires, it presents us with a fairly sophisticated understanding of the way in which desires, rather than being “natural” urges, are subject to construction by a variety of forces. Human beings, Gandhi suggests in these passages, flourish when they are able-bodied and physically robust, rather than becoming lazy and dependent on others to fulfill their most basic needs. They flourish when
they are self-sufficient, cannot be exploited by others on whom they depend for their sustenance, and when their material needs are limited such that they can be easily fulfilled. The ideal forms of social and economic organization are those in which we are neither lazy, physically atrophied, dependent on others for sustenance, nor vulnerable to exploitation by those who control our material well-being. 

This critique of modern civilization and its attendant theory of human flourishing also suggests that human desires can be distorted, artificially magnified and often lead astray, and that this distortion can have ethical implications for the world around us. We can easily be led into becoming dependent upon larger commercial entities of modern industry for our material subsistence and consumption, and therefore to having those desires manipulated. Rather than seeing corporeal needs and desires as natural, visceral or presocial, Gandhi suggests, in fact, that the very concept of necessity is vulnerable to distortion.

I read Gandhi as offering us the insight here that there is something empowering about bringing this distortion to our own attention, and finding ways to scrutinize, re-educate and reform our patterns of needs and desires. Gandhi sees human beings as having the capacity for self-examination, for holding their own needs and desires up to the light of conscious attention, and for moving toward an independence in which these desires and needs are no longer held hostage to such manipulation. The warriorlike corporeal strategy of nonviolence becomes an important environmental ethical responsibility, if we see the surveillance of corporeal needs and desires as an act of conscious self-scrutiny in order to liberate ourselves from the collective manipulation of desire.

In so doing, we need not replicate the extreme ascetic self-control and confessional self-surveillance that Gandhi inflicted on himself. This need not require the level of deep, abiding
commitment to *brahmacharya* that Gandhi advocated and seemed to have attained: no one is required to live in villages, to give up sexuality altogether, or to live entirely non-industrial lives. We need not reject the technological and material advances such as modern medicine and electronic communication that have doubtless improved the quality of human life.

Instead, we can think of human fulfillment of corporeal desires and consumption of material resources as happening in a conscious, disciplined and controlled manner—rather than with abandon and lack of vigilance to the underlying motivations and patterns of such consumption. Gandhi’s corporeal strategy of self-surveillance may require simply that human beings bring conscious attention to their material desires, that they examine and scrutinize the source of these desires as well as their consumptive tendencies, and ask what the implications might be of their decision to consume one thing rather than another, or in one way rather than another. Does consuming this particular kind of food have any negative implications for the world I live in? Does giving money to this particular commercial entity for the pursuit of this particular material pleasure have any implications for the world I live in? Does disposing of this waste in one way or another have any impact on the world around us? For Gandhi, the individual political actor is made agentic and deeply empowered by her own capacity for self-surveillance and attention to these habits once she can begin to see the connection between her own desires and the ways in which they are structured and manipulated by others.

This view of human desire should resonate deeply within the realm of environmental ethical practice. It speaks directly to the modern liberal prejudice of taking all individual material desires as legitimate and beyond scrutiny, without asking the question of how these desires might be artificially inflated and manipulated. It is clear by now that the unrestrained fulfillment of certain kinds of material and corporeal desires have ethical implications for the environment.
Much of what human beings now consume as a need or a desire is done so in an unconscious way, and ends up being environmentally irresponsible, from diet to clothing to natural resources for bodily functions to fuel for basic household and transportation needs. And analyses of environmental practice also acknowledge that much of this unrestrained and unconscious consumption occurs within a matrix of choices that are already structured by the manipulation of large commercial entities.\textsuperscript{lv}

It might be objected that the sorts of corporeal desires and that give rise to environmental degradation are surely not the most basic ones of the sort with which Gandhi seemed to struggle, but rather higher-order consumptions of more complex and refined goods. Shouldn’t the focus then be on luxury consumption such as air travel or designer cosmetics, rather than on the simplicity of things like diet or nutrition? However, we now know that there are dangerous environmental implications to the most basic functional needs like diet. Much contemporary literature chronicling the connection between environmental degradation and how food is produced reiterates that choices about what to eat and where to obtain it are now heavy with implications for the planet.\textsuperscript{lv} Of course, in a sense this has always been the case, for no human activity throughout history has ever been entirely free of environmental impact. But we now live in a time when this impact matters far more because the costs of not considering it are potentially much higher. And we may turn here to Gandhi precisely because he recognized the connection between basic corporal needs and collective ethical impact, while offering us a model of how to live in a way that turns the scrutiny of such needs into an instinctive and regular ethical practice.

The other, more potent objection to this reading is that it may end up locating ethical responsibility for environmental degradation in the wrong place. That is, the majority of environmentally destructive behaviour arises from commercial entities, rather than from
individuals consuming for their basic needs. No matter how much conscious scrutiny we bring to our diet or energy consumption, if agribusinesses and power companies continue to be subsidized in producing the cheapest sources of nutrition and energy in ways that are the most environmentally damaging, then individual choices to eat certain foods or turn down the heat can only have so much impact. And, to call for individuals to take the lead through scrutinizing their basic consumption incorrectly assigns blame to the individual instead of to those who actually wield power in the entire system of corporate behaviour that structures individual choice.\textsuperscript{lvii}

Indeed, no ethical response to the problem of sustainability can afford to ignore the need for the active opposition of injustice, and for such opposition to take on the role of citizen rather than of consumer (or non-consumer, as it were).\textsuperscript{lviii} The role of a nonviolent politics, Gandhi would agree, is not to “navigate systems of oppressive power with as much integrity as possible, but rather to confront and take down those systems.”\textsuperscript{lix} When we act in our role as citizens rather than consumers, we not only reject the logic of commodification as a framing device for all human problems, our potential forms of nonviolent resistance extend far beyond our consumption or non-consumption patterns, to include boycotting, striking, marching, protesting, and actively working to abolish any system of governance damaging to just forms of life. Gandhian corporeal nonviolence, in response to this objection, reminds us of the importance of placing the body at the center of political contestation, and using the corporeal strategy of self-suffering as an act of political confrontation. Recall here that for Gandhi, meaningful political exchange must include the most basic corporeal involvement, in which the body becomes a tool for demonstrating the strength of moral and political convictions.

An important ethical response to environmental concerns, on this view, will include the use of bodily self-suffering as an expression of political commitment, inviting this self-suffering
through the deliberate pain inflicted by very public bodily sacrifices. Gandhi reconstructs the concept of warriorhood in terms of the invitation to physical pain and an ability to bear it courageously through the self-sacrificing, self-abnegating openness to physical pain. Translated into environmentally-centered political action, sacrifice and suffering are often the costs of fighting for truth in politics, and these must happen in a very public way in order to be effective.

Indeed, one such example might be the experiment now known as *No Impact Man*, in which a journalist and his family attempt to live with zero environmental impact for one year. Described in both a book and a film, Colin Beavan’s project generated both deep admiration and contempt for what was seen as either a self-promoting publicity stunt or an absurd attempt at living simply. Beavan and his family live with as little environmental impact as possible for one year: creating no trash, forgoing takeout food, toilet paper, most modes of transportation including an elevator, and eventually eschewing electricity altogether. Beavan’s experiment seems akin to the kind of sacrificial, self-inflicted suffering that Gandhi engaged in, for the purposes of finding the limits of human experience, while demonstrating in a visible and public way one’s commitment to a particular conviction, and attempting to persuade others of one’s position.

Of course, casting this form of public sacrifice alone as Gandhian *satyagraha* misses the most important point of warriorlike nonviolence, if it ignores the need to place the body at the center of political contestation by inviting corporal punishment through civil disobedience, and the experience of embodied pain that often follows. Gandhian environmental ethical practice would require activists to fast unto death, go on strike, place their bodies at the frontlines of breaking unjust laws or defying unjust phenomena, and pay the price in terms of embodied pain: police action, arrests, jail time, or even harsher violence. Corporeal nonviolence would require
acts of civil disobedience, such as power company employees’ refusal to undertake their daily tasks, logging-company or oil-company workers disobeying commands, private citizens’ willingness to confront building contractors intent on carrying out environmentally-destructive road-building, or uprooting genetically modified crops in government-designated test fields.\textsuperscript{lxii} Well-known examples are India’s Chipko Andolan (“Hug the Tree Movement”), and Narmada Bachao Andolan (“Save the Narmada Valley Movement”) in which environmental activists inspired by Gandhi have acted to protect trees in the Himalayas against industrial exploitation, or to demand justice for the citizens of the Narmada River Valley, through actions such as tree-hugging and hunger strikes.\textsuperscript{lxiii} Acts of simple living, scrutinizing and monitoring one’s own desires, and public acts of extreme sacrifice and suffering are accompanied by the physical placement of the body in situations of corporeal pain.

A nonviolent response to environmental degradation would be both Gandhian and corporeal if it were to combine conscious corporeal consumption with active, embodied provocation and confrontation that allows individual actors to suffer in a public way, by placing their bodies in the center of political contestation, and in the path of potential physical harm. Because it recognizes the necessity of both these forms of political action, Gandhi’s corporeal nonviolence speaks with particular resonance to the contemporary problem of environmental degradation. Debates about environmental ethics and political practice acknowledge precisely the need for varied and multi-pronged forms of action.\textsuperscript{lxiv} Gandhi’s theory of nonviolence speaks with urgency to such debates, not simply because of its focus on asceticism, nor simply because it calls for nonviolent political action, but rather because it acknowledges the dual sense in which such political action must be focused on the embodied aspects of human existence.\textsuperscript{lxv} Recall that Gandhi called for people to wear \textit{khadi} (homespun) and spin their own cloth, while boycotting
British cloth. But sacrificing foreign cloth alone could not achieve the objectives of the nationalist movement: political actors had to march, make salt, burn British cloth, disobey laws and government commands, and invite the sanctions that followed, making their suffering visible, before the injustice of empire collapsed.

**Conclusions: Gandhian ecological citizenship**

This way of reading Gandhi also reminds us that the body is not only a site of political action and contestation, it is an instrument of political action, discourse and change. Traditional usage of war and warrior imagery has often focused on violence, and on the death and destruction wrought by bodies upon one another (and now, increasingly by technology upon bodies). Such warriorlike imagery often assumes that the only condition under which bodies can turn into instruments of political action are those of the brute physicality of war and violence: bodies perpetrating destruction upon another, or being subject to destructive attacks by technological devices such as bombs and guns.

Indeed, the dichotomy sometimes offered to us in Western thought is that of embodied engagement understood as war, violence or brute strength, versus a disembodied politics characterized by nonviolent reason, discourse and speech. Gandhi offers us a way beyond this dichotomy, to understand political action as embodied and warriorlike, yet neither violent nor centred around the martial character of brute strength. Gandhi reminds us that there is a new—and nonviolent—way in which political action can be centred around embodied and warriorlike exchange. Like much of postmodern feminist and Foucauldian theory in the contemporary era, Gandhi emphasizes that bodies can be sites of political contestation. But, he takes this insight a step further by showing us how bodies can become instruments of political exchange and action,
that is, how political change can be effected by using the human body as a medium of such action.

While Gandhi is keenly aware of the need for reasoned speech and discourse as central political tools, and repeatedly focuses on the importance of persuading or converting one’s opponent, he appears unconvinced about the sufficiency of rational discourse for persuasion. As the Rudolphs remind us, he sees satyagraha itself as a form of deliberation:

“The satyagrahi strives to reach the reason through the heart… things of fundamental importance …are not secured by reason alone, but have to be purchased with suffering…Suffering is infinitely more powerful…for converting the opponent and opening up his ears…If you want something really important to be done, you must not merely satisfy the reason, you must move the heart also.”

Nonviolent, embodied self-suffering appeals simultaneously to both reason and emotion, breaking through the rational defenses of the opponent to supplement the appeal of reason, thus turning the body into an instrument of non-rational, emotive persuasion. Thus, a corporeal Gandhian politics is both embodied yet discursive, both warriorlike yet nonviolent. Moreover, it also offers us the insight that while the human body may need to be protected from suffering inflicted by others, conscious, deliberate, and disciplined self-inflicted suffering can be a positive, productive and perhaps necessary moment in political exchange.

An objector might contend that the blurring of the distinction between public and private can appear quite problematic from modern, liberal, and perhaps democratic perspective. Would a Gandhian environmental ethic insist that private behaviours and choices pertaining to corporeal habits be brought under public scrutiny, or subject to legal sanction? Would this lead to anti-democratic or authoritarian political formations, wherein the state or society has the right to curb,
correct and punish individual choices? The upshot of a Gandhian environmental politics may certainly be that key presumptions of liberal theory need to be challenged.\textsuperscript{lxviii} Recent attention in environmental political thought has turned precisely to this potential tension between green objectives and liberal democratic regimes.\textsuperscript{lxix} Either because of the anthropocentrism of liberalism, the inevitable stressing of “limits” to preferences in ecological commitments, the centrality of freedom to the liberal program, the liberal commitment to neutrality among various forms of the good life, or the incompatibility of liberalism with the curtailing of tastes and preferences, liberalism is seen as greatly suspicious of environmental political thought.\textsuperscript{lx}

Gandhi’s corporeal nonviolence, particularly in its environmental form, may exhibit precisely such a tension, if it subjects people’s consumptive preferences to some form of public scrutiny.

But contemporary environmental thinkers also point out that challenging \textit{liberal} presumptions should not be confused with challenging \textit{democratic} ones. Public limits to private consumption choices may impinge upon the liberal notion of autonomy, but need not do so in a way that is remote, capricious or arbitrary. Rather, such limits can be posited \textit{within} the very context of procedural and constitutional forms of democratic decision-making.\textsuperscript{lxxi} In fact, some analysts suggest that some of the most crucial goals of environmental thinking can only be brought about through the most radically participatory forms of democratic action; many radical ecologists tend to insist on an intrinsic connection between the ecology movement and participatory or face-to-face democracy.\textsuperscript{lxxii} Even if a commitment to ecological goals may find us running up against the limits of liberal theorizing, this need not lead automatically to an anti-democratic or authoritarian modes of thought.

This becomes even more apparent if we see the Gandhian model of environmental ethics as an active, participatory form of citizenship, rooted in a notion of duties and obligations to a
particular political community, rather than in the language of rights. We may perhaps see his model as a form of what Andrew Dobson, among others, calls “ecological citizenship:” a form of citizenship that deals with non-contractual responsibility, inhabits the private as well as the public sphere, and emphasizes the language of virtue. Ecological citizenship focuses on duties, obligations and responsibilities of citizens toward one another, and toward the collective. Many commentators, Dobson points out, seek intellectual resources for the idea of such citizenship within civic republic discourse, which includes the idea of striving toward the common good through the cultivation of virtues such as courage, discipline and service, sacrificing personal inclinations and preferences. John Barry points out that this reliance on the civic republic tradition by some “green” political theorists centralizes the concepts of active citizenship and virtue-based moral perspectives, while notions of obligation and duty are often expressed in opposition to liberalism’s focus on rights and entitlements.

Gandhi asks citizens to cultivate certain virtues based on self-discipline, courage and sacrifice for the greater good, emphasizing their duties and obligations to one another. Moreover, he asks them to do so within a context that is necessarily participatory and collective. As we have seen, social change for Gandhi was irreducibly linked to the moral transformation of individuals, but this transformation was to take place within the context of community, civil society, and associational life. Gandhi, the Rudolphs remind us, “was a tireless creator of civil society,” for “wherever he went, he created voluntary self-help organizations and journals of opinion.” His ashrams—the socio-political-spiritual communities he founded—were not only laboratories for experiments in inner moral and spiritual transformation through simple living, they were “energizing centres for associational life and for civil disobedience, non-cooperation and satyagraha campaigns.” To live in Gandhi’s ashram was to embrace both
the individual self-discipline that Gandhi recommended for inner moral growth, as well as to participate in collective activities that contributed to the common good, which transcended the spheres of public and private: it was as important, in a Gandhian sense, to spin cloth, feed the ashram’s goats, and clean its latrines, as it was to march in a satyagraha.

The set of individual virtues that Gandhi asks citizens to cultivate relies necessarily on their location within communities, on their collective relations with one another in pursuit of a common good. Seen in this light, Gandhi’s blurring of public and private is important precisely because it echoes the obligation- and duty-based collective ethic that many contemporary thinkers find within the civic republican version of ecological citizenship. And, like ecological citizenship, it challenges the separation of public and private spheres by asking us to rethink the concept of collective good: the private realm is important to ecological citizenship after all, because the sphere of bodily necessity where the production and reproduction of human life takes place, rather than removing us from the realm of citizenship, actually generates the kind of obligations peculiar to it.

This also allows us to recall that the corporeal nonviolence we have seen is both necessarily embodied and necessarily collective, for it relies not merely on individual corporeal actions, but also on the collective re-organization of bodies with relation to one another. If the self-scrutiny of corporeal desires were simply a perfectionist prescription for individual action, it might seem somewhat futile when conducted by a few isolated individuals. When coordinated with others, such corporeal discipline starts to become politically powerful. So too, with the warriorlike requirement of corporeal self-suffering through direct political action: it is when bodies collectively place themselves in acts of corporeal confrontation against adversaries that the notion of corporeal nonviolence takes on political power. This is not to deny that a
single, lone body confronting an adversary, no matter how powerful, or scrutinizing his/her own corporeal consumptions, could have symbolic political meaning. But, as Dustin Howes points out, recalling Arendt, power involves people acting in concert with one another; thus, it is when bodies collectively organize themselves in certain ways that corporeal nonviolence transforms meaningful but largely isolated acts into politically powerful action.

The difficulties of placing of the body at the center of political contestation specifically in the service of environmental change are not to be ignored. Unlike in the nationalist fight for Indian independence, there is a diffusion of targets and goals which may obscure the true nature of the problem. Who is most responsible for environmental degradation: Governments? Corporations? Individual citizens? Moreover, corporate entities are different kinds of entities than unjust governments against which to conduct satyagraha, especially because there are fewer nonviolent political actions that can legitimately provoke a corporeally violent response from such an adversary. There is a need to act publicly and dramatically with conviction, but sometimes without a clear sense of who precisely one’s adversaries (or even allies) are at any given moment, which specific adversary to target, and how precisely to provoke responses that highlight one’s embodiment through self-suffering.

Yet, nowhere does the need for an ethical and political response seem more urgent than in the arena of environmental change and action. I have argued here that a corporeal, nonviolent approach to this issue would be multi-pronged, calling upon both the consumption- as well as citizenship-oriented modes of being. A Gandhian contribution to environmental debates would not, as traditionally thought, stem simply from his commitment to the renunciation of worldly desires, or from an ontology emphasizing the interconnectedness of all life. Rather, I have sought here to imagine the possibilities of a more creative Gandhian intervention, at a time when being
creative is a necessity, suggesting that an ethical, nonviolent response to this crisis would be a corporeal one that takes seriously human embodiment and centers it within political action.

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iii *Ahimsa* and truth, Gandhi claims, “[are] the obverse and reverse of the same coin.” Gandhi, *Young India*, June 4, 1925, in Iyer, *MPW* Vol. II p. 216.


vi Gandhi, Discussion with G. Ramachandran, *Young India*, March 1922.

Gandhi seems to rely on the classical Hindu understanding of suffering or tapas as a tool of connection with the truth, which purifies consciousness and moral vision. See Sri Swami Satchidananda, *The Yogasutras of Patanjali* (Integral Yoga Publications, 1990), Ch. 2.1, p. 79.


For instance, Gandhi writes: “I had involuntary discharge twice during the last two weeks. I cannot recall any dream. I never practiced masturbation….I also know that there are impure desires deep down in me…I feel unhappy about this, but I am not nervously afraid.” Gandhi, *CW*, 40: 312, as cited in Alter, p. 7.

Alter, p. 6.


Parel, *Gandhi’s Philosophy and the Quest for Harmony*, pp. 139-140.

Alter, *Gandhi’s Body*, p. 3.


exx “We cannot have ecological movement designed to prevent violence against Nature, unless the principle of non-violence becomes central to the ethics of human culture.” This statement is attributed to Gandhi in T. N. Khoshoo, *Mahatma Gandhi: An Apostle of Applied Human Ecology*, pp. 3, 17, and subsequently cited elsewhere, but mysteriously, no reference is provided for this. So too for the following: “I need no inspiration other than Nature’s. She has never failed me as yet. She mystifies me, bewilders me, sends me to ecstasies. Besides God’s handiwork, does not man fade into insignificance?…Have I not gazed at the marvelous mystery of the starry vault, hardly ever tiring of the great panorama?…When I admire the wonders of a sunset or the beauty of the moon, my soul expands in the worship of the creator.” See Khoshoo, *Mahatma Gandhi: An Apostle of Applied Human Ecology*, p. 31, cited in Moolakatту, pp. 152-153. Gandhi’s profound attachment to what he termed “dumb creation,” his passion for cow-protection, and the strong prohibitions he subsequently posited on meat-eating, are also often cited: “[Cow-protection] takes the human being beyond his species. The cow to me means the entire sub-human world. Man, through the cow is enjoined to realize his identity with all that lives.” (*Young India*, 6 October 1921.).


See also Rudolph and Rudolph, “This-Worldly Asceticism and Political Modernization,” in *The Modernity of Tradition*, pp. 216-239.


Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph point out that the sharp distinction between public and private so essential to much of liberal thought was untenable in Gandhi’s India. See Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, “The Coffee House and the Ashram Revisited: How Gandhi Democratized Habermas’ Public Sphere,” in Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *Postmodern Gandhi and Other Essays: Gandhi in the World and at Home* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).


Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 112: “nothing…is less common and less communicable, and therefore more securely shielded against the visibility and audibility of the public realm, than what goes on within the confines of the body.” See also pp. 50-51, 141.

Raia Prokhovnik points out that many practices that we would not normally regard as citizenship practices—such as the “natural obligations” parents have in bringing up children—should indeed be so regarded. Prokhovnik, “Public and Private Citizenship: From Gender Invisibility to Feminist Inclusiveness,” Feminist Review 60, 1988, p. 88, 97.

See, for instance, Anthony Parel, Gandhi’s Philosophy and the Quest for Harmony, pp. 144-151.


“Civilisation,” in Parel (ed.) Hind Swaraj, p. 35.


li See Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, October 5, 1945, in Parel (ed.), *Hind Swaraj*, p. 150


liv See “What is True Civilization?” in Parel (ed.), *Hind Swaraj*, p. 68; “Gandhi on Machinery,” p. 167, Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, October 5, 1945, in Parel (ed.) *Hind Swaraj*, p. 150. I should mention here that I have not distinguished in much detail between “necessity” and “desire,” concepts that are perhaps sufficiently different to warrant further exploration.


Andrew Dobson and Derek Bell (eds.), *Environmental Citizenship* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

Discussions of “corporeal” citizenship” among green political theorists seek to advance conceptions of citizenship that are embodied and attentive to the particularities of human difference—such as race and gender. See, for instance, Teena Gabrielson and Katelyn Parady, “Corporeal Citizenship: Rethinking Green Citizenship Through the Body,” *Environmental Politics*, 19(3), 2010, 374-391.


See Dobson, *Green Political Thought*, pp. 149-158.


Matthews (ed.), *Ecology and Democracy*.


lxxv Barry, “Resistance is Fertile,” p. 22


lxxx When conducted by lone individuals, it also carries the danger of an egoistic or obsessive perfectionism that concerns itself only with an absurd existential exercises, or the achievement of one’s disciplinary goals, sometimes to the detriment of one’s collective relations with others.

lxxxi *Satyagraha* “wins concessions by rearranging bodies, claiming and creating public spaces.”

See Dustin Howes, *Toward a Credible Pacifism: Violence and the Possibilities of Politics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), p 139. Recent events in Egypt reminds us starkly of this: the visual images of hundreds of thousands of bodies assembled in Tahrir Square, organized and arranged in certain ways, evoked a notion of political power that eventually toppled the regime.


