

**‘Hoping against Hope’<sup>1</sup>**  
*A one-act play by Pablo Ouziel*

“If anything that I write in these pages should strike the reader as being touched with pride, then he must take it that there is something wrong with my quest, and that my glimpses are no more than a mirage. Let hundreds like me perish, but let truth prevail”  
(Gandhi 2008, 3).

**Prologue**

It has been just over two months since Barack Obama received the Nobel Peace Prize. In this short space of time, military and financial tensions have increased for all oppressed people in the planet while the profits of the leading multinational corporations have sky rocketed<sup>2</sup>. During his acceptance speech, Obama was keen to laud the nonviolent efforts of Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi, but he quickly added the following phrase: “A nonviolent movement could not have halted Hitler's armies. Negotiations cannot convince al-Qaida's leaders to lay down their arms.”<sup>3</sup>

At no point in his speech did the President of the United States make any mention of Immanuel Kant, yet Obama’s words are closer to Kant’s, than they are to Gandhi’s: “We can understand that there will be war, and still strive for peace”<sup>4</sup>.

It has been suggested to me, that Obama’s Nobel Peace Prize is as uninteresting and unimportant an issue, as Tiger Woods’s extramarital affair. I disagree. The prize exposes the extent to which Western society has become tolerant and approving of war. Although there is a centuries old tradition of such acceptance by Western populations, I think it is incredibly dangerous to allow Gandhi’s non-violent message to be adulterated and inserted into an imperial cry for war. *‘Hoping Against Hope’* attempts to resurface, explore and defend the praxis of soul-force. Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj*, Tolstoy’s *War and*

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<sup>1</sup> A letter from Mahatma Gandhi to Madame Edmond Privat, on December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1947, inspired the title of this play. The letter was written one month prior to his assassination. In regards to the bloodbath taking place in India, in the letter Gandhi hopes that the nation will come out not by imitating the West, but by taking the best from the West and becoming the hope of the ‘whole aching world’. He writes the following: “I must confess that this is hoping against hope, for, we are today swearing by the military and all that naked physical force implies” (Gandhi 2008, 373).

<sup>2</sup> *USA Today* (22/01/2010) ‘Goldman Sachs earns \$4.79B in Q4; '09 compensation is \$16.2B’. Available online: [http://www.usatoday.com/money/companies/earnings/2010-01-21-goldman\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/money/companies/earnings/2010-01-21-goldman_N.htm)  
*DailyFinance* (28/01/2010) ‘Lockheed Martin Profits Fly Past Wall Street Estimates’. Available online: <http://www.dailyfinance.com/story/company-news/lockheed-martin-profits-fly-past-wall-street-estimates/19336029/>

<sup>3</sup> *MSNB* (10/12/2009) ‘Accepting peace prize, Obama defends war: President acknowledges his few accomplishments, defends military actions’. Available online: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34358659/>

<sup>4</sup> Same source as footnote 2.

*Peace*, Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*, and Bonnie Honig's contemporary political critique through Sophocles's *Antigone*<sup>5</sup>, have inspired the writing of this paper.

Following a tradition popular in ancient Greece, the paper is written in the form of a one-act play. Aware of the thin line separating truth from untruth, reality from fiction, and science from non-science, the aim is to blur the time-space separation between characters and between events, in order to open up the space for a most pertinent conversation – the transcendence of humanity's inability to lay down arms and embrace truth, justice and peace. In the early days of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, only a dream seems to offer the genuine space for such dialogue.

I doubt this one-act play can ignite our collective love-force, but luckily every new day alive, offers an opportunity for trying.

Songhees Territories  
February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010

### **Characters in the Play**<sup>6</sup> – In order of appearance

PAU	(Pau is a Catalan name which in English can mean Peace or Paul)
PETRAS	James Petras
DAY	Richard Day
TULLY	James Tully
SANTOS	Boaventura de Sousa Santos
KANT	Immanuel Kant
MARX	Karl Marx
RUSKIN	John Ruskin
GANDHI	Mahatma Gandhi
TOLSTOY	Leo Tolstoy

### **Opening the Act**

The whole play takes place in a writer's den inside a settler home on stolen indigenous land. The young writer, a working class aristocrat, types away on his MacBookAir as he carefully reviews his position on issues of grave concern. Oppression, exploitation,

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<sup>5</sup> Honig, B. (29/01/2010) 'Antigone's Two Laws: Greek Tragedy and the Politics of Humanism'. Lecture series: *Victoria Colloquium in Political, Social and Legal Theory*. Available online: [http://www.law.uvic.ca/demcon/victoria\\_colloquium/Colloquium2009-2010.htm](http://www.law.uvic.ca/demcon/victoria_colloquium/Colloquium2009-2010.htm)

<sup>6</sup> Except for PAU, the other characters in the play are real people. Their words are non-fiction; all have been extracted from their written works (Care has been given to maintaining the integrity of quoted viewpoints, within the context of the play).

PAU is a fictional character created to illustrate some the questions humans of the 21<sup>st</sup> century grapple with, when attempting to influence change through non-violent means.

hunger, death, anger, frustration, indignation, condemnation, accusation and war, all these pop up as descriptions of what the young man sees and feels of the ruthless social world in which he exists. Having surfed the web for the last couple of hours, Pau (our writer), has a good sense of the news of the day: The struggle for hegemony between rising China and the decadent United States<sup>7</sup>, the continued imperial expansion of Western allied military forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan<sup>8</sup>. The rebranding of the war in Iraq<sup>9</sup>, the humanitarian disaster in Haiti<sup>10</sup>, the military coup in Niger<sup>11</sup>, and finally, the continuing economic collapse<sup>12</sup> and the disintegrating fabric of Western morality, legality, and ultimately society<sup>13</sup>.

One particular news story keeps resurfacing in Pau's thought, it is the suicide of Joe Stack, a 53 year-old contract software engineer, who decided to plunge his plane into a building of the United States Internal Revenue Service. In a 3000-word suicide note<sup>14</sup>, which mixes the author's personal frustrations with elements of a common reality faced by millions of Americans, he finishes with the following words:

“Sadly, though I spent my entire life trying to believe it wasn't so, but violence not only is the answer, it is the only answer”.

With these words resonating in the back of his head, Pau steps away from the computer and goes to lie down on the rugged sofa with its lonesome and draped Palestinian flag.

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<sup>7</sup> NPR (19/02/2010) 'As U.S.-China Tensions Rise, Military Ties Suffer'. Available online:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=123894197>

*The Christian Science Monitor* (19/02/2010) 'Is China Turning Bearish on the U.S. Treasury?'

Available online: <http://www.csmonitor.com/Money/Tax-VOX/2010/0219/Is-China-Turning-Bearish-on-the-U.S.-Treasury>

<sup>8</sup> *Amnesty International* (17/02/2010) 'Afghanistan: Warning over civilian deaths from Nato and Taleban tactics'. Available online: [http://www.amnesty.org.uk/news\\_details.asp?NewsID=18631](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/news_details.asp?NewsID=18631)

*AFP* (16/02/2010) 'US drone strike kills four militants in Pakistan'. Available online:

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jkGBDF6-qAwU5sfZxPWf1LkIPgUQ>

<sup>9</sup> *AFP* (16/02/2010) Iraq war to be rebranded 'Operation New Dawn'. Available online:

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5g1Bg95t6yV42auorK9zui8XPe6Pg>

<sup>10</sup> *The New York Times* (17/02/2010) 'A Growing Risk in Haiti'. Available online:

[http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2010/02/19/world/americas/0220HAITI\\_index.html](http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2010/02/19/world/americas/0220HAITI_index.html)

<sup>11</sup> *The Guardian* (19/02/2010) 'Niger and the changing face of coups'. Available online:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/feb/19/niger-coup-military-overthrow>

<sup>12</sup> *BusinessWeek* (20/02/2010) 'OneWest Buys Failed Bank, Three Others Collapse as Toll Climbs'.

Available online: <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2010-02-20/onewest-buys-failed-bank-three-others-collapse-as-toll-climbs.html>

*The Washington Post* (17/02/2010) 'America's debt spiral resembles Greece's crisis'. Available online:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/16/AR2010021604549.html?hpid=opinionsbox1>

<sup>13</sup> *The Dallas Morning News* (19/02/2010) In letter, pilot says violence 'is the only answer'. Available online: [http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/texasouthwest/stories/DN-pilotbox\\_19tex.ART.State.Edition2.4bc7599.html](http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/texasouthwest/stories/DN-pilotbox_19tex.ART.State.Edition2.4bc7599.html)

*The Independent* (18/02/2010) 'Robert Fisk: Britain's explanation is riddled with inconsistencies. It's time to come clean'. Available online: <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/fisk/robert-fisk-britains-explanation-is-riddled-with-inconsistencies-its-time-to-come-clean-1902994.html>

<sup>14</sup> *The Statesman* (18/02/2010) 'Internet note posted by man linked to plane crash'. Available online:

[http://www.statesman.com/blogs/content/shared-gen/blogs/austin/blotter/entries/2010/02/18/internet\\_note\\_posted\\_by\\_man\\_li.html?cxntcid=breaking\\_news](http://www.statesman.com/blogs/content/shared-gen/blogs/austin/blotter/entries/2010/02/18/internet_note_posted_by_man_li.html?cxntcid=breaking_news)

Scattered on the floor around the sofa, books, notes and articles bear witness to the young man's struggle in coming to terms with his own social, political and spiritual reality. Some classics – Kant, Marx, Ruskin, and Tolstoy – mingle with the contemporary thought of Day, Santos, Petras and Tully. As Pau lies down he is holding in his hands an open copy of *Mahatma Gandhi: The Essential Writings*, he has it open on page 61 and the following words can be read: “Non-violence is the weapon of the strong” (Gandhi 2008, 61). But the writer is exhausted, too much social analysis for one day. His eyes begin to close as the open copy of Gandhi slowly precipitates upon his chest. Our writer falls asleep.

### **Scene One<sup>15</sup>**

*It is a blissful and sunny afternoon and inside the den only the gentle breathing of our sleeping writer can be heard. From the open skylight, the harsh caws of a murder of crows resonates in the distance as they chase away a lonesome bald eagle. Such noise is no distraction to our writer as he continues his peaceful sleep and emerges in the strangest of dreams...*

*There is a knock at the door...*

*“Who is there?” The Writer asks as he tries to decipher the strange voices congregated outside of the den and engaged in a heated debate. He does not recognize any of the voices, and since there is no response, he shouts again: “Who is there?”*

*This time the voices cease and one of them responds: “It is the authors of some of the articles and books you have been reading. We have come to discuss some of the concerns we all seem to share”.*

*The door opens and Day, Santos, Petras and Tully enter the room. After brief introductions and explanations of why they have come, Pau quickly prepares some Wu Long tea from the high-mountains of Taiwan, and they all sit cross-legged in a circle on the floor. As the tea is poured the discussion quickly drifts towards the social issues of the day.*

PAU: I guess my first concern is related to what are the objectives of Obama's imperial agenda.

PETRAS: His “first priority is to reconstruct the deteriorating domestic foundations of empire; the second is to launch a new imperial offensive in South Asia and the Middle East. The Third level of priorities is to attempt to coordinate economic and military policies with Europe and Japan to counter the world recession and secure collective

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<sup>15</sup> Throughout the play, the narrator uses italicized paragraphs to introduce scenes and to describe events.

imperial-military interventions. The fourth is to negotiate with China over the severe trade imbalances and debt financing” (Petras 2008, 15).

PAU: But surely if this is the case, social movements should be responding in mass with sustained and focused direct action against such policies?

PETRAS: “The major weakness of the social movements is obvious: They have a largely ‘sectoral’ leadership and base and do not have national structures. Even as they embrace a more general society-wide program, their leadership lacks independent sources of financial and material resources to provide for a national cadre structure” (Petras 2008, 12).

*Day seems eager to interrupt, but he manages to wait until Petras has made his point before presenting his own perspective.*

DAY: “Rather than seeking state power, subordinated groups [for the last few decades have] began to focus more on persuading an existing hegemonic formation to alter the operation of certain institutions, or infiltrating those institutions with a different set of values and thereby constructing a counter-hegemony” (Day, 2004, 727).

PAU: What has been the outcome of this strategy?

*A hesitantly abrupt silence emerges, until the conversation eventually reignites.*

PETRAS: As they gain influence and mass support, they turn toward or ally with the ‘centre-left’ political leaders who have demonstrated repeatedly that: ‘Out of power they are with the Left, but in power with the Right’ (Petras 2008, 12).

*Wide consensus seems to have been reached on this point and Tully elaborates.*

TULLY: “The opposition parties on the left criticise neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies and offer a more social democratic and multilateral alternative strategy, yet they do so entirely within the shared languages and institutions of modern citizenship” (Tully 2008, 265).

DAY: “Therefore, just as it was necessary in 1985 to rethink radical politics in the light of the successes of the new social movements, it is necessary to do so again, in the light of their failure to effectively limit the continued rise of neoliberal ideology and the societies of control” (Day, 2004, 727).

PAU: Ok, I sense from your responses to my questions that there is a fragmentation in the social movements and that something needs to be done about it, but how are we to build consensus amongst us and move away from our present *status quo*? Is there a single principle of social transformation?

DAY: “I would suggest that the reactionary consolidation of the status quo and the clampdown on dissent mean that it is more important than ever to take stock of what has been achieved and what remains to be achieved in the struggles against globalizing capital and the societies of control” (Day, 2004, 729).

PAU: Good so far, but this doesn’t address my question regarding a single principle.

SANTOS: “First, there is no single principle of social transformation... [and] [i]n the absence of a single principle, it is not possible to gather all resistance and all agents under the aegis of one common grand theory. More than a common theory, we need a theory of translation capable of making the struggles mutually intelligible and allowing for the collective actors to talk about the oppressions they resist and the aspirations that mobilize them” (de Sousa Santos 1998, 126).

*Petras seems reluctant to agree yet he remains silent.*

PAU: I think I understand, but in order to break away from the theoretical description of empire and globalization, is it possible for someone to be more specific on the different struggles and oppressions around the globe? Could you help me paint a mental picture of the social reality we are discussing?

*Santos and Tully look at each other wondering where to begin; yet soon enough, data is vehemently presented.*

SANTOS: “While in the eighteenth century 4.4 million people died in 68 wars, in [the twentieth] century 99 million people died in 237 wars. Between the eighteenth and the twentieth centuries, the world population increased about three and a half times, whereas war casualties increased over 22 times” (de Sousa Santos 1998, 123).

TULLY: “Approximately 840 million people are malnourished. There are 6 million children under the age of five who die each year as a consequence of malnutrition. Roughly 1.2 billion people live on less than \$1 a day and half the world’s population lives on less than \$2 a day”<sup>16</sup> (Tully 2008, 265).

SANTOS: “During the past 50 years the world lost about a third of its forest... 600,000 acres of Mexican forests are destroyed every year. Nowadays, multinational corporations hold the right to fell trees in 12 million acres of the Amazon forest” (de Sousa Santos 1998, 123).

TULLY: “[T]he wealth of the richest 1 per cent of the world is equal to that of the poorest 57 per cent. The assets of the two hundred richest people are worth more than the total income of 41 per cent of the world’s people. Three families alone have a combined

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<sup>16</sup> Tully is drawing his data from Seabrook, J (2003) *The No-Nonsense Guide to World Poverty*, Toronto: New Internationalist. p.53.

wealth of \$135 billion. This equals the annual income of 600 million people living in the world's poorest countries"<sup>17</sup> (Tully 2008, 266).

*Traumatized by the data presented, Pau struggles to keep his composure. But the need for answers is too intense and with a calmed tone he proceeds in his quest for clarification.*

PAU: I admit these are very discouraging facts, but what can one do about it, should we overthrow our government and burn down the gates of the rich? Can we then distribute the wealth between the poor and live in perpetual harmony?

SANTOS: "Even in the countries regarded as the cradle of democracy, the decreasing participation of citizens in elections, the lack of accountability of elected officials, the growing exclusion or marginalization of significant sectors of their populations from participation in social and political life or from gainful employment, the limitations of political and social rights, the dismantling of public welfare provision and the privatization of the public services that were at the core of the welfare state are regarded by many observers as symptoms of severe pathologies that affect the democratic order and its legitimacy" (de Sousa Santos 2004, 4).

PAU: So what you are saying is that many like myself feel disillusioned with our current social structures, but how does this lead to any change?

SANTOS: "Both in the realm of production and in the realm of consumption capitalist society appears increasingly as a fragmentary, plural, and multiple society, whose borders seem to be there only to be trespassed" (de Sousa Santos 1998, 133).

*Following this point, only the silent sound of thinking brains can be felt in the den. Pau begins to serve more tea and soon the conversation resumes.*

TULLY: "We can see that the globalisation of modern citizenship<sup>18</sup> has not tended to democracy, equality, independence and peace, as its justificatory theories proclaim, but to informal imperialism, inequality, dependence and war... From the perspective of diverse citizenship, this mode of citizenship is neither freedom nor democracy but the culmination of five hundred years of relentless 'tyranny' against local citizenship and self-reliance" (Tully 2008, 266-267).

*Petrus nods in agreement.*

SANTOS: "Other futures and another, solidaristic globalization is possible, and grassroots movements and struggles are crucial contributions to the project of a multicultural and cosmopolitan world, a world built on social and environmental justice,

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<sup>17</sup> Same source as footnote 10.

<sup>18</sup> "Synoptically, modern citizenship is a status consisting of four ranked tiers of rights and duties that make sense and are exercised within a canonical set of underlying legal, political, economic, educational and military institutions of the modern nation-state, international law and global governance" (Tully 2008, 267).

solidarity, active citizenship and high intensity democracy. Cognitive justice and epistemic democracy are an indispensable part of such a project” (de Sousa Santos 2004, 3).

*It appears the conversation is over, but it momentarily rekindles with a final message of peace.*

TULLY: “[N]on-violent grass-roots democratic relationships are the preconditions of democratisation. Consequently, peace cannot be the end of a long historical process of war and the spread of Western institutions. Peace is the way” (Tully 2008, 295).

*A military helicopter is flying overhead on its way to the Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt (CFB Esquimalt) and the mechanical sound of destruction partially awakens the writer. He opens his left eye and disoriented realizes that he is alone in the den. As the retched sound of the war machine disappears, the squeaky song of a male hummingbird defending its territory can be heard. Once again, our writer fades into a deep sleep...*

## **Scene Two**

*...Back in his dream, he is still sitting cross-legged in a circle on the floor, and a new round of Wu Long tea has just been poured. Nevertheless, the people in the circle have changed. Day, Petras, Santos and Tully have left, and instead Kant, Ruskin and Marx are chatting away, discussing the relevance of their work following their death. Pau in his usual impatient demeanour jumps in with a question.*

PAU: I suppose the main realization stemming from my previous conversation with fellow contemporaries is that we have a tragedy of severe magnitudes currently taking place in our planet. I recently listened to Obama’s speech as he received his Nobel Peace Prize. In it, he was quite adamant about the peaceful objectives of ‘his’ wars – ‘our’ wars if we want to be morally strict – for the spread of democracy around the globe. What do you make of his argument Kant?

KANT: “Wars, tense and unremitting military preparations, and the resultant distress which every state must eventually feel within itself, even in the midst of peace – these are the means by which nature derives nations to make initially imperfect attempts, but finally, after many devastations, upheavals and even complete inner exhaustion of their powers, to take the step which reason could have suggested to them even without so many sad experiences – that of abandoning a lawless state of savagery and entering a federation of peoples in which every state, even the smallest, could expect to derive its security and rights not from its own power or its own legal judgment, but solely from this great federation (*foedus Amphictyonum*), from a united power and the law-governed decisions of a united will” (Kant 1784/2006, 47).

PAU: So in essence what you are saying is that through war we will attain perpetual peace?

KANT: “Peace means an end to all hostilities, and to attach the adjective ‘perpetual’ to it is already suspiciously close to pleonasm” (Kant 1795/2006, 93).

PAU: So in light of this peace you describe, what must the people of the world do to reach it?

KANT: “[T]hey must renounce their savage and lawless freedom, adapt themselves to public coercive laws, and thus form an international state (*civitas gentium*), which would necessarily continue to grow until it embraced all the peoples of the earth. But since this is not the will of the nations, according to their present conception of international right (so that they reject in *hypothesi* what is true in *thesi*), the positive idea of a world republic cannot be realised. If all is not to be lost, this can at best find a negative substitute in the shape of an enduring and gradually expanding *federation* likely to prevent war” (Kant 1795/2006, 105).

PAU: Isn’t your conception of freedom incredible oppressive?

KANT: Savages “prefer the freedom of folly to the freedom of reason. We regard this as barbarism, coarseness, and brutish debasement of humanity” (Kant 1795/2006, 103). “[I]f he lives among others of his own species, man is *an animal who needs a master*” (Kant 1784/2006, 46). “A state of peace among men living together is not the same as the state of nature, which is rather a state of war” (Kant 1795/2006, 98).

*Feeling complete rejection to such a view of the world, Pau remains immersed in thought until he courageously express his point of view.*

PAU: With your proposition of the need for masters, I now begin to understand the calls of those who advocate for revolution.

KANT: “Man wishes concord, but nature, knowing better what is good for his species, wishes discord” (Kant 1784/2006, 45). “A revolution may well put an end to autocratic despotism and to rapacious or power-seeking oppression, but it will never produce a true reform in ways of thinking. Instead, new prejudices, like the ones they replaced, will serve as a leash to control the great unthinking mass” (Kant 1784/2006, 55).

PAU: I cannot agree with your conception of freedom, your mode of thought seems to be the basis of our present social, political and economic model, at least in Western societies. Although I understand your rejection of revolution, I must find a way of altering the current path our societies are taking. You advocate for a model of reasoned freedom, which is based on the oppression of whom you describe as the savage. The more I think about this, the more I realize that to you, a lot of my friends would seem barbaric. In fact, following your line of reason, the government that claims to represent

me, is currently butchering my sisters and brothers around the globe. How could I ever adhere myself to your cause?

*At this moment Karl Marx feels the need to enter the conversation (he seems a bit exasperated), there seems to be a collective feeling in the room that all have had enough of Kant, nevertheless he does leave everyone with thoughts on which to ponder. The rest of the conversation Kant spends listening carefully and drinking his tea slowly and reverently.*

MARX: “The weapon of criticism cannot, of course, supplant the criticism of weapons; material force must be overthrown by material force. But theory, too, will become material force as soon as it seizes the masses” (Marx 1844/2006, 77).

PAU: Why the need for violence, surely there must be another way?

MARX: “We must emancipate ourselves before we can emancipate others... The proletariat, the lowest stratum of present society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself up, without the whole superincumbent strata of official society being sprung into the air” (Marx 1848/2006, 254). “Is private property not abolished ideally speaking when the no-owner has become the lawgiver for the owner?” (Marx 1843/2006, 52).

PAU: So what you are saying is that the core problem of our society is class related. Those who have the power have it because of their wealth. I can understand what you are saying; yet your revolutionary spirit seems to lead to the outcome suggested by Kant. In essence, both of you share a similar militaristic outlook – advocating for the hegemony of one group over the other –, yet you happen to be on different sides. I must admit Marx, that I stand closer to you, yet violence is not the theme of this one-act play.

*Ruskin ceases the moment to get a word in...*

RUSKIN: “[T]he consent of mankind has always, in spite of the philosophers, given precedence to the soldier” (Ruskin 1862/1997, 175).

PAU: And to the rich and powerful in our societies.

RUSKIN: “[T]he art of making yourself rich... [is] equally and necessarily the art of keeping your neighbour poor” (Ruskin 1862/1997, 181). “What is really desired under the name of riches, is, essentially, power over men; in its simplest sense, the power of obtaining for our own advantage the labour of servant, tradesman, and artist; in wider sense, authority of directing large masses of the nation to various ends (good, trivial, or hurtful, according to the mind of the rich person)” (Ruskin 1862/1997, 182).

PAU: So what we end up with, is a group of capitalists making money, while their soldiers fight wars they claim will lead the world to peace.

RUSKIN: “So far as I know, there is not in history record of anything so disgraceful to the human intellect as the modern idea that the commercial text, ‘Buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest,’ represents, or under any circumstances could represent, an available principle of national economy. Buy in the cheapest market? – yes; but what made your market cheap?” (Ruskin 1862/1997, 187). “[W]hereas it has long been known and declared that the poor have no right to the property of the rich, I wish it also to be known and declared that the rich have no right to the property of the poor” (Ruskin 1862/1997, 202).

PAU: Just to be clear, are you saying that the rich are stealing from the poor?

RUSKIN: “Luxury is indeed possible in the future – innocent and exquisite; luxury for all, and by the help of all; but luxury at present can only be enjoyed by the ignorant; the cruelest man living could not sit at his feast, unless he sat blindfold” (Ruskin 1862/1997, 228).

PAU: But how do we achieve justice? Do we fight their soldiers and free what belongs to us all?

RUSKIN: “[T]he attraction of riches is already too strong, as their authority is already too weighty, for the reason of mankind” (Ruskin 1862/1997, 202). Nevertheless, “[e]very man may know, and most of us do know, what is a just and unjust act” (Ruskin 1862/1997, 169). “We need examples of people, who... have resolved to seek – not greater wealth, but simpler pleasure; not higher fortune, but deeper felicity; making the first of possessions, self-possession; and honouring themselves in the harmless pride and calm pursuits of peace” (Ruskin 1862/1997, 227).

*Submerged in deep thought, Pau is seriously considering the outcome of such action. He is eager to know more.*

PAU: I found Marx’s suggestion of overthrowing those in power, violent and unconstructive, but with the sacrifice your path demands, there must be clear guarantees of the gain. That is, if you are hoping people will adopt it.

RUSKIN: “In affecting any radical changes of this kind, doubtless there would be great inconvenience and loss incurred by all the originators of the movement. That which can be done with perfect convenience and without loss, is not always the thing that most needs to be done, or which we are most imperatively required to do” (Ruskin 1862/1997, 175). “[T]he fruit of justice is ‘sown in peace of them that make peace’... peace-Creators; Givers of Calm. Which you cannot give, unless you first gain” (Ruskin 1862/1997, 227).

PAU: Your answer partly addresses my question. I agree that sacrifice must be made in order to gain, but what about the guarantees of success?

RUSKIN: “In a science dealing with so subtle elements as those of human nature, it is only possible to answer for the final truth of principles, not for the direct success of plans:

and that in the best of these last, what can be immediately accomplished is always questionable, and what can be finally accomplished, inconceivable” (Ruskin 1862/1997, 165).

*Marx is pouring some tea and the only sound which can be heard, is that of a cup being filled. The conversation resumes with a final and definitive question.*

PAU: So what kind of society are you advocating for with such a plan?

RUSKIN: “Government and co-operation are in all things the Laws of Life; Anarchy and competition the Laws of Death” (Ruskin 1862/1997, 202).

*The sirens of a police car make a loud racket as they swiftly cruise through the neighbourhood offering security. Our writer is shaken out of his dream, and as the sirens fade into the distance, he remembers vague abstracts of his latest conversation. He acknowledges to himself that it was only a dream and he finds himself staring with wide-open eyes at the little poster he found in the Public Administration Department at the University of Victoria. The poster shows the face of a man with a cross covering his mouth (symbolizing silence). There is a caption that read: ‘A Police State needs those who will support it – Public Servants need to play their part’.*

*As the neighbourhood regains its natural sounds, from the den, two neighbours can be heard talking to each other about the annual harvest. With a sigh of relief, once again Pau closes his eyes and resumes his sleep.*

### **Scene Three**

*This time Pau finds himself in a different dream, it appears to him as a dream within his dream. He is standing in the middle of a large field and it seems like a place untouched by the hand of modernity. At the end of the field some dunes fuse the tall sunburnt grass with the crispy white sand of a beautiful beach. The Ocean is vibrant with deep blues and greens dancing with each other as the waves slowly recede with the tide. Driftwood is scattered across the sand, ducks are paddling in the water and the sky is exceptionally blue as the sun indulges the earth with its rays. The blue abyss above him captivates Pau, yet all of a sudden, thousands of seagulls are flying above him. They seem disturbed and soon they begin to drop from the sky, they are spiralling downwards, all at the same time, and for a second, it seems to Pau that they are going to crash into the land. But as they reach the ground they caress the grass like a falling feather and lay motionless as if their spirits are abandoning their bodies. Pau is mesmerized by this quasi-spiritual experience, when all of a sudden; he notices a bald eagle spiralling downwards towards her death. He panics and looks around, but finding himself alone, he calls for the strength of his soul-force and the eagle regains her flight. As her wings flap, the harmony of the dream has been recovered, and Pau finds himself back in the den, cross-legged in the circle of friendship drinking tea with Tolstoy and Gandhi.*

*Gandhi is describing the government of his time...*

GANDHI: “Parliament... members are hypocritical and selfish... When the greatest questions are debated, its members have been seen to stretch themselves and to doze” (Gandhi 1909/2009, 31). “Prime Minister[’s]... I do not hesitate to say that they have neither real honesty nor a living conscience” (Gandhi 1909/2009, 32). “[A]fter twenty years’ experience, I have come to the conclusion that immorality is often taught in the name of morality” (Gandhi 1909/2009, 37).

*Tolstoy is sitting silently making gestures of approval...*

PAU: If you have such a problem with politics why do you get involved in it?

GANDHI: “[I]f I seem to take part in politics, it is only because politics encircles us today like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries” (Gandhi 2008, 10). In addition, “although to all appearances my mission is political, I would ask you to accept my assurance that its roots are – if I may use the term – spiritual” (Gandhi 2008, 77).

*Pau is surprised by the use of spirituality in politics; he interprets a link between spirituality, religion and politics. Marx’s ideas come to his mind, but he prefers to refrain from addressing the topic of religion until he has clarified a few points.*

PAU: I remember reading through the introduction by Anthony Parel in the 2009 Cambridge edition of *Hind Swaraj*. In it, Parel claims that “[i]f Lenin connected colonialism to capitalism, [you] went one step further and connected colonialism to modernity itself” (Gandhi 2009, xxi). Can you clarify your views on modernity?

GANDHI: “The more I observe, the greater is the dissatisfaction with the modern life. I see nothing good in it. Men are good. But they are poor victims making themselves miserable under the false belief that they are doing good” (Gandhi 2008, 39). “Those who are intoxicated by modern civilization are not likely to write against it. Their care will be to find out facts and arguments in support of it, and this they do unconsciously, believing it to be true. A man, whilst he is dreaming, believes in his dreams; he is undeceived only when he is awakened from his sleep” (Gandhi 1909/2009, 35).

PAU: I wonder if in your rejection of modernity you are indeed masking a rejection to manufacturing and machinery?

GANDHI: “I am not opposed to the movement of manufacturing machines in the country, nor to making improvements in machinery. I am only concerned with what these machines are meant for” (Gandhi 1919/2009, 165).

PAU: So what do you claim they are meant for?

GANDHI: “Today Machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The Impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might” (Gandhi 1924/2009, 166). Much of the organization of machinery of the present age is of that type” (Gandhi 2008, 16). “They wish to convert the whole world into a vast market for their goods. That they cannot do so is true, but the blame will not be theirs. They will leave no stone unturned to reach the goal” (Gandhi 1909/2009, 41).

PAU: I understand your claim that industrialism is the control of the majority by the minority, but how can its wonders be ignored? And more importantly, how can the situation change?

GANDHI: There is nothing attractive about it, nor is there anything inevitable about it. If the majority simply wills to say ‘no’ to the blandishments of the minority, the latter is powerless for mischief” (Gandhi 2008, 87). “The rich cannot accumulate wealth without the co-operation of the poor in society” (Gandhi 2008, 96).

PAU: Are you not an anti-capitalist?

GANDHI: “[A]s my religion begins and ends with truth and non-violence, my identification with labour does not conflict with my friendship with capital” (Gandhi 2008, 11). Nevertheless, “I feel that the world would not go all wrong, would not become a world of idiots, if all of us took the vow of voluntary poverty. But I know that this is almost an impossible thing” (Gandhi 2008, 81).

PAU: So you do not think that we can have equality and justice as long as we have private property?

GANDHI: “The only thing that can be possessed by all is non-possession, not to have anything whatsoever. In other words, a willing surrender” (Gandhi 2008, 79).

PAU: Then your argument seems to be in alignment with the thinking of Marx, he advocates for a revolution of the proletariat. What do you suggest?

GANDHI: “The labourer has but to realize that labour is also capital. As soon as labourers are properly educated and organized and they realize their strength, no amount of capital can subdue them. Organized and enlightened labour can dictate its own terms” (Gandhi 2008, 98). “If this knowledge were to penetrate to and spread amongst the poor, they would become strong and would learn how to free themselves by means of non-violence from the crushing inequalities which have brought them to the verge of starvation” (Gandhi 2008, 96).

PAU: Where does this leave the idea of revolution for you?

GANDHI: “A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the

common good” (Gandhi 2008, 176). But “I think we know the violent way. It has not succeeded anywhere” (Gandhi 2008, 177).

*Pau reflects on the violent and failed emancipatory attempts of the last century and nods in agreement. He proceeds with his questions.*

PAU: How would you wish it to be?

GANDHI: “I want no revolution. I want ordered progress. I want no disordered order. I want no chaos. I want real order to be evolved out of this chaos which is misrepresented to me as order. If it is order established by a tyrant in order to get hold of the tyrannical reins of Government, I say that it is no order for me but is disorder. I want to evolve justice out of this injustice” (Gandhi 2008, 354).

PAU: So you want to reach economic equality but you are not willing to do so through violence?

GANDHI: “Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour... A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists...” (Gandhi 1941/2009, 177).

*Pau acknowledges the truth in Gandhi’s ideas and is interested in learning the particulars of his struggle.*

PAU: You are also not willing to endorse violence to achieve self-rule.

GANDHI: “The English are splendidly armed; that does not frighten me, but it is clear that, to pit ourselves against them in arms, thousands of Indians must be armed. If such a thing be possible, how many years will it take? Moreover, to arm India on a large scale is to Europeanise it. Then her condition will be just as pitiable as that of Europe” (Gandhi 1909/2009, 77). “My countrymen... believe that they should adopt modern civilization and modern methods of violence to drive out the English. ‘Hind Swaraj’ has been written in order to show that they are following a suicidal policy” (Gandhi 1909/2009, 7).

PAU: Can the ends not justify the means in the struggle against oppression?

GANDHI: “Those who will rise to power by murder will certainly not make the nation happy” (Gandhi 1909/2009, 77). “Your belief that there is no connection between the means and the end is a great mistake... there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree” (Gandhi 1909/2009, 81).

PAU: But are you not asking the weak to make a leap of faith into non-violence?

GANDHI: “[A] nation of three hundred million people should be ashamed to have to resort to force to bring to book one hundred thousand Englishmen. To convert them or, if you will, even to drive them out of the country, we need, not force of arms, but force of will. If we have not the later, we shall never get the former. If we develop the force of will, we shall find that we do not need the force of arms” (Gandhi 2008, 197).

*Gandhi seems adamant about his latest statement, but Pau prods him for a more in-depth argumentation.*

PAU: Are you truly convinced about non-violent means?

GANDHI: “My study and experience of non-violence have proved to me that it is the greatest force in the world. It is the surest method of discovering the truth and it is the quickest because there is no other... It is the one constructive process of Nature in the midst of incessant destruction going on about us” (Gandhi 2008, 55). “[I]f men’s minds turn towards this way of life, there will come about a peaceful revolution in society, and that without any bitterness” (Gandhi 2008, 95).

PAU: So how do you go about obtaining rights with the application of non-violence? What do you say to those in power?

GANDHI: “If you do not concede our demand, we will be no longer your petitioners. You can govern us only so long as we remain the governed; we shall no longer have any dealings with you. The force in this may be described as love-force, soul-force or, more popularly but less accurately, passive resistance. This force is indestructible” (Gandhi 1909/2009, 85). “[A] perfect Passive Resister has to be almost, if not entirely, a perfect man. We cannot all suddenly become such men, but, if my proposition is correct – as I know it to be correct – the greater the spirit of Passive Resistance in us, the better men we will become... [I]t is a force which, if it became universal, would revolutionize social ideals and do away with despotisms and the ever-growing militarism under which the nations of the West are groaning and are being almost crushed to death, and which fairly promises to overwhelm even the nations of the East” (Gandhi 2008, 310).

*Gandhi has put forth a convincing argument, but Pau eagerly expresses a deep concern.*

PAU: It seems to me that you are calling on people to break the law?

GANDHI: “The real meaning of the statement that we are a law-abiding nation is that we are passive resisters. When we do not like certain laws, we do not break the heads of law-givers, but we suffer and do not submit to the laws... It is contrary to our manhood, if we obey laws repugnant to our conscience. Such teaching is opposed to religion<sup>19</sup>, and means slavery” (Gandhi 1909/2009, 91).

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<sup>19</sup> A footnote in the original text explains that ‘religion’ in this context refers to dharma, in the sense of ethics.

*Tolstoy struggles to cope with the conception that people do not grasp such a message. Pau on the other hand simply continues with his incessant questioning. It is a rare opportunity for him to receive spoken answers to such fundamental questions.*

PAU: What is necessary for such passive resistance or soul-force?

GANDHI: “[A] passive resister will say he will not obey a law that is against his conscience, even though he may be blown to pieces at the mouth of a cannon” (Gandhi 1909/2009, 93). “Control over the mind is alone necessary, and, when that is attained, man is free like the king of the forest, and his very glance withers the enemy” (Gandhi 1909/2009, 94).

PAU: If that is the case, why is there no proof of truly successful passive resistance?

GANDHI: “[T]he greatest and most unimpeachable evidence of the success of this force is to be found in the fact that, in spite of the wars of the world, it still lives on” (Gandhi 1909/2009, 89).

*Pau pours some tea as he collects his thoughts and in his mind experiences a glimpse of what Gandhi is portraying. He quickly gets back to the conversation.*

PAU: Before I move on to other issues can you confirm to me that you will always reject violence?

GANDHI: “Non-violence is the weapon of the strong. With the weak it might easily be hypocrisy” (Gandhi 2008, 61). “My non-violence does not admit of running away from danger and leaving dear ones unprotected: Between violence and cowardly flight, I can only prefer violence to cowardice. I can no more preach non-violence to a coward than I can tempt a blind man to enjoy healthy scenes” (Gandhi 2008, 199).

*With Gandhi’s words, a gate for violence to enter his theoretical and practical domain seems to have been opened. Pau wonders if it is at this point that Obama considers himself in alignment with Gandhi. Nevertheless, he refrains from pushing the thought any further and opts for a change of topic.*

PAU: Another area, which I find of true interest in your work, is your understanding of religion. Religion continues to be one of the reasons in the name of which wars are fought in the early stages of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I understand it was also one of your main concerns during the struggle for *Swaraj*, and one of Marx’s when he was writing ‘On the Jewish Question’. In that essay Marx asks the following: “How does one make religious opposition impossible?” He emphatically responds with the following words: “By abolishing religion” (Marx 1843/2006, 48).

*Pau pauses for a second.*

PAU: Do you believe that religion must be eliminated?

GANDHI: “Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal. Wherein is the cause for quarrelling?” (Gandhi 1909/2009, 53). “What a joy it would be when people realize that religion consists not in outward ceremonial but an ever-growing inward response to the highest impulses that man is capable of” (Gandhi 2008, 50).

PAU: So although you think religion is being misinterpreted you do not advocate for its abolition?

GANDHI: “[I]t is more correct to say that Truth is God than to say that God is Truth. But as we cannot do without a ruler or general, the name God is and will remain more current” (Gandhi 2008, 44). “I do, however, suggest that non-violence is the end of all religions” (Gandhi 2008, 197) and that “truth and non-violence are, to me, faces of the same coin” (Gandhi 2008, 61).

PAU: In essence what you are saying is that non-violence is God. If I am correct in my understanding, I can see why you would make such a statement.

*There is a break in the conversation and all three characters can be seen looking around the room at the numerous religious ornaments from different faiths. In the den, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Shinto, Sikhism, Taoism, Wicca, Zoroastrianism, Druidism, Baha'i, Atheism and others coexist in harmony<sup>20</sup>. The three look at each other and grin. The conversation resumes as Pau continues...*

PAU: I remember a while back I read some of your work; you often refer to the tactic of civil disobedience, yet I still do not have a full grasp of what it entails. Could you elaborate on that theme for me?

GANDHI: “Submission to the state law is the price a citizen pays for his personal liberty. Submission, therefore, to a state wholly or largely unjust is an immoral barter for liberty” (Gandhi 2008, 359). “Complete civil disobedience is a state of peaceful rebellion – a refusal to obey every single State-made law” (Gandhi 2008, 358).

*Gandhi takes a deep breath as if entering a state of deep meditation and then he continues...*

GANDHI: “[C]ivil disobedience in terms of independence without the co-operation of the millions by way of constructive effort is mere bravado and worse than useless” (Gandhi 1941/2009, 180).

PAU: It seems to be a dangerous proposition unless there is substantial critical mass.

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<sup>20</sup> For a more extensive list of religions, *Religion Facts* offers a basic initiation into an online search: <http://www.religionfacts.com/>

GANDHI: “There is a danger in civil disobedience only because it is still only a partially tried remedy and has always to be tried in an atmosphere surcharged with violence” (Gandhi 2008, 368).

PAU: So in essence a non-violent response to oppression implies civil disobedience, which equates to non-cooperation, correct?

GANDHI: “There shall be no co-operation between injustice and justice, between an unjust man and a justice-loving man, between truth and untruth. Co-operation is a duty only so long as Government protects your honour, and non-co-operation is an equal duty when the government, instead of protecting, robs you of your honour” (Gandhi 2008, 350).

*There seems to be no more that Gandhi needs to add, but Pau persists in hope of grasping the essence of Gandhi’s proposal.*

PAU: What are you seeking with the independence of India?

GANDHI: “My ambition is much higher than independence. Through the deliverance of India, I seek to deliver the so-called weaker races of the earth from the crushing heels of Western exploitation” (Gandhi 2008, 153).

PAU: In that sense would you prefer a world without government?

GANDHI: “I am not anti-any government; but I am anti-untruth – anti-humbug and anti-injustice. So long as the Government spells injustice, it may regard me as its enemy, implacable enemy” (Gandhi 2008, 349). However, “[r]epresentatives will become unnecessary if the national life becomes so perfect as to be self-controlled. It will then be a state of enlightened anarchy in which each person will become his own ruler. He will conduct himself in such a way that his behaviour will not hamper the well-being of his neighbour. In an ideal State there will be no political institution and therefore no political power” (Gandhi 2008, 102).

*At this moment Tolstoy enters the conversation, he just wants to emphasize the importance of Gandhi’s work...*

TOLSTOY: “I read your book with great interest because I think that the question you treat in it – the passive resistance – is a question of greatest importance not only for India but for the whole of humanity”<sup>21</sup> (Gandhi 1910/2009, 137).

*Tolstoy once again retreats to his analytical silence and Gandhi and Pau continue talking.*

PAU: I could not agree more with Tolstoy’s statement, but allow me to dig deeper into your essential thought, so that you might shed light on some of the issues of grave

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<sup>21</sup> Letter from Tolstoy to Gandhi, May 8th 1910.

concern today. What would you consider to be the biggest problem facing the powerful nations of the world?

GANDHI: “Pride makes a victorious nation bad-tempered. It falls into luxurious ways of living. Then for a time, it may be conceded, peace prevails. But after a short while, it comes more and more to be realized that the seeds of war have not been destroyed but have become a thousand times more nourished and mighty. No country has ever become, or will ever become, happy through victory in war. A nation does not rise that way, it only falls further. In fact, what comes to it is defeat, not victory” (Gandhi 2008, 312).

PAU: So we have to wait until all nations fall in order to attain global peace?

GANDHI: “The cry for peace will be a cry in the wilderness, so long as the spirit of non-violence does not dominate millions of men and women” (Gandhi 2008, 56). However, “[i]f the recognized leaders of mankind who have control over engines of destruction where wholly to renounce their use, with full knowledge of its implications, permanent peace can be obtained. This is clearly impossible without the great Powers of the earth renouncing their imperialistic design” (Gandhi 2008, 42).

PAU: That reality seems utopian.

GANDHI: “If even one great nation were unconditionally to perform the supreme act of renunciation, many of us would see in our lifetime visible peace established on earth” (Gandhi 2008, 42).

*Pau is wondering how such a move could be achieved, he looks at Tolstoy for an answer, but since Tolstoy seems determined to keep silent, he stares at Gandhi and asks one more question.*

PAU: What do you think must be humanity’s greatest achievement?

GANDHI: “Man’s triumph will consist in substituting the struggle for existence by the struggle for mutual service. The law of the brute will be replaced by the law of man” (Gandhi 2008, 90).

*The conversation is clearly coming to an end, and Pau with a heartfelt sense of sadness begins the good byes...*

PAU: Thank you for this great opportunity to discuss the problems we are facing, I certainly have learned a lot, and I hope to transform all this knowledge into something practical. What do you think I should take with me as a core message?

TOLSTOY: “Do not resist evil, but also yourselves participate not in evil, in the violent deeds of the administration of the law courts, the collection of taxes and, what is more

important, of the soldiers, and no one in the world will enslave you”<sup>22</sup> (Tolstoy quoted in Gandhi 1909/2009, 137).

*Gandhi calmly adds his finishing stance on non-violent action...*

GHANDI: “[T]o those who are unable to make up their mind, I say, by all means wait. But for those who have seen the clear light as they see the lights in front of them, for them to wait is a sin” (Gandhi 2008, 351).

*The phone rings, but it takes a while for our writer to be awakened by modernity’s call. He realizes that he has been dreaming, but everything has been so real that it is hard for him to acknowledge its disappearance. As he adjusts himself to the world of the awake – the space of full consciousness – he is unable to refrain from wondering which of his worlds holds the most valuable truths for humanity. Which one is more True in Gandhi’s sense? Is it our imperial world of hope as presented by CNN, or is it the hope against hope elucidated by Gandhi inside a simple dream? Without an answer to such conundrum, Pau reaches for the phone. It is a standard robocall<sup>23</sup> in which Mary – a recorded voice – is claiming to offer free credit. Still holding the open copy of ‘Mahatma Gandhi: The Essential Writings’, Pau remembers that he must finish reading it before the end of the day.*

*With a vague memory of the conversations held in his dream, and with an equally mild recollection of the news of the day – in particular Joe Stack’s violent suicide note – Pau continues reading on page 61 where he left off... “Non-violence is the weapon of the strong” (Gandhi 2008, 61).*

- The End -

## Epilogue

In this one-act play I wanted PAU to be an inquisitive character who although opinionated at times, in essence was simply the facilitator of a conversation between people whose thought and practice has shaped and continues to shape the way we understand human interaction – both between ourselves and with our planet. PAU in the play is the person who asks the questions and who offers no answers, yet, it seems like the time has come for him to express his own views.

There is a letter that PAU wrote to a dear friend of his a few weeks after he had his dream. The friend is a retired kindergarten teacher in the little fishing village of Siraya, in

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<sup>22</sup> In the preface of Tolstoy’s ‘Letter to a Hindoo’ Gandhi quotes Tolstoy.

<sup>23</sup> Robocall is the term used for an automated telemarketing phone call that uses both a computerized auto-dialer and a computer-delivered recorded message. The implication is that a “robocall” resembles a telephone call from a robot. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robocall>

the island of Koh Lanta. The letter attempts to synthesize what PAU took from the conversation in his dream. In order to reveal a little more about PAU's thinking, as the narrator of this story I am compelled to present the letter in the form of this epilogue:

PAU  
Songhees Territories  
*March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010*

Dear KRU,

How much I miss the contemplative, peaceful and sustainable existence you have always shown me. During my time back in the 'civilized world' – term which as you know I am using ironically – I have come to the realization that your simple life is too complex for the obtuse lens of mainstream Western thought. Nevertheless, instead of giving up on my quest for truth, justice and peace, and returning to Siraya to watch our magical planet rapidly disappear; I continue to believe that I have something to contribute in this part of the world. Although in my heart I carry with me the pain of being away from the peace of Siraya, its 'uncivilized' and human tranquillity, I understand that for the time being my response-ability is in the heart of Western thought – its academic institutions.

I truly have no idea of what I will be able to achieve while I am here. I often question my own intellectual abilities, yet I remain diligent and committed to my quest, in the hope that truth will prevail. If only the militaristic and imperialist mindset of the Western world can be transformed into a cooperative project of mutual respect and love, I figure that we might have a chance to end exploitation and oppression in our planet. We might be able to be the human family which reason allows us to envision, and which practice seems to be negating. Of course seeing such a change in our lifetime is not an easy task, much work needs to be done and millions of soul-force practitioners need to join the ranks of the non-violent movement. But that is what I am here for, to empower myself in the practice of soul-force. As Gandhi clearly states, we must start on ourselves before we move on to convince others.

As you already know from our previous correspondence, I have spent the last few months of my life, engaged in an intellectual exercise trying to figure out the underpinning theories currently driving Western thought. Out of the search I have identified Kant's ideas deeply ingrained in the mindset of Western citizens and Western institutions. The idea of reaching peaceful co-existence through imperialist militarization appears to me as the most destructive conditioning Westerners have adopted. Nevertheless, it has become the driving force of our societies, and the bastion of reason through which we have opted to engage with others. I dread that unless somehow we acquire the necessary wisdom and strength to discredit such a position – this being of course the most challenging of tasks – we will not see peace flourishing in our time, but instead will be forced into a global conflict of unimaginable magnitude. Of course when I make such a statement I am fully aware of the fact that conflict has been a constant throughout the process of construction of our present societies. Yet, I am inclined to argue that we have entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century

with a rapid escalation of violence and oppression, which historians in the future might refer to as the early stages of the Third World War. Driven by such a thought I am forced into making a choice about which side I want to be on: the side that promotes war, or the side, which practices peace.

In addition to my readings of Kant, I have given serious thought to alternatives I see to such a worldview. I think the biggest change in my own conception of truth over the last few months, has been to move away from Marx's violent approach to human emancipation, and towards Gandhi's conception of non-violent means for attaining justice and peace. Nevertheless, because so much of the analysis offered by Marxists regarding the current state of our societies is invaluable, I figure that one of the core challenges non-violence practitioners face is convincing Marxists of the fact that violent means are disempowering. This will not be an easy task despite the fact that history is on our side. Furthermore, we are also going to have to work with all the groups in the existing peace movement whose ideological underpinning is closely tied to Kant's conception of peace, and hopefully lead them towards a re-evaluation of his metaphysics of morals.

I had a dream a few weeks ago in which various thinkers were talking to me about their views regarding society. It was a strange dream, because time and space had disappeared and the living and the dead were able to converse in my den. I came out of the dream with the clear vision of how I wanted to proceed. TULLY and SANTOS two contemporary thinkers gave me a sense of direction moving forward. In their analysis of the problems we are facing, they offered alternatives to the predominant form of citizenship (modern citizenship) and to the current neo-liberal globalization we are experiencing. Also in the dream, DAY provided me with an understanding of the failings of social movements and the need to re-evaluate the numerous strategies and tactics currently being pursued – solutions, which at present are not successfully disrupting imperial expansion. On a different note, PETRAS revealed to me the sharpness of contemporary Marxist critique, but he failed to entice me towards its outdated and foundationally warped alternative project, that of overthrowing the elites. Like MARX, PETRAS seems to attribute qualities of goodness and justice to those whose emancipation he seeks to support, which to him would justify their getting blood on their hands, in order to gain control of society through the use of brute force. Such a project from my perspective can only feed the existing spiral of violence.

In the dream, I actually had my first serious encounter with the possibilities of non-violent action. Inspired by TULLY, and having always been a big fan of TOLSTOY, a few months back I began to read GANDHI. Knowing that TOLSTOY had inspired GANDHI, reading him was a pleasure for me. For that reason, you can imagine my surprise when he appeared in my dream and began to clarify some of my concerns regarding the political possibilities of his non-violent project. Conditioned by a Hollywood movie I once watched, I had always imagined GANDHI as this inaccessible almost non-human creature that behaved in a way that mortals could only aspire to. In essence, although I could envision what his project was about, I could not really understand how to go about building on his struggle. Talking with GANDHI in my

dream, the human behind the name showed himself like any other human being. This made him accessible, but more importantly it also revealed the essence of his struggle – we can all adopt non-violence, and it can one day be the paradigm that governs our actions as individuals engaging with each other and with our planet. What is needed is the will to make such a choice.

I imagine that by now my dear friend KRU, you will be asking yourself what it is that follows for me. The transformation I have experienced has been intense and real. Refusing to advocate for violent revolution, and instead dedicating my life to non-violence is a very constructive step. But it is a step, which requires strength, honesty and commitment. Gandhi himself said: “Non-violence is the weapon of the strong. With the weak it might easily be hypocrisy” (Gandhi 2008, 61). The only honest way I can claim to adopt non-violence is to make a life of it; to make sure that everything I do is in alignment with its essential core, and aims towards strengthening the cause. For this reason, the first act of non-violence I have practiced has been to direct my university studies towards theorizing its practice. The justice-seeking individual can only justify refusing to contribute to a violent revolution at this critical juncture in world affairs, if his call for non-violence is not a hypocritical act of cowardice. Theorizing its possibilities and advocating for its intensification, seems to be my calling. It is certainly the path I have chosen.

Missing you with all my heart. Your friend,

PAU

*\*The letter was written in Thai by PAU and translated by the narrator for this epilogue.*

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