

# Disobedients and Ideals

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Often a person's reasons for engaging in civil disobedience stem from certain deeply and conscientiously held commitments. Whereas sometimes these commitments are well-founded and sufficiently weighty to justify a communicative breach of law in their defence, other times they are not. In the latter case, the dissenter might have reason to believe her commitments are genuinely valuable and her actions justified, but she is mistaken and, at best, her conduct is excused. I undertake in this paper to explicate the nature of dissenters' commitments, good and bad, by situating the reasons for which dissenters civilly disobey the law in the context of a pursuit of ideals. An ideal, as a conception of perfection or a model of excellence, offers a person a comprehensive end toward which she may orient her thoughts and actions and through which she may seek to effect substantial change in perspectives or practices. Whereas some ideals are personal (e.g. model parenting, athletic excellence, intellectual achievement), others are public or political (e.g. collective flourishing, equality, justice).<sup>1</sup> Civil disobedience, as a paradigmatically communicative practice, is oriented principally toward the latter. While it is true that not all civil disobedience is marked by a pursuit of such ideals, much of it, justified and unjustified, may be interpreted in this way; and civil disobedience which lacks an orientation toward ideals may be explicated through its contrast with disobedience that is so oriented.

The first aim in this paper is to vindicate the concept of *ideals* as a moral category and to locate this concept in relation to more familiar moral concepts like *duty*, *rights*, *virtue*, and *the good*. The second aim is to mobilise the concept of *ideals* in understanding historical and contemporary cases of civil disobedience. A third, more general aim is to further the returning interest amongst moral philosophers in ideals by offering an analysis which relates ideals, particularly public ideals, to duty and virtue through responsible citizenship. I maintain that persons who commit themselves, both normatively and motivationally, to the realisation of genuine public ideals demonstrate responsible citizenship or civic virtue.<sup>2</sup> And it is this responsiveness to public ideals and the duties they generate which leads these persons to engage in civil disobedience. Their disobedience sharply contrasts with disobedience that lacks normative and motivational commitment to genuine ideals. Assuming the latter disobedience is oriented toward ideals at all, it represents either 1) a commitment to false ideals, or 2) a pursuit of ideals through reprehensible means, or 3) a pursuit that is motivationally dubious though the means and/or the end may be respectable, or 4) some combination of the three.

As these possibilities indicate, various sub-categories of ideals are relevant to civic virtue (and to respect for ideals generally) including value ideals, character ideals, and admirable modes of pursuit. Although these categories overlap, broadly speaking genuine value ideals are ends (like states of affairs) toward which a person may orient her thought and action; character ideals are dispositions to respond to the right reasons and to act for those reasons in pursuit of value ideals (or other ends); and admirable modes of pursuit are exemplary means and modes of conduct taken in the pursuit of value ideals or ordinary goals.<sup>3</sup> After teasing out these categories of ideals in Section 1 with an eye to locating them in relation to other moral concepts, I

elucidate in Section 2 concerns about false ideals, improper motivations, and extremism in means and modes of pursuit, which together underpin much of the current wariness about ideals.<sup>4</sup> I argue that concerns about extremism and improper motivation are misdirected, at least when it comes to genuine ideals, because genuine ideals place certain constraints upon the means and motivations that may legitimately be employed in their pursuit. Concerns about false ideals and their overlap with extremist action and improper motivation are well-founded however, and disobedient actions taken in their name may recommend a harsh response from society or the law. I then apply my analysis of ideals to the lives and work of several disobedients, historical and contemporary. In the lives of Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr, and Nelson Mandela, we find personal and public commitments intertwined in a striving for something finer for their people or perhaps even for humanity.<sup>5</sup> I begin my consideration of these three disobedients by explicating Gandhi's moral outlook, which itself may be understood in terms of ideals, namely, the moral ideal of exemplary action. I then examine in Section 3 Gandhi's, King's and Mandela's contributions to their respective movements not only to assess the merits of their efforts, but also to explicate various features that mark pursuits of ideals: imagination, innovation, loneliness, and a noble sense of purpose.<sup>6</sup> This last mirrors a feature of paradigmatic civil disobedience, namely, conscientiousness. The paradigm case of civil disobedience, on my view, is a conscientious and communicative breach of law associated with both the aim to demonstrate protest against a law or policy and the aim to bring about through moral dialogue a lasting change in that policy. I conclude Section 3 by noting some concerns about necessity, violence, tragedy, and circumstance-relativity.

Although these three men are often identified as the paradigmatic civil disobedients, the paradigm may be shifting since much recent civil disobedience aims not to guarantee recognition of a people's rights, but to challenge policies within liberal democracies. When I say the paradigm may be shifting, I do not mean that the key features exemplified in historical paradigms are not the key features exemplified in contemporary civil disobedience. I mean rather that both dissenters' modes of communication and their aims for policy change are evolving. In Section 4, I examine civil disobedience pursued in defence of concerns like the environment, animal rights, anti-globalisation, and nuclear disarmament. I then conclude Section 4 by considering disobedience which seemingly lacks that sensitivity to genuine ideals necessary for civic virtue. Some dissenters demonstrate an urge to transcend aspects of existing moral horizons but that urge is motivated by baseless, distasteful, or even contemptible commitments. Other dissenters show that ideals play little or no part in their actions, as they are driven not by a need to transcend certain moral boundaries, but merely by disagreement with some established policy. Through my examination of these and other cases, I tease out the relation between justified civil disobedience, responsible citizenship, and the pursuit of ideals.

## **1. Ideals and Virtue**

In his Uehiro lecture 'Concerning Ideals', C.A.J. Coady identifies four features of ideals which distinguish such ends from ordinary goals (and *mutatis mutandis* ordinary values).<sup>7</sup> First, ideals are more comprehensive and general than most goals. Second, they garner esteem from the person who pursues them, something which a goal need not do: 'An ideal', Coady says, 'is estimable for those who pursue or acknowledge it in that they must rank it highly as a good.' Third, ideals are more

pervasive or even constitutive than ordinary goals. Anyone who is possessed of an ideal, suggests Coady, ‘acts now in the light of that ideal and does not merely do certain ideal-neutral things that will bring about the ideal in some remote future...the ideal comes to exist to a greater or [lesser] degree in the agent as the agent seeks to live it.’ Finally, ideals often are to different degrees and for different reasons unrealisable, a feature most thinkers who have considered ideals regard as vital to distinguishing them from ordinary goals. While I prefer to characterise ideals as, at least in principle, realisable (though this may clash with a commonsense notion of *ideals*), I recognise that often a person will be unable to realise her ideals. This feature and the others just listed require explication, and I consider each at different points in this discussion. I shall focus for the moment on the second feature since the element of esteem or admiration helps to locate ideals in relation to other moral categories.

*a. Value ideals*

Genuinely valuable ideals may be understood in terms of what is admirable, exemplary and commendable. Genuine ideals are, of course, not the only things that are admirable. It is simply a common feature of genuine ideals that they are admirable. What is admirable may be distinguished from what is good.<sup>8</sup> Whereas wearing a sweater when it is cold may be good but is not admirable, putting one’s life at risk to save another is admirable. Genuine ideals, as comprehensive ends, offer a standard of excellence which guides people in the development of aspects of their lives, be it character, motivation, action, goals, commitments, or relationships. If the model offered by an ideal is genuinely valuable, then everyone has reason to admire both it and any success someone has in realising it. If, however, an ideal is false and the model it offers is not admirable, then people have reason not to admire either it or

someone's efforts in realising it. People in fact may have reason to condemn it. Where two persons disagree over the admirability of some ideal, one of those persons is mistaken. This does not mean, though, that she is mistaken about what she herself has reason to do. We may distinguish between what people have reason to admire or commend and what they have reason to pursue themselves. One may admire the world-class athlete or the virtuoso without having reason to regard these ideals as ends one ought to strive for oneself. In fact, one's commitment to one's own legitimate ideals may be incompatible with a commitment to other equally admirable ends. This incompatibility, an issue which I explore further below, need not diminish one's regard for alternative ideals. As P.F. Strawson notes, the steadiest adherence to a single ideal picture of life may coexist with the strongest desire that other incompatible ideals should have their steady adherents too.<sup>9</sup>

However, not all ideals are optional in this respect. Some ideals recommend themselves to all and give all a reason to pursue them. Certain character ideals, like honesty, for example, recommend themselves to all. At the same time, such ideals can be particularly salient to specific roles or ways of life. As Coady notes, '...although the ideal of truth, for instance, has an objective claim to the attention of all, it may have a special role in the lives of intellectuals, just as the ideal of justice must concern everyone, but [has] a special significance for judges.' Justice and truth concern everyone partly because they are public ideals (though, in different clothes, they can be personal ideals too). Public ideals, as a class, recommend themselves generally because excellence in them comes to be seen as contributing to the common wealth of the culture. As John Skorupski observes, public ideals are seen not just as ideals of individuals but as ideals of the society.<sup>10</sup> Of course, some people are better placed

than others to pursue public ideals of justice, equality, or democracy. The point is simply that all people have reason to be concerned with such ideals.

The issue of *how* ideals are to be pursued is particularly relevant in the context of public ideals since, at some level, lack of agreement and coordination about the admirability of the ideal and the appropriate means to pursue it can hamper progress toward public ideals. Gandhi, for example, did not want the nationalist movement in India to be a project of the elite. He wanted all Indians including peasants and untouchables to be part of the resistance to British rule. Although Gandhi's satyagrahi (trained, non-violent resisters) were particularly well-placed to pursue the political ideal of a free, democratic, undivided India and to provide leadership through their non-violent disobedience, nevertheless it was only in making his ideal the objective for all that Gandhi could hope to approximate it. But the agreement and coordination required for the pursuit of public ideals operates at a general level since the value of dissent and disagreement about means and modes of pursuit should not be underestimated. Forceful and vivid disagreement actually may better enable a people to approximate an ideal than lack of opposition would do because often it is only through the collision of perspectives that people become aware of the drawbacks of a particular approach. Such dissent may be seen as a contribution to, rather than a detraction from, the coordinated effort.

It is worth pausing on the distinction between personal and public ideals for a moment to note that many so called personal ideals – rich, long-lasting relationships, positive self-development, etc. – require social support to be pursued in meaningful ways. Moreover, the contribution made by any success in realising such ideals is not limited to the individual and her close relations: the cultivation of personal ideals contributes to the common wealth of the community. Similarly, many so called public

ideals have a personal dimension in that, although common to the community, they influence, inspire, and benefit the individual as an individual. To judges, for example, justice has a distinctly personal dimension. Yet, despite the overlap between personal and public ideals, the distinction between them is worth sustaining, as it helps to specify the orientation of a person's pursuit. To clarify this point, consider Nelson Mandela's ideals, which began as personal ideals and only over time evolved into public ideals with a distinctly personal focus. In his autobiography, Mandela states:

At first, as a student, I wanted freedom only for myself, the transitory freedoms of being able to stay out at night, read what I pleased, and go where I chose. Later as a young man in Johannesburg, I yearned for the basic and honourable freedoms of achieving my potential, of earning my keep, of marrying and having a family – the freedom not to be obstructed in a lawful life.

But then I slowly saw that not only was I not free, but my brothers and sisters were not free. I saw that it was not just my freedom that was curtailed, but the freedom of everyone who looked like I did...and that is when the hunger for my own freedom became the greater hunger for the freedom of my people.<sup>11</sup>

Mandela's statement highlights the process he underwent as he learned to look beyond his personal situation to strive for the betterment of his people, a process necessary to the development of responsible citizenship or civic virtue. Before considering issues of character and motivation, let me note a further feature of public ideals.

There is an inextricable link between public ideals and communication.

Whereas one can pursue personal ideals in private, one cannot pursue public ideals in any meaningful sense without communicating one's position to other members of society. Gandhi appreciated this, which is why his commitment to a moral ideal of exemplary action (which I explicate below) brought with it a commitment to spin-off ideals concerning how societies should be structured so that the models people set for others to follow could have maximum publicity. Gandhi held an ideal of peasant communities organised in small panchayat or village units, as these communities could approximate the family, where examples could be visibly set. The publicity



necessary to set an example or to communicate a commitment to certain ends is, however, not the same kind of publicity which John Rawls identified in *A Theory of Justice* as a defining condition for civil disobedience. Rawls's notion of *publicity*, which takes the form of forewarning authorities of intended disobedience, often is counterproductive to the aim of communicating a position since it gives authorities and opponents the opportunity to prevent the planned action.<sup>12</sup> The kind of publicity that is conducive both to civil disobedience and to the pursuit of public ideals communicates, first, that certain people have taken certain actions, and second, the specific reasons for which they have acted.<sup>13</sup> Through this kind of publicity, civil disobedients offer an orientation toward certain ends for others to consider. When their challenges to law are well-founded and important and arise from sustained, deep conviction, their decision to engage in civil disobedience may be seen as the product of a fervent commitment to their society, a commitment which underpins their aim to lead that society to redraw some of its moral boundaries. Such commitment may be understood in terms of responsible citizenship or civic virtue.

*b. Character ideals and civic virtue*

A virtue is a character trait or disposition to act for certain good reasons. It not only makes a person responsive to normative reasons to do things in a range of contexts, but also gives her the motivation to do those things for the right reasons.<sup>14</sup> Civic virtue then is the disposition, first, to identify the normative reasons to participate responsibly and to contribute to the flourishing of a people, and second, to act on the basis of those reasons when making a contribution.<sup>15</sup> Tricky cases are those where one would better do as the right reasons would have one do if one acted not on the basis of those reasons. Such cases, which usually turn on the agent's inability to

master her emotions or her enthusiasm, would be rare when a person possesses sufficiently the relevant virtue since she would be able to comport herself as the right reasons recommend. However, in those rare cases where she would do better by those reasons to act for other reasons, the virtue would supply her with reasons that are motivationally respectable though they are not the reasons whose normativity she is respecting.

Now, what does it mean to participate responsibly in society? On my view, this does not mean respecting the law because it is the law. I deny that there is a *pro tanto* moral obligation to obey the law because it is the law. This means that civil disobedience must be assessed on the basis of its character and consequences. Our responsibilities as citizens are more expansive than a *pro tanto* obligation to follow the law would allow. Responsible citizenship extends beyond duty to the virtues of civility and forbearance, and moreover, to supererogatory acts like those noted by James Boswell: ‘I would have every breast animated with the *fervour* of loyalty; with that generous attachment which delights in doing somewhat more than is required, makes “service perfect freedom”.’<sup>16</sup> Putting issues of supererogation aside for the moment, Boswell’s endorsement of loyalty and service picks out the key feature of civic virtue, which is the disposition to further in the right way public good over private good.<sup>17</sup> The responsible citizen does not give priority to the flourishing of the community to such an extent that she ignores her own children. Rather, being motivated by a strong sense commitment to the community and by an awareness of the specific duties that arise from this commitment, the responsible citizen gives priority to the community over her individual advantage when the two are incommensurable.

Civic virtue may be recharacterised without spoiling its essence as a responsiveness to public ideals. In fact this recharacterisation brings out Boswell's notion of generous attachment since, as noted at the outset, ideals are distinctive for being constitutive and pervasive, which means that a person animated by a public ideal comes to possess that ideal to a greater or lesser degree as she seeks to live it. Civic virtue, on this picture, requires both an appreciation for the reasons which those ideals give her to take certain actions and the motivation to act for those reasons.

This sensitivity to public ideals also brings with it an attention to the particular duties that stem from those ideals. Those duties sometimes include challenging the government or the dominant position. As Richard Dagger notes,

To be virtuous, then, is to perform well a socially necessary or important role. This does not mean that the virtuous person must always go along with the prevailing views or attitudes. On the contrary, Socrates and John Stuart Mill have persuaded many people to believe that questioning and challenging the prevailing views are among the highest forms of virtue. In making this case, though, they rely on the claim that the social gadfly and the unorthodox thinker are really promoting the long-term interests of society and thereby performing a social role of exceptional value.<sup>18</sup>

I noted above the value of dissent as a contribution to the collision of antipathetic outlooks, but would observe that the contribution of an irresponsible or frivolous gadfly is often nothing compared to the contribution of committed citizens who both appreciate how far their present political system falls below an admirable regime and communicate their awareness through concerted action and engagement.

The attitude with which these citizens act is as important to their contribution to the pursuit of ideals as the particular actions they take. Their motivation concerning an ideal determines, first, whether they reasonably may claim to pursue that ideal, and second, assuming they may, whether they have any hope of success. Gandhi, for example, may reasonably claim to pursue the ideal of non-violence since in his life and work he acted according to a very stringent notion of non-violence which eschews even criticism of others. On Gandhi's view, dissociating oneself from a

policy must not be marked by the condemnation and critical judgment typically associated with civil disobedience. It can be done with a ‘pure heart’. Bilgrami characterises the attitudes of Gandhi and his non-violent resisters as follows:

The ‘satyagrahi’...has to show a certain kind of self-restraint, in which it was not enough simply not to commit violence. It is equally important not to bear hostility to others or even to criticise them; it is only required that one not follow these others, if conscience doesn’t permit it. To show hostility and contempt, to speak or even to think negatively and critically, would be to give in to the spiritual flaws that underlie violence, to have the wrong conception of moral judgment. For it is not the point of moral judgment to criticise.<sup>19</sup>

While we may dispute Gandhi’s definition of *violence* and its implications for political activism, my aim here is to highlight how important his pure-hearted motivation was to the integrity of his pursuit of this non-violent ideal. If Gandhi’s pursuit of that ideal of non-violence had taken any other form or exhibited any other attitudes, it could not have been regarded as a genuine pursuit. As we shall see, other dissenters like King and Mandela also adopt a pure-hearted attitude toward those whom they seek to challenge (though Mandela’s stance is more complicated since he advocated violent resistance). King’s pure-hearted attitude toward his opponents, including the white clergy, comes out in his letter from Birmingham Jail. King says, ‘In deep disappointment, I have wept over the laxity of the church. But be assured that my tears have been tears of love. There can be no deep disappointment where there is not deep love.’<sup>20</sup> Such an attitude, while it may not be necessary for a genuine pursuit of a moral reformation in political relations, may make that pursuit easier to realise. Moreover, such an attitude is necessary when the ideal one pursues rules out attitudes other than pure-hearted love. I consider in the next section how this pure-heartedness may be reconciled with my understanding of civil disobedience as action which exemplifies the communication of condemnation of and dissociation from a law or policy.

Characterising civic virtue in terms of a responsiveness to public ideals is consistent with appreciating that civic virtue is itself a character ideal. As a model of participation, civic virtue offers an extremely high standard for citizens to meet, requiring not only that they place community concerns before personal concerns when the two conflict, but also that they both be aware of the practices and policies that would serve common flourishing and be able to act on the basis of the right reasons to contribute to that flourishing. Responsible citizenship is perhaps a more realistic approximation of civic virtue, which many disobedients deserve credit for cultivating.

Civic virtue and responsible citizenship require a certain kind of communication, namely, an appropriate civic voice. Part of civic harmony in a framework of pluralism and disagreement, says Robert Audi, ‘consists in using that voice as the primary mode of communication in debating issues important for citizens...’<sup>21</sup> An appropriate civic voice requires the kinds of communication that allow a person to claim with legitimacy that she aims to persuade others of the merits of her view. For communication through civilly disobedient means to be justified, a person’s reasons for action must meet not only certain subjective conditions concerning moral consistency and self-respect, but also certain objective conditions concerning their intelligibility to others. The kinds of reasons that count toward the justification of civil disobedience depend in part upon the parties to whom justification is owed. It must be possible to offer reasons for a dissenter’s action which would satisfy those who may legitimately demand justification and who might not share her moral outlook.

*c. Admirable means and modes of pursuit*

The link between persuasive communication and an appropriate civic voice extends beyond the reasons an agent appeals to when accounting for her actions to the actions themselves and, in particular, to the mode or manner in which those actions are performed.<sup>22</sup> When the means and mode of action taken in pursuit of a given value ideal are in keeping with the spirit of that ideal and are taken for the right reasons, then they are genuinely admirable. The strangeness in characterising means and modes of action as the proper elements of a category of ideals lessens when we appreciate that acting in an exemplary way and for the right reasons can be an end in itself even as it contributes to the realisation of ideals easily recognised as ends. It is central to Gandhi's morality, for example, that leading an exemplary life by setting a good example through one's pursuit of certain aims is an intrinsically valuable end.

Like value ideals and even character ideals, means and modes of pursuit may recommend themselves in some contexts, but not in others. Given the differences in the contexts people face, it is understandable that an admirable mode of pursuit in one case may not be an admirable mode in another even when, at an abstract level, the people seek the same ideal. For example, although at some level Gandhi, King, and Mandela strove for the same ideal of inclusive democracy, Mandela found that, while he admired Gandhi's non-violence, he could not adhere to it in his own efforts in South Africa.<sup>23</sup> Relatedly, in a given context, there can be more than one admirable way to pursue an ideal. The way that Gandhi pursued his ideals through stringently non-violent resistance, for example, was not necessarily the only admirable way or even the most admirable way to seek independence for India (granting that Gandhi's way was admirable). Looking at the recent history of India and Pakistan, one might wonder whether strategies other than Gandhi's would have been preferable or more

successful, though that assessment depends partly on the extent to which Gandhi may be held responsible for the direction of events leading up to the division of India.

Also like character ideals and value ideals, admirable means and modes of pursuit are more pervasive and constitutive than mere goals are. A model action performed on one occasion in the right way for the right reasons is not in and of itself an ideal since it lacks the comprehensive and pervasive aspects of ideals. Single instances of model conduct may contribute to genuine (though momentary) pursuits of ideals, but those actions only contribute to an ideal mode of pursuit when couched within a general framework of such conduct.

To introduce my discussion in the next section of how the pursuit of ideals can go awry, let me note two ways in which character ideals and admirable means and modes of pursuit can pull apart. Whereas a person who has some success in realising a character ideal will take the right action in the right manner for the right reasons, a person who lacks the right disposition may fail to do this either by acting for the right reasons while taking the wrong action or by taking the right action for the wrong reasons. (A person might also take the wrong action for the wrong reasons, but such action does not represent a division between admirable character and admirable conduct.) In the first case, she lacks an appreciation for which actions these normative reasons indicate she ought to take. A person may have reasons for engaging in one form of disobedience, but choose to engage in another form that is not supported by these reasons which admittedly apply. Her conduct in such a case is at best excused. In the second case, the person lacks the proper motivation although she does as those reasons would have her do. She performs an action which she has undefeated reasons to perform, but not for those reasons (nor for other respectable reasons which would allow her better to adhere to the relevant normative reasons). Her action in this case

may be permissible or even obligatory, but it is not taken for the right reasons. Before considering improper motivation, extremism, and false ideals more fully, I wish to specify how ideals, as I have characterised them, relate to other moral categories.

*d. The place of ideals in morality*

As stated above, ideals provide standards of excellence which guide people in the development of aspects of their lives. Such development can pertain to categories like duty, motivation, virtue, and principle, to which people are more accustomed to focusing their attention. In many contexts, genuine ideals shape right action, but because ideals are several and often incompatible with each other, the right action as it is specified by one ideal or set of ideals may differ greatly from that specified by another, and in all likelihood respecting equally the duties presented by each will be impossible. However, duties also exist which do not seem to depend upon ideals. Keeping promises, for example, needs no comprehensive conception of perfection to recommend itself to all as a practice, though such a practice can be part of such a conception. The point is not that ideals replace duties or are the only source of duty, but rather that ideals lie closer to the centre of morality than is generally acknowledged. Ideals underpin many duties, yet also clash sometimes with the demands of duty. As the examination of historical and contemporary cases of civil disobedience will suggest, genuine ideals are no less admirable for their conflict with duties, and can show to an extent where the limits of duty lie. This claim must be tempered since not all ideals warrant equal consideration when either they or the duties they generate come in conflict. Ideals of style and their attendant obligations, for example, should take a backseat to ideals and duties which recommend themselves to all.



The relation between ideals and duty is complicated by the fact that some ideals may be named by the same terms as certain duties. Imperfect duties like beneficence, charity, generosity, and fidelity are primary examples. Explanations for this overlap differ. Bernard Gert, for one, argues that beneficence and other ‘imperfect duties’ are really only ideals. Audi, by contrast, argues that where beneficence and fidelity are the ideal, they represent a level of actual commitment higher than that required by duty. Simply meeting duties of beneficence and fidelity would not entail realising ideals thereof.<sup>24</sup> Ideals (positively) exceed what duty requires, says Audi, and are in that sense supererogatory. Of the two accounts, Audi’s is preferable in one respect since it acknowledges the comprehensive and constitutive aspects of ideals. However, not all adherence to ideals is supererogatory. Given that certain ideals can be particularly salient to specific roles, respect for those ideals may prove obligatory for persons in those roles and supererogatory for the rest of us. Moreover, as I suggest later, the fact that it may be appropriate to blame someone who fails to realise her aspirations indicates that pursuit of certain ideals is not supererogatory. In contrast with both Audi and Gert, I suggest that, while ideals like beneficence and generosity may give us all imperfect duties of beneficence and generosity, they give persons in roles for which those qualities are particularly salient a more general obligation to further these ideals as much as possible. We see from this the extent to which ideals and duty are interdependent and often mutually reinforcing.

## **2. The Dangers in Ideals**

A question that arises is whether it is undesirable sometimes for people to take up another person’s pursuit of a genuine ideal. There are several contexts in which

this might be so. First, people might misidentify the admirable aspects of a given mode of pursuit in which case their efforts to contribute could produce the opposite of a valuable result. Second, some ideals like poverty or chastity or revolution through pure-hearted, non-violent resistance are best pursued by a small number of persons who have undergone a process of self-purification. Such people, having acquired a certain disposition that puts such ideals within their reach, are better disposed than others are to pursue those ends. Not simply are such persons most likely to succeed, but also the pursuit by all of such ideals would be disastrous. Promotion of ideals as a general good requires that different people pursue different ideals incompatible with other ideals. If all people devoted themselves to the realisation of chastity or poverty or Gandhi's ideal of non-violence, then not only would society fall to ruin, but all other ideals and excellences in human life would be lost.

Even so, since genuine ideals are comprehensively valuable ends, at some level it is good when there are people pursuing any one ideal, whatever costs an imbalanced arrangement of pursuits may cause for the human community. Worries about imbalance suggest, though, that there may be a meta-ideal pertaining to the pursuit of ideals which constrains or informs our picture of the best way to pursue ideals as a realm. Nicholas Rescher takes up this point, arguing that, 'The cultivation of ideals is profitable only within the setting of a concern for the overall 'economy' of the system of values whose interaction imposes mutual constraints. And the health of such an economy is destroyed when one element is aggrandised by expanding its scope at the cost of the very life of others.'<sup>25</sup>

Just as dedication by all to a single ideal would be a dangerous thing, so too would be over-zealous dedication by any one person to an ideal. Public order, as Rescher observes, is a good. 'But when, like Robespierre, one sacrifices multitudes on

its altar, things have gone too far.<sup>26</sup> It is largely such threats of single-minded fanaticism that underpin the wariness about ideals in modern western moral philosophy. But, ideals are not inextricably linked to the fanaticism that Isaiah Berlin and others have feared.<sup>27</sup> This is shown, for example, in Gandhi's account of morality as an ideal of exemplary action. For Gandhi, morality is not about principles, but about exemplary acts of conscience. Morality involves setting an example through one's life and action which one hopes others will follow. The emphasis on hope, rather than on expectation or demand for adherence to some moral standard, stems from Gandhi's rejection of a right to criticise others if they somehow fall away from one's moral outlook. Gandhi maintains, says Bilgrami, that, while we may sometimes be confident in our grasp of the truth or in the worth of our values and actions, we are not entitled thereby to criticise others for not taking the same approach because criticism is a form of violence; and there is no true non-violence until criticism is removed from the realm of morality. Bilgrami states that,

In Gandhi's writing there is an implicit but bold proposal: "When one chooses for oneself, one sets an example to everyone." That is the role of the satyagrahi. To lead exemplary lives, to set examples to everyone by their actions. And the concept of the exemplar is intended to provide a wholesale alternative to the concept of principle in moral philosophy.<sup>28</sup>

Bilgrami's interpretation of Gandhi's philosophy diverges from the standard view which regards Gandhi's modesty about moral judgment as an Enlightenment position akin to Mill's, which warns against a conviction that we have obtained the truth. Gandhi's modesty, says Bilgrami, stems from no such diffidence about the truth, but from an avoidance of the hostility and contempt that give in to the spiritual flaws underlying violence. I accept Bilgrami's interpretation of Gandhi unchallenged, as it offers a fruitful contribution to our analysis of ideals.

Thus, on Gandhi's view, a wholehearted pursuit of ideals is compatible with holding one's moral values modestly and eschewing criticism of others. One can

appreciate the rightness of one's commitment and actions without adopting attitudes of condemnation, hatred, and obsession which purportedly haunt ideals. When others act in ways contrary to one's pursuit of an ideal, one simply does not follow them, but hopes they will come to see the value in one's views and conduct.

A different response from Gandhi's to the problem of extremism is offered by King:

But though I was initially disappointed at being categorised as an extremist, as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label. Was not Jesus an extremist for love: 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.' Was not Amos an extremist for justice: 'Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.'... Was not Martin Luther an extremist: 'Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, so help me God.'... So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be.<sup>29</sup>

By embracing the term 'extremist', King seeks to neutralise it, to show that it is not only compatible with the best of views, but also exemplified in the lives of great people. Certainly, the term 'extreme' need not carry negative connotations. Most ideals are themselves extremes: the pursuit of an ideal is often the pursuit of an upper limit, the height of which is unknown. The aim is to run faster than we think possible or to hone our rational faculties beyond their apparent limits or to treat well all people including those who abuse us. Extremes like these are true excellences, the great goals of humanity, and to be wholeheartedly committed to their realisation is, as King claims, meritorious. Being an 'extremist' in this sense is no epithet.

But, King's argument must be qualified by an appreciation that the way in which one advocates the realisation of an ideal is equally important. Recall Robespierre's overzealous pursuit of 'public order'. It is this kind of extremism – the excessive attachment and zeal – which opponents of ideals find worrying. But, what these challengers miss is that a pursuit which takes the form that Robespierre's did cannot be regarded as a genuine pursuit of the ideal of public order since it clashed

with the spirit of that ideal. Public order in the best sense does not require the mass slaughter of one branch of society. Rather it requires conduct that respects the rights and dignity of all citizens, to ensure that a 'positive peace' may be sustained. Similarly, the ideal of peace requires, at least, peaceful modes of pursuit in its name. Peace protestors who act violently cannot legitimately claim to act in pursuit of this ideal. Thus, genuine ideals themselves preclude certain kinds of extremism. Ideals also place certain constraints upon the reasons for which people legitimately may act in their pursuit. A person who pursues peace for reasons of self-promotion, for example, does not act in an exemplary way; her conduct lacks the appropriate disposition for a sustained and meaningful pursuit of such a value ideal, and so cannot be regarded as a genuine pursuit of the ideal.

In the end, although King embraces the term 'extremist' and Gandhi rejects it, their responses complement each other and highlight the importance not only of the ends one seeks but of the mode of pursuit and motivation one adopts in seeking them. The person who advocates the realisation of an ideal in a manner in keeping with the spirit of that ideal can claim the title 'extremist' proudly.

While concerns about improper motivation and extremism in action may be ruled out when it comes to genuine ideals, such dangers arise in relation to the pursuit of false ideals. False ideals are ideals in the sense that they are conceptions of perfection, but they are conceptions that have no objective value. The Nazi ideal of racial purification, for example, reflects, as Rescher observes, a misbegotten desideratum in which perfectly good values like communal solidarity, group loyalty, and pride in heritage overdevelop into something monstrous, usurping the space created when other less parochial and more human values were abandoned.<sup>30</sup> Such ideals invite corrupted motivations and extremist modes of pursuit though it is not

necessary that the three perversions coincide. In Section 4, I consider in more detail extremist and improperly motivated disobedience undertaken in pursuit of false ideals.

### **3. Historical Paradigms**

#### *a. Pure-heartedness*

Gandhi's statement 'My life is my message', which he uttered in 1947 before leaving Calcutta for Delhi in the hope of ending violence there between Hindus and Muslims, shows how constitutive of his life he took his political and moral commitments to be. There is something self-congratulatory in the phrase, but in Gandhi's case, as in the case of some other dissenters, the conviction seems apt. The phrase not only is revealing of Gandhi as a person devoted to the pursuit of a seemingly impossible end, but also says something true of humans generally: it is in how we live and act that we show who we are, not just in what we profess. The disobedients whose lives and work are under consideration will be evaluated on several fronts: 1) the value of their ends, 2) the consistency of their assertions and actions, 3) their reasons for pursuing those ends, and 4) the manner in which they pursued them. In short, drawing upon the three categories of ideals discussed above, disobedients will be assessed according to their value ideals (or lack thereof), their reasons for action, and their means and mode of pursuit. In Gandhi's case, his rhetoric was matched by action (so concerns about consistency may be laid to rest), and both sprang from his understanding of morality in terms of an ideal of exemplary action.

Unlike Gandhi, I do not believe that ideals and their pursuit can offer a wholesale alternative to the concepts of *moral principle*, *duty*, and *judgment*. One danger in characterising ideals in terms of exemplary action is its implication of

narcissism in suggesting that the exemplary person presents herself as one who can set an example for everyone. Gandhi seems not appreciate that the pursuit of ideals is not primarily about setting examples. In the context of public ideals, it is about justice or peace or equality and the process necessary to achieve those ends. And that process may require pursuing, for example, a character ideal like non-violence. Some of this Gandhi may be able to accommodate if he characterises an exemplary person as one whose reasons for action do not include setting a good example for others; that she does so is incidental to her pursuit of a given value ideal.

Another danger in Gandhi's approach is that it seems to silence opposition where opposition would be appropriate. I maintain that a person is well-placed to demand justification from another for his action when she has a certain standing relative to that person and a *prima facie* cause to ground her objection. Gandhi would not endorse this language since to demand a justification implies a judgment or criticism of the other's action and this, like the notion of *objection*, invites violence (very broadly understood) into morality. But, concerns about justification are relevant to Gandhi's morality since they speak to the reasons a person has for pursuing a given end. As Gandhi himself maintains, it is not simply what one does that matters; why one does it matters too. His concern about pure-heartedness may be recharacterised in terms of a concern about the reasons for which a person acts, a concern which, as noted earlier, shapes what counts as a legitimate pursuit of ideals. If we focus our attention on the agent, and not on the people to whom (on my view) she owes an explanation for her action, we find common ground between Gandhi's position and my own. Both highlight the importance of the agent's attitude toward her conduct. Her ability to defend her reasons for action is one mark of conscientiousness, a trait closely linked, I shall argue, to the pursuit of ideals.

Gandhi's account thus should be seen as applying primarily to motivation since his own disobedience, like King's and Mandela's, is actually a form of condemnation although their attitude is one of pure-hearted love for the people they oppose. Mandela, for his part, was questioned upon his release about his attitude toward white people. Many expected him to harbour anger and resentment toward whites. But, he asserted that he felt none. In prison his anger toward whites diminished, but his hatred of the system grew (a sentiment which distinguishes him from Gandhi and which points to the incommensurability of their specific ideals). Mandela's famous policy of reconciliation nevertheless resembles Gandhi's pure-hearted resistance and King's non-violent direct action in that all three men acknowledged that the way they and their followers pursued their ends and the attitudes they adopted toward those ends were crucial both to their success and to the integrity of their projects. History would suggest that, in each case, their activism was undertaken for good reasons and done with the aim to realise a political ideal in a manner in keeping with that ideal.

Mandela's and King's commitments to freedom also included an appreciation for the entrapment of the oppressor. 'I knew as well as I knew anything' said Mandela, 'that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. A man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred, he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity.'<sup>31</sup> King makes similar comments:

In Connor's Birmingham, the silent password was fear. It was a fear not only on the part of the black oppressed, but also in the hearts of the white oppressors... Certainly Birmingham had its decent white citizens who privately deplored the maltreatment of Negroes. But they remained publicly silent. It was a silence born of fear - fear of



social, political, and economic reprisals. The ultimate tragedy of Birmingham was not the brutality of the bad people, but the silence of the good people.<sup>32</sup>

King's appreciation for the imprisonment of white people did not prevent him from lamenting the silence of good white people. To remain silent in some circumstance casts doubt on the sincerity of one's commitment. If white people sincerely believed in meaningful equality, they had reasons of self-respect and respect for others to communicate that judgment despite their fear of reprisals.

*b. Imagination and motivation*

The realisability of an ideal may depend upon the innovation, imagination and commitment of the persons seeking to realise it. The lack of imagination on the part of white American moderates during the 1960's, for example, both in their conception of public ideals and in their appreciation of how far the current situation fell short of them, may have not only underpinned their criticism of King and his activism, but also slowed the US civil rights movement. Although these people appreciated the plight of black Americans and believed that an integrated, equal society would be preferable to segregation and inequality, they could not drum up the motivation to do their part in support of a state of affairs they regarded as valuable. At most, they paid lip-service to this admirable end. As Thomas Nagel observes,

It is possible for individuals to judge from an impersonal standpoint that a certain form of collective conduct or a certain set of interpersonal relations would be good – or better than what we have now – without being thereby sufficiently motivated to do what would be necessary to play their part in such an arrangement.<sup>33</sup>

This lack of motivation can arise when an ideal is not motivationally reasonable. An ideal is utopian, says Nagel, if, however attractive it is to contemplate, people are not motivated to follow it. If people find it difficult or even impossible to live as a theory or ideal requires or to adopt the relevant institutions, these things should carry some weight against the ideal.<sup>34</sup> But, people may simply need to be educated properly about

the ideal to find the motivation to follow it. In King's American, it was not impossible for some at least to follow the ideals that King and his associates set. Most African Americans and a handful of whites sought to live as these ideals suggested, and found that it was possible. The apathy of white moderates, therefore, did not stem from any motivational unreasonableness in King's ideals as such. Rather, it stemmed from whites' lack of imagination and their refusal to conceive of the plight of others as their own. King states, 'I suppose I should have realised that few members of the oppressor race can understand the deep groans and passionate yearnings of the oppressed race, and still fewer have the vision to see that injustice must be rooted out by strong, persistent and determined action.'<sup>35</sup>

White Americans' lack of appreciation for the desperation of African Americans may have derived in part from an inability to regard the conduct of King and his associates as genuinely admirable. Although white moderates believed in some abstract notion of equality, they may have found it difficult to shape their actions after people whom they had been told all their lives were subordinate to them. What makes that apathy so lamentable is that, had more than a handful of white moderates been wholeheartedly committed to the ideals of equality and justice, approximations of those ideals might have been realised quite quickly (when the people whom the government seeks to please go over to the other side, a democratic government has little choice but to follow).

Innovation, imagination, and motivation are required not only in the conception of ideals, but also in the pursuit of ideals. To pursue an ideal, one must conceive of it, develop it in one's mind, and structure one's life and actions around it. One must both be open to alternative approaches to living and learn not to be swayed by a natural concern for self-preservation. This last feature, which many white

moderates were unable to demonstrate, is a mark of sincere dedication to an ideal. Both Gandhi and King recognised the difficulty in putting aside personal concerns for the sake of an ideal, which is why they trained themselves and their followers not to respond when attacked with violence and not to feel hatred toward those who attacked them. They willingly exposed themselves to the risks of punishment and censure and they did it for the right reasons: to further the interests of their communities in the hope of realising genuine public ideals. As Thoreau notes, only a very few people – heroes, martyrs, patriots, reformers in the great sense – serve their society with their consciences in this way, and so necessarily resist it for the most part, and are commonly treated by it as enemies.<sup>36</sup> And the greatest sacrifice comes from those who have most to lose: the few white people who committed themselves wholeheartedly to the civil rights movement and demonstrated their dissociation from the law through disobedience showed not only a strong sense of duty toward their fellow citizens, but also some greatness in accepting significant burdens when they were not directly harmed by established policies. They and their African American associates displayed responsible citizenship through their sincere and serious commitment to genuine public ideals.

*c. Circumstance relativity and violence*

The realisability of an ideal may also depend on the circumstances in which one seeks to realise it. In some cases, the prevailing circumstances are such that no one in those circumstances is presently capable of achieving the ideal. The unrealisability of the ideal in defeating circumstances, as Coady calls them, shows neither that the ideal is unrealisable *tout court* nor that it has no present implications. Acknowledging the ideal should lead an agent in those defeating circumstances to do

what she can to change the circumstances, or, if this impossible, to take up whatever opportunities result from changes in those circumstances (however induced) to move in the direction of the ideal.<sup>37</sup>

Coady identifies one consequence of defeating circumstances. But, there could be at least two others. The first is the impossibility of *pursuing* the ideal in question, let alone realising it. The second is the impossibility of pursuing the ideal in a manner that is genuinely admirable (which might amount to the same thing given the constraints that genuine ideals place on legitimate pursuits). One worry about circumstance-relativity is that defeating circumstances may be invoked when they are not present. A person or group might claim that certain modes of action are unavailable when actually they are available. This was the crime of white moderates who called King's disobedience 'untimely and unwise'. In asking King and his associates to wait for a better season, they implied that, in the present circumstances, these objectives were unrealisable and dangerous. In Mandela's case, however, the invocation of defeating circumstances seems more plausible. During the crackdown in the 1960s and 1970s, the ANC found it extremely difficult to take meaningful steps toward public ideals of democracy and equal liberty. The extremity of the situation led many to employ violent tactics. Concerning his endorsement of strategic violence, Mandela states,

Gandhi remained committed to nonviolence; I followed the Gandhian strategy for as long as I could, but then there came a point in our struggle when the brute force of the oppressor could no longer be countered through passive resistance alone. We founded Unkhonto we Sizwe and added a military dimension to our struggle. Even then, we chose sabotage because it did not involve the loss of life, and it offered the best hope for future race relations. Militant action became part of the African agenda officially supported by the Organization of African Unity (O.A.U.) following my address to the Pan-African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa (PAFMECA) in 1962, in which I stated, "Force is the only language the imperialists can hear, and no country became free without some sort of violence."<sup>38</sup>

If we grant that Mandela faced defeating circumstances which rendered it impossible to pursue his public ideals through non-violent means, we must ask whether those means which he could and did use were in keeping with the spirit of the ideals he sought.

Violence is not in itself at odds with the conscientiousness and communication exemplified in paradigmatic civil disobedience. Nor is it by definition coercive. Some violent measures can eloquently communicate a dissenter's frustration and conviction while leaving the targeted audience with a variety of possible responses. Nor does violence necessarily speak ill of a person's pursuit of political ideals. The use of violence can support rather than undermine the values and ideals to which justified civil disobedience contributes. Mandela's use of sabotage, for example, was preferable for the reasons he gives to other forms of violence, and it aligned as well as can be expected with the public ideals he sought. This is implied in the fact that Mandela was able to defend his reasons for employing such measures. When questioned after his release about his ongoing commitment to the armed struggle Mandela maintained that there was no contradiction between this and his advocacy for negotiations with the de Klerk government for democracy. It was the reality and threat of armed struggle, he said, that brought the government to the verge of negotiations. He added that 'when the state stopped inflicting violence on the ANC, the ANC would reciprocate with peace.' When asked about sanctions, Mandela replied that the ANC could not yet call for the relaxation of sanctions because the situation that caused sanctions in the first place – the absence of political rights for blacks – was still the status quo. I might be out of jail, he said, but I am not yet free.<sup>39</sup>

Mandela's actions may be compared with the actions of Malcolm X who, like Mandela, endorsed violent strategies. King and Malcolm X, both sons of African

American preachers, differed in the goals they sought and the strategies they used to pursue them. Whereas King became a leader in non-violent direct action and interracial cooperation, Malcolm X developed a position of armed self-defence and exclusive all-black nationalism. King was very critical of Malcolm X's advocacy of violence which King saw as doomed to create nothing but grief. 'Over the past few years I have consistently preached', says King, 'that non-violence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek. I have tried to make clear that it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends.'<sup>40</sup> Malcolm X, however, saw his contributions as necessary to King's work. He said once to King's wife Coretta that 'If white people realize what the alternative is, perhaps they will be more willing to hear Dr. King.' The possibility that Malcolm X smoothed the way for King's pursuit of his ideals complicates the assessment of both activists' conduct. It suggests that the one could remain pure in his mode of pursuit because the other was there to do the more dirty work. That King did not welcome Malcolm X's purported assistance indicates the consistency of King's methods and ideals.

But, Malcolm X's activism highlights a paradoxical aspect of ideals, namely that sometimes one can better promote an ideal through actions which cannot be deemed a genuine pursuit of that ideal than one can through a genuine pursuit. It could be argued, for example, that Malcolm X's activism did not constitute a legitimate pursuit of democracy and equality on the grounds that he advocated modes of action at odds with those ideals. Malcolm X claimed, for example, that black Americans should achieve their emancipation through whatever means necessary (though there is little evidence that he engaged in extreme activism himself). Nevertheless it is possible that he did more for those ideals than many activists who

could claim with legitimacy to pursue ideals of democracy and equality since, as he himself said, Malcolm X made society aware of the alternatives to non-violence.

Then again, one might argue that Malcolm X's activism did constitute a genuine pursuit of democracy and equality and that his methods were simply incommensurable with those employed by Gandhi or King. It is true that, despite the force of his assertions, Malcolm X's activism cannot be labelled extremist since most of his activism came from a pulpit or lectern. His activism may be seen as an eloquent statement of frustration consistent with paradigmatic civil disobedience. The line between strategic violence and extremism is a fine one however; and, although unjustified violence that neither harms others nor has significant consequences is not extremist, nevertheless much unjustified violence is extremist and may be questioned particularly when purportedly employed in pursuit of public ideals.

*d. Noble purpose and agonising loneliness*

King ends his letter from Birmingham Jail stating that, 'One day the South will recognise its real heroes. They will be the James Merediths, with the noble sense of purpose that enables them to face jeerings and hostile mobs, and with the agonising loneliness that characterises the life of the pioneer.'<sup>41</sup> Here King picks out at least two features of a pursuit of ideals: a noble sense of purpose and agonising loneliness. The former is closely linked, I believe, with the kind of conscientiousness exemplified in paradigmatic civil disobedience. Such conscientiousness combines a sincere and serious belief or commitment with an appreciation that this belief or commitment brings with it certain demands upon the holder's conduct. It requires that a person who sincerely believes that certain decisions or policies are wrong not only avoid those types of decision herself, but also judge the conduct of those who pursue such

decisions as being wrong (however charitably she may feel toward those persons). Moreover, conscientiousness commits her to communicating this judgment in some situations. The person who believes that a law or policy requires revision and that the values behind her judgment are sufficiently weighty to warrant a breach of law in their defence would be morally inconsistent to deny that she has reasons to dissociate herself from the law she opposes. When the ideal a person pursues is genuine, the conviction that marks her disobedient conduct is well-founded, and this gives her good reason to feel a noble sense of purpose. However, that sense of purpose requires both confidence and optimism, which may be difficult to sustain in the face of continued opposition and setback.

Intuitively, a noble sense of purpose seems more appropriate for the pursuit of ideals than, say, for the performance of duty unrelated to ideals. This may be due to our sense, first, that one should be able to do one's duty (since ought purportedly implies can),<sup>42</sup> and second, that one simply *should* do one's duty: one needs no sense of purpose to do what one ought to do. Concerning ideals, by contrast, it is less clear whether one should be able to realise one's ideals. Many ideals, as we have seen, prove to be unrealisable for various reasons. Moreover, striving for an ideal seems often both supererogatory and more difficult than fulfilling one's duty, making the pursuer seem noble for her commitments. These intuitions explain why we tend to blame those who fail to do their duty and praise those who live up to their aspirations. But, it is unclear that these are the right attitudes to take to either the fulfilment of duty or the pursuit of ideals. As Coady observes, sometimes it is very hard to do one's duty; and we do well to praise those who do theirs. And, sometimes we do well to blame those whose behaviour fails to accord with their professed ideals. Moreover, as Coady continues, sometimes people may be blamed not just for failing to live up to



ideals they have embraced, but also for failing to have certain ideals at all, as in the case of white American moderates who failed to embrace the ideals of equality and justice in any meaningful way. One might claim that whites simply failed in their duties not in their ideals. But that failure is attributable to the fact that they did not have the right set of ideals. True, this implies that those ideals are ideals they *should have held* (had a duty to hold), yet that duty may well have stemmed from a more general value ideal which appeals to all. In any case, these points do not undermine the claim that pursuing ideals may be marked by a sense of purpose; rather they suggest that one overstates the point to say that a noble sense of purpose is distinctly appropriate for the pursuit of ideals. Respect for duty as such also may warrant this attitude. Moreover, a noble sense of purpose in the pursuit of an ideal is only warranted when a person's mode of pursuit and reasons for pursuing it are in keeping with the ideal to which she has professed commitment.

The second feature noted in King's statement is the feeling of agonising loneliness (which I am sure could also pick out the person who does her duty when all others shirk theirs). In the contexts we have been considering, where the defenders of genuine public ideals are in the minority, are vilified by some and deified by others, are imprisoned, threatened, assassinated (in the cases of Gandhi, King, and Malcolm X), acute loneliness seems an unavoidable and possibly necessary feeling for these pioneers. Perhaps, it is here that the single-minded or 'fanatical' aspect of ideals comes out. To endure such extraordinary treatment and not to lose sight of the end requires self-isolation in many ways.

Ironically, the trail-blazer's acute loneliness can combine with a feeling that her life is not her own to command. On the day of his release from prison in February

1990, Mandela addressed South Africa and the world from the balcony of the old City Hall in Cape Town.

I greet you all in the name of peace, democracy and freedom for all! I stand here before you not as a prophet but as a humble servant of you, the people. Your tireless and heroic sacrifices have made it possible for me to be here today. I therefore place the remaining years of my life in your hands.<sup>43</sup>

His language echoes Gandhi's phrase – my life is my message – in the sense that the lives of these men are not seen by them as their own to control. In committing themselves wholeheartedly to an ideal for their people, they appreciate that their lives as individuals become the common property of those for whom they strive. In his autobiography, Mandela speaks wistfully of wanting to relax with his family and to visit the Transkei after his release. No such opportunity came in the sea of ANC scheduled activities and negotiations as well as the continued armed struggle in the early 1990s. At his daughter's wedding sometime following Mandela's separation from his wife Winnie, he said that 'it seems to be the destiny of freedom fighters to have unstable personal lives. When your life is the struggle, as mine was, there is little room left for family. That has always been my greatest regret, and the most painful aspect of the choice I made.'<sup>44</sup> It is in the cost to activists' personal lives that extremism re-enters the scene in a tragic way.

This tragic aspect of ideals is a general feature arising from their plurality. I disagree with Coady's view that conflicts of ideals are less tragic than proper moral dilemmas are. In the case of ideals, says Coady, we seem characteristically to face postponement rather than outright violation of our ideal.<sup>45</sup> But, what Coady does not consider is that there can be time pressures when it comes to ideals. It is only at certain times in one's life that one has, for example, the physical ability to strive in any meaningful sense for an athletic ideal or the mental ability to strive for an intellectual ideal. The constraints of time and capacity can turn a conflict between

ideals into a tragic dilemma because an ideal too long postponed will become an ideal denied. While it may sound odd to say that an ideal has been violated or breached, that is often the effect of postponement. Mandela's opportunities, for example, to be an admirable, loving father to his children diminished or even disappeared when his children were forced to grow up without him. And when he returned to them as a father, they found he was now the father of the nation. It is not simply that one only can do certain things well (or at all) at certain times in one's life like being a good parent, husband, academic, athlete, but also that if one does not start down the path toward realising those ideals at a certain stage, it is almost assured that one either won't make it or won't get as far as one would have done had one started at the right time. In deciding which path to pursue, one does face a tragic dilemma of ideals since whichever ideal one puts aside is probably forever lost. The tragedy is most acute when one would have more closely approximated the abandoned ideal than other persons do. The same concern about postponement applies at the community level. In his letter, King quotes that 'justice too long delayed is justice denied.' The postponement of a public ideal can be tragic in that whatever effort people put into it subsequently will be at best a poor approximation of what it could and should have been for those people. Black Americans who lived before the civil rights movement, for example, were denied that degree of justice which the movement could have given them. In not being taken up during their lifetimes, the ideal was denied to those people.

*e. Necessity*

At the Rivonia trial in 1964, Mandela read a statement which concluded with this explication of his commitments:

During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to see realized. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.<sup>46</sup>

Characterising his life's work in terms of The Struggle shifts the focus away from the end – the ideal of a free society – and onto the pursuit itself, understood as an ongoing battle. Focusing on the mode of pursuit still can be a focus on ideals since, as I have argued, ideals include not only ends like states of affairs and ideals of character and motivation, but also the modes of action taken in their pursuit. Leading an exemplary moral life can be a good in itself. So, in focusing on the struggle, Mandela could be said to focus on an ideal. However, Mandela's personal identification with 'the struggle' highlights a painful feature of ideals as things which give meaning and significance to a life: what does one do when the struggle ends and the ideal is realised? If and when we realise our ideals, they can no longer shape our lives and give them meaning. As Bernard Williams observes, it is not absurd to take the view that 'although men set themselves ends and work towards them, it is very often not really the supposed end, but the effort towards it on which they set value – thus they travel, not really in order to arrive (for as soon as they have arrived they set out for somewhere else), but rather they choose somewhere to arrive, in order to travel.'<sup>47</sup> It would overstate the point to say that, for Mandela, the travelling had intrinsic value and the arriving only instrumental value. Genuine value ideals, by definition, have intrinsic value and Mandela certainly appreciated the significance of the public ideals he sought. The point is that the approximation of an integrated, democratic South Africa which Mandela and others achieved in the mid-1990s would have dislodged the core meaning around which they built their lives. In Mandela's case, the cultivation and maintenance of that ideal provided a surrogate for the Struggle, but

nevertheless he lost much of that conception of perfection the search for which was the purpose of his life.

Mandela's experiences, and King's too, may be considered through the lens of necessity, the loss of which can derail a plotted course. Harry Frankfurt argues that,

Enlarging the range of available and permitted alternatives entails, of course, diminishing the scope of necessity in human life. It narrows the extent to which people find that circumstances allow them no choice but to follow a particular course of action...Reducing the grip of necessity may not in fact enhance our enjoyment of freedom. For if the restrictions on the choices that a person is in a position to make are relaxed too far, he may become, to a greater or lesser degree, disoriented with respect to where his interest and preferences lie.<sup>48</sup>

Something like this applies to Mandela's and King's situations. Throughout much of his life, Mandela and other black South Africans endured circumstances that severely restricted their options. Their circumstances structured their choices and made plain the cause for which they should strive; their necessity forced their resistance.

Similarly, though perhaps less acutely, King and black Americans endured the hypocrisy of American democracy and the isolation and exclusion which amounted to a necessity like that confronting South Africans. Necessity was perhaps less pressing for Gandhi than it was for Mandela or for King, though Gandhi too found his options in British India restricted. As Gandhi's case suggests, one need not be personally oppressed to be constrained by necessity in a way that is productive of a pursuit of ideals. Necessity can come from within. Frankfurt observes that a person's ideals are those concerns, those limits, which she cannot bring herself to betray; they entail constraints that she finds unthinkable to violate. A person who loves nothing has no ideals; for that person, nothing is unthinkable, and there are no limits to what she might be willing to do.<sup>49</sup> In Gandhi's case, the limits he imposed on himself were significant. He structured his life around a morality of exemplary action and non-violence, and the commitment to these ideals greatly shaped his life. Whereas Gandhi found his necessity partly within, Mandela and King found theirs at least partly

without; the limits were imposed upon them by their societies. One is not necessarily more praiseworthy than the other. It is sufficient that all three men loved deeply and devoted their lives to the realisation of genuine public ideals.

For both Mandela and King, as their efforts paid off, they lost some of that necessity which kept them focused on their objectives. In Mandela's case, release from prison, the development of a democratic state, and the growth of valuable options for black South Africans may have weakened his sense of identity which was tied to being a freedom fighter. In King's case, growing recognition for his movement caused him to lose direction on how to pursue his ends, and consequently, some of the meaning for his journey was lost. King sought to expand his movement to the North, without success. He also turned his attention to new, less tangible forms of racial discrimination like poverty. In doing these things, he lost credibility and influence over the civil rights movement. These events were perhaps inevitable as the movement lost its original inspiration and as the pursuit for the ideal became difficult in a new and less tangible way. What this suggests is that civic virtue and responsible citizenship are closely linked to necessity; one's sensitivity to public ideals and the duties they generate may be most acute when the society falls well short of those objectives. The closer society moves toward the goal, the more difficult the goal may be to see.

By way of summary, despite the vicissitudes in their experiences, Mandela, King, and Gandhi recognised that to serve their societies with their consciences, they must oppose them. Their civic commitment, informed by their understanding of public ideals, thus led them to engage in civil disobedience. I wish to dispel the idea that these dissenters were saints naturally disposed both to be responsive to public ideals and to engage in admirable civic conduct. Mandela, for his part, worried about

being seen as a uniquely virtuous man. He wished to be known as Mandela, a man with weaknesses, some fundamental, who was committed but nevertheless sometimes failed to live up to expectations. Mandela's responsiveness, like King's and Gandhi's, did not stem from a natural goodness or natural sensitivity for public ideals. They acquired that sensitivity through their experiences and observation of oppression, hatred, bigotry, and segregation. At the height of their struggles, the necessity that shaped their circumstances gave them a distinctly clear lens through which to perceive both the flaws in their political systems and the ideals they would have to seek to remedy those flaws. Their ideals in turn gave them a sense of what their specific roles must be: Mandela as a freedom fighter, King as a non-violent activist and religious leader, Gandhi as an ascetic, non-violent dissenter and advocate. It is ironic, but necessary to their efforts, that these dissenters, who demonstrated the public commitment reflective of responsible citizenship, were at the same time struggling for full recognition as citizens. Their lives juxtaposed heightened political participation with a demand for greater inclusion and official recognition, and their participation contrasts vividly with the apathy of the white populations within their countries whose recognition as full citizens was undisputed. White people's knowledge that their citizenship, rights and liberties were secure gave them cause for complacency and reinforced the lack of imagination from which their apathy stemmed.

In the lives of Gandhi, King and Mandela, there are many parallels in the nature and magnitude of the problems they faced, the kinds of responses they offered, and the attitudes they adopted toward those problems and the people who perpetuated them. Their lack of concern for self, their distress at the state of their societies, their continued optimism and sense of purpose in the face of grave setbacks, their

impression that their lives were not their own to control, their sense that their political and moral commitments were constitutive of who they were are hallmarks of responsible citizens. Through their devotion and activism, they contributed to moral transformations in their countries, and thereby forced a redrawing of the boundaries of moral principle.

#### **4. Shifts in the Paradigm**

##### *a. Contemporary Disobedience*

Gandhi's, King's and Mandela's activism is representative of that kind of civil disobedience which aims to guarantee legal protection for the basic rights of a specific constituency. Such disobedience contrasts with much contemporary disobedience, which focuses on concerns other than the basic rights of fellow citizens, like the environment or animals' rights, or nuclear disarmament, or globalisation issues, or foreign policy, and so on. As noted at the outset, I am not suggesting that the features exemplified in paradigmatic civil disobedience have changed through this shift in aims and activities. It is within this framework of conscientious and communicative breaches of law that shifts in the practice of civil disobedience have occurred. Both dissenters' modes of communication and their aims for policy change have evolved.

Disobedience taken in support of concerns like the environment or foreign policy, for example, may be seen as a response to some breakdown in the mechanisms for citizen engagement in the decision-making process. This breakdown might be termed a democratic deficit.<sup>50</sup> (Of course, it is not only within democracies that citizens defend concerns like the environment or animal rights. The point is simply that disobedience of this sort may be understood, at least in part, as citizens'



declaration of their right to contribute to the dialogue on general policy.) Such deficits in that dialogue may be an inevitable part of real democracies, and disobedience undertaken to correct those deficits may be said to demonstrate, to varying degrees, that sensitivity to democratic ideals reflective of responsible citizenship.

Consider, for example, the activism of Sisters Ardeth Platte, Carol Gilbert, and Jackie Marie Hudson, who protested in October 2002 against US military policy by cutting through a fence in northeastern Colorado to gain access to a Minuteman III nuclear missile silo. Wearing suits labelled 'Citizens Weapons Inspection Team', the three nuns pounded with household hammers on both the 110-tonne concrete cover of the silo and the tracks that support the lid in the event of a launch. Using their own blood, the nuns drew crosses on the silo and the tracks. They then sang hymns and prayed until they were arrested.<sup>51</sup> The three nuns were tried and found guilty, first, of injury to, interference with, and obstruction of the national defence of the United States, and second, of \$1,000 in damage to government property. They were sentenced to 41 months, 33 months, and 30 months imprisonment respectively, including 3 years of supervised release. The nuns' previous offences were cited by the prosecution to substantiate the call for stiff sentences.<sup>52</sup>

The nuns' reasons for engaging in civil disobedience relate to a number of concerns, some of which pertain to the protection of basic rights, but others to nuclear disarmament and to US policy in Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, and more generally. The nuns argued that, as citizens in a free society, they have a basic right non-violently or symbolically to expose either the threat or the commission of war crimes by their own government. The nuns argued that they acted both out of their religious faith and out of what they perceived as an obligation under the principles of international law, specifically the 1945 Nuremberg Charter, to act against government policies which

violate international law. Their objectives were not only to raise awareness about the presence of real weapons of mass destruction – the 49 nuclear missile silos – in northeastern Colorado, but also to embarrass the US government and to focus attention on atrocities committed by the US internationally.

The nuns' activities resemble the work of Gandhi, King and Mandela in that the common good is given priority over individual interest. Not only had the nuns taken similar actions in the past at the risk of imprisonment, but also on this occasion they refused on moral grounds to pay restitution to the US government, for which they will serve additional prison time. However, the nuns differ from the three historical dissenters in that the nuns hold a cosmopolitan conception of the common good which transcends national boundaries. Gandhi, King, and Mandela may have aimed indirectly to further the common good of humanity in their efforts to defend their constituencies, but such a cosmopolitan good was probably not their primary concern. One might argue that, in this respect, the nuns' action offers a closer approximation of the character ideal of civic virtue since the nuns' sphere of concern is not restricted to national interests. The expansiveness of the nuns' conception of the common good speaks well for their commitment to public ideals *tout court*. Much contemporary disobedience has a similar cosmopolitan aspect. In anti-globalisation movements, the target audience is not only or even primarily the national government, but rather both the leaders of developed nations and the international business community. Whereas Mandela and Oliver Tambo made international appeals for sanctions against South Africa in order to address their own government, anti-globalisation activists address not just their own governments but also other governments whose policies they seek to change.

The element of necessity, which I suggested earlier was closely linked to civic virtue and responsible citizenship, may seem to be absent in the nuns' case since the pressures they face (threat of nuclear war, perhaps) are less tangible than those endured by Mandela, King and Gandhi which allowed the latter to see clearly the failures of their societies. Even so, necessity, as I argued, can arise from within a person. The nuns' religious convictions combined with their fervent commitment to peace and international justice gave them a strong sense of obligation and shaped their course of action in light of those ideals.

In view of their commitment to the ideals of peace and international justice, though, one might question whether the nuns' methods were wholly admirable. I have argued that violence is not in itself at odds with the conscientiousness of paradigmatic civil disobedience. However, in the nuns' case, violence is a trickier issue given the nuns' professed commitment to peace. Is beating a silo or pouring one's own blood on military equipment violence? The line between violence and non-violence, if it exists, is difficult to locate. Presumably, the nuns did some violence to themselves to get sufficient quantities of blood to paint crosses on the silo and tracks. And, certainly, they did damage to property, which on a commonsense view may be deemed violence. Whether such actions are in keeping with the spirit of the ideal of peace depends to some extent on how that ideal is specified. We must consider what is important about the ideal of peace as a comprehensive good. Respect for other people, for example, is a central component of such an ideal, a component which the nuns' actions did not contravene. One might suggest that, on this basis, their actions, irrespective of description, were in keeping with the spirit of that ideal.

Just as the nuns must take certain actions and act for certain reasons to claim with legitimacy that they pursue the ideal of peace, so too the staunch animal rights

activist and the environmentalist must give attention to certain life-style choices (diet, clothing, energy use, etc.) to claim with legitimacy that they pursue the ideals they profess. To act with legitimacy, these dissenters must both be aware of the reasons they have to take certain actions in defence of these ideals and act on the basis of those reasons. Such dissenters thus are more constrained in the actions they legitimately can take than are dissenters who disobey out of mere disagreement. The disagreeer, since she has no comprehensive commitment around which she structures her disobedience, may be justified in employing violence, for example, where a committed peace activist would not be. The greater liberty of the disagreeer comes with a price however, which I outline in a moment.

Another difference between much contemporary disobedience and historical paradigms concerns the means and modes of communication. Many contemporary activists are highly organised, efficient coordinators of large-scale movements. (This is not to say that Gandhi, King, and Mandela were not organised. They were. However, they did not have access to the kinds of technology and communication which contemporary dissenters employ.) By making use of the internet and email, movement leaders mobilise large numbers of people and garner publicity for their concerns. Many contemporary dissenters also are fully aware of the legal process and offer guides to participants on how they should behave, the strategic importance of non-violence, the treatment they should expect to receive from authorities, and possible recourse subsequent to arrest. In response to this systemisation of disobedient practices, law enforcers also have developed sophisticated tactics. Police have standard procedures for dealing with protestors who go limp upon arrest, for example. Similarly, some judges have adopted the practice of banning long-time disobedients from attending political marches.

Despite the increased professionalism of much disobedience, contemporary activism seems less potent than civil rights disobedience was. Civil disobedience is a common occurrence now: it goes without saying that a large gathering of protestors will appear at every G8 summit. This lack of novelty renders dissenters less effective in their quest to stir society and government from their lethargic complacency on key concerns. The only visible impact that G8 protests have had upon the summits is that the meetings have been moved from city centres to remote places. Perhaps, some of this impotence stems from the fact that contemporary issues are less captivating than people's basic rights are. Environmental ideals or animal rights' ideals may be harder for a community to identify with than the desire for recognition and equality. And, in the case of animal rights, there is the additional issue of how broadly one may construe the notion of the common good. Although animal rights are a worthy cause, it may be unreasonable to expect general society to motivate itself in animals' defence. But, as noted above, the same apathy was exhibited by whites toward equality in both Apartheid South Africa and the US civil rights movement. With proper education, such commitment is not an unreasonable demand.

A final difference concerns the centrality of ideals to the pursuit. Basic civil rights are, presumably, not a concern which one could advocate in any meaningful way without a deep commitment to ideals of respect and humanity. However, disobedience that relates to other concerns could be undertaken without a commitment to ideals. One might simply disagree with the invasion of Iraq or with the current US stance on the Kyoto agreement. One need not be motivated by a sustained commitment to peace or international justice or environmentalism to take disobedient action against those policies. Yet, such dissent, while it may take the form of disobedience which responsible citizens would employ, lacks responsible

citizenship, as it is not motivated by a commitment to public ideals. This is the price of mere disagreement.

That such dissent lacks civic virtue does not mean it lacks justification. Dissent based on mere disagreement can be taken for undefeated reasons since the dissenter may have good reason to disagree with the policy in question. Her reasons and her action simply are not couched within a body of conduct which constitutes a genuine pursuit of an ideal and which warrants recognition as responsible citizenship. Justified disobedience which lacks a commitment to ideals nevertheless may be a useful vehicle for change. Often, it is through the slow development of collective agreement that dissenters have an impact on government. While the leaders of a movement in all likelihood will be motivated by a deep commitment to public ideals, many of the participants may not be. They may simply add their voices to a growing snowball of public opinion.

*b. Extremism*

Some disobedience differs from the paradigms offered by Gandhi, King, Mandela, and the nuns in that it lacks that sensitivity to genuine ideals necessary for civic virtue. I have argued that much disobedience is marked by an urge to transcend aspects of existing moral horizons. But, in some cases, that urge either is groundless, or is pursued for the wrong reasons, or is pursued through questionable means. These three breakdowns in the pursuit of ideals need not coincide. In some cases, disobedience in pursuit of false ideals is just as conscientious as well-founded disobedience is in that it is sincerely and seriously undertaken by persons who hold deep beliefs on the issue. The opponent of desegregation, for example, who believes in a natural division of races, may be conscientious in her action although her

commitments are poorly founded. Such disobedience sometimes is excused, though not justified, as it is premised on a mistaken conception of value. That mistake may be due to upbringing, education, environmental or cultural influences, and so on. In other cases, dissenters' convictions are well-founded but their methods of pursuit are not admirable. The Animal Liberation Front, for example, might be credited for professing an admirable ideal, but some of their methods are highly questionable and cannot constitute legitimate pursuits of that ideal. Also, such extremism when it includes a coercive element moves away from the paradigm of civil disobedience, as it lacks the persuasive quality which marks that communicative practice. In still other cases, dissenters' ideals are genuine and their actions respectable but their reasons for pursuing those ideals are reprehensible. Such action again may be predicated on a misconception, in this case a misconception of the right reasons to pursue a worthy end. Such ignorance of right reasons is, however, less likely and less excusable than ignorance about value since the person's awareness in the former case that the goal is valuable should bring with it an appreciation for the reasons she has to pursue that value. To pursue it for other reasons reflects poorly on her commitment to that value. In the worst case, however, dissenters' ideals are false and their means and motivation for pursuing them are reprehensible. The KKK's lynching of black people is one example.

These perversions in the pursuit of ideals not only can overlap with each other but also can apply to both paradigmatic and non-paradigmatic civil disobedience. Justified civil disobedience, by contrast, cannot fall prey to any of them since it invariably has some moral merit in being taken for undefeated reasons in support of a value or principle that has objective worth. Such civil disobedience could not be undertaken either in pursuit of a false ideal or for questionable (i.e. defeated) reasons,

or through truly reprehensible actions (since no undefeated reasons would exist for taking those actions). Disobedience which exhibits these defects, therefore, lacks justification. Qualification of this conclusion is required since, as noted earlier, dissent, irrespective of its focus or motivation, has value in forcing the champions of dominant opinion to defend their positions. I believe that justification admits degrees, which suggests that a modest amount of justification may apply to disobedience taken in pursuit of a false ideal or to disobedience that employs means that are less than admirable though not despicable. Even so, the contribution of less than fully justified disobedience to the collision of perspectives is small compared to the contribution of well-founded dissent by persons sensitive to the ideals appropriate to their society.

## **5. Summary**

I stated at the outset that much civil disobedience may be understood in terms of a pursuit of ideals. Putting aside the rhetoric of the disobedients considered here, there are three arguments that support the claim that much civil disobedience involves a pursuit of ideals. The first is an empirical point that many of the dissenters discussed were in fact driven by their commitment to ideals. Mandela, King, Gandhi, and the nuns may all claim with legitimacy to have been motivated by their deep regard for certain public ideals. The opponent of desegregation and the KKK defender of racial purification also may claim to act in pursuit of ideals, though their ideals are false. The second is a conceptual argument that the key features of civil disobedience align with features that mark a pursuit of public ideals (be they genuine or false). The conscientiousness paradigmatic of civil disobedience is captured well by the sense of purpose which marks the life of the pioneering idealist. The communication exemplified in paradigmatic civil disobedience shows an awareness that pursuits of



public ideals can only be taken through public engagement. The third is the theoretical argument that aligns civic virtue with a responsiveness to those public ideals which require their defenders to challenge present policies through a communicative dissociation from those policies. The sense that such ideals are sufficiently important to warrant a breach of law in their defence prompts dissenters to engage in civil disobedience. This disobedience is but an extension of their ideals.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> My focus is substantive ideals, not deliberative ideals. For a brief account of the two, see Connie Rosati, 'Ideals' in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. E. Craig (London: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> By normative and motivational commitment, I mean that the person, first, is sensitive to certain reasons, and second, actually acts *for* those reasons.

<sup>3</sup> Character ideals and admirable modes of pursuit are also ends in themselves though they may contribute to the pursuit of more easily recognised ends like value ideals.

<sup>4</sup> I use the term 'ideal' to refer to genuinely valuable ideals. When speaking about ideals which lack value, I use the term 'false ideal'.

<sup>5</sup> I shall assume that the work of these activists is well known, and that the analysis of ideals is best served by discussing their aims and activities together, though this may anticipate my analysis of each activist's commitments.

<sup>6</sup> Many of these features could mark pursuits of false ideals.

<sup>7</sup> C.A.J. Coady 'Concerning Ideals', Uehiro Lectures in Practical Ethics, Oxford University, May 2005 (Forthcoming).

<sup>8</sup> The adjective 'good' should be distinguished from nouns like 'a good' and 'the Good'. The latter are closely linked to ideals since genuine ideals are amongst the great goods people seek.

<sup>9</sup> P.F. Strawson, *Freedom and Resentment, and Other Essays* (London: Methuen and Co., 1974), p. 28.

<sup>10</sup> John Skorupski, 'The Future of Ideals' in *Philosophy and the New Millennium*, supplement to *Philosophy*, Royal Institute of Philosophy, ed. Anthony O'Hear (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 197.

<sup>11</sup> Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: the Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. (Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1994), p. 624.

<sup>12</sup> See Brian Smart, 'Defining Civil Disobedience', in ed. Hugo A. Bedau, *Civil Disobedience in Focus* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 206.

<sup>13</sup> See Joseph Raz, *The Authority of Law: Essays on Law and Morality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p.265.

<sup>14</sup> See Robert Audi, 'A Liberal Theory of Civic Virtue' in *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 15/1 (1998): pp. 149-70.

<sup>15</sup> I argue in Section 4 that civic virtue need not be bound by national borders.

<sup>16</sup> James Boswell, *A Journal of the Tour of the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson*, (London, Dent 1901). Cited from Leslie Green, 'Law and Obligations' in *Oxford Handbook of Jurisprudence and Philosophy of Law*, eds. Jules Coleman and Scott Shapiro (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 544.

<sup>17</sup> See Richard Dagger, *Civic Virtues*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 14.

<sup>18</sup> Dagger, *Civic Virtue*, p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> Akeel Bilgrami, 'Gandhi's integrity: the philosophy behind the politics' in *Postcolonial Studies*, 5/1 (2002): 79-93.

<sup>20</sup> Martin Luther King Jr, 'Letter from Birmingham Jail' in *Philosophy of Law*. Fifth edition, eds. Joel Feinberg and Hyman Gross (London: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1995), p. 119.

<sup>21</sup> Audi, 'A Liberal Theory of Civic Virtue', p. 164.

<sup>22</sup> *Means* are the types of actions that people take and *modes* the manner in which these actions are taken, be it violently or peacefully, collectively or individually, etc.

<sup>23</sup> I consider non-violence in Section 3.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Audi, *The Good in the Right* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 170.

- <sup>25</sup> Nicholas Rescher, *Ethical Idealism: An Inquiry into the Nature and Function of Ideals* (London: University of California Press, 1987), p. 125.
- <sup>26</sup> Rescher, *Ethical Idealism*, p. 126.
- <sup>27</sup> See Isaiah Berlin, 'The Pursuit of the Ideal' in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity* (London: John Murray, 1990).
- <sup>28</sup> Bilgrami, 'Gandhi's integrity', p. 86.
- <sup>29</sup> King, 'Letter from Birmingham Jail', p. 118.
- <sup>30</sup> Rescher, *Ethical Idealism*, p. 125.
- <sup>31</sup> Mandela, *Autobiography*, p. 624.
- <sup>32</sup> Martin Luther King Jr, *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King*, ed. Claybourne Carson (New York: IPM/Warner Books, 2001), pp. 172-3.
- <sup>33</sup> Thomas Nagel, *Equality and Partiality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 29.
- <sup>34</sup> Nagel, *Equality and Partiality*, p. 21.
- <sup>35</sup> King, 'Letter from Birmingham Jail', p. 118.
- <sup>36</sup> Henry David Thoreau, 'Civil Disobedience' in *Civil Disobedience and Other Essays* (New York: Dover Publications, 1993), p. 3.
- <sup>37</sup> Coady (forthcoming).
- <sup>38</sup> Nelson Mandela, 'The Sacred Warrior' in *Time*. 3 January 2000.
- <sup>39</sup> Mandela, *Autobiography*, p. 568.
- <sup>40</sup> King, 'Letter from Birmingham Jail', p. 120.
- <sup>41</sup> King, 'Letter from Birmingham Jail', p. 120.
- <sup>42</sup> This phrase oversimplifies the relation between ought and can. It is better to say that what one ought to do is constrained by what one is able to do.
- <sup>43</sup> Mandela, *Autobiography*, pp. 565-6.
- <sup>44</sup> Mandela, *Autobiography*, p. 600.
- <sup>45</sup> Coady (Forthcoming).
- <sup>46</sup> Mandela, *Autobiography*, p. 368.
- <sup>47</sup> Bernard Williams, 'Consequentialism and Integrity' in *Consequentialism and its Critics*, ed. Samuel Scheffler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 20.
- <sup>48</sup> Harry G. Frankfurt, *Necessity, Volition and Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 109.
- <sup>49</sup> Frankfurt, *Necessity, Volition and Love*, p. 114.
- <sup>50</sup> See Daniel Markovits, 'Democratic Disobedience' in *Yale Law Journal*, 114 (2005): 1897-1952.
- <sup>51</sup> Chrissy Cada, 'Three Nuns and a Test for Civil Disobedience' in the *Boston Globe* 27 May 2003.
- <sup>52</sup> In 2000, the nuns illegally entered the Colorado Springs Air Force Base, struck a parked Marine fighter jet with a hammer, and poured their blood on its landing gear. Charges were dropped.