


RESEARCH ARTICLE

The pacifist and the hypophysical: A cosmological reading of Gandhi

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(Received 31 July 2022; revised 15 June 2023; accepted 26 June 2023)

Abstract

Amidst the resurgence of scholarship on pacifism, this essay seeks to critically interrogate certain influential sections within pacifism which characterise Gandhi as a pacifist, and his philosophy as pacifism. After pointing out the shortcomings of existing attempts to problematise the pacifist connotations of Gandhi, I adopt a cosmological approach to reading Gandhi. I argue that such an approach enables us to view the uncritical equation of both strands of thought as symptomatic of the deep-rooted ontological, epistemological, and other biases informing Western cosmology. This is demonstrated by the channels through which Gandhian discourses are framed as pacifism (especially in their diffusion into the American context), via a distinct set of interactions with both the religious and secular cosmological background assumptions underpinning pacifism. In the subsequent section, I continue this approach by highlighting how an alternate relational cosmology – Gandhian hypophysics – with a radically different set of background assumptions results in an idiosyncratic notion of Gandhian ideas which are quite inimical to pacifism. Besides reconciling contradictory characterisations of the same man and his philosophy, as well as contributing to a dialogic, pluriversal approach, I argue that this work also seeks to extend the scholarship on the interrelated themes of agency and cosmology.

Keywords: cosmology; Gandhi; global IR; pacifism; security

Introduction

There has been a resurgence in scholarly interest around pacifism. A number of scholars have churned out a wide range of illuminating scholarship on various aspects of pacifism and non-violence across disciplines including international relations, political theory, philosophy, and so on.¹ On the justifiable grounds that pacifist discourses have been systematically subjugated,² such studies have sought to foreground pacifist perspectives, highlighting a wide range of possibilities inherent in them as well as their practical manifestations.

¹See, for example, Joseph Llewellyn, 'Building emancipatory peace through anarcho-pacifism', *Critical Studies on Security*, 6:2 (2018), pp. 259–72; Kimberly Hutchings, 'Pacifism is dirty: Towards an ethico-political defence', *Critical Studies on Security*, 6:2 (2018), pp. 176–92; M. S. Wallace, 'Wrestling with another human being: The merits of a messy, power-laden pacifism', *Global Society*, 34:1 (2020), pp. 52–67; Nicholas Parkin, 'Conditional and contingent pacifism: The main battlegrounds', *Critical Studies on Security*, 6:2 (2018), pp. 193–206; Mathias Thaler, 'Peace as a minor, grounded utopia: On prefigurative and testimonial pacifism', *Perspectives on Politics*, 17:4 (2019), pp. 1003–18; Dustin Ells Howes, 'The failure of pacifism and the success of nonviolence', *Perspectives on Politics*, 11:2 (2013), pp. 427–46.

²Richard Jackson, 'Pacifism: The anatomy of a subjugated knowledge', *Critical Studies on Security*, 6:2 (2018), pp. 160–175 (p. 160).

While I certainly do not dispute the argument of the marginalisation of pacifist scholarship, I seek to problematise some of the foundational assumptions of this scholarship, by examining some of the Gandhian threads which are integral to many pacifist writings. Throughout certain prominent sections within this scholarship, Gandhi is understood as a pacifist, and Gandhian philosophy is often considered equivalent to (or inseparable from) pacifism. As Gregory C. Elliott argues, ‘Gandhi’s works best exemplify what most people understand intuitively and connotatively by the term pacifism.’³ Against this backdrop, I seek to critically interrogate this interlinkage (and often equation) between pacifism and Gandhian philosophy using a cosmological lens.

Towards this end, my article will be organised as follows. I first provide a broad overview of the pacifist literature, highlighting the instances of its equation with Gandhian philosophy. In the second section, I highlight the shortcomings of existing attempts (including post-colonial perspectives) to problematise the pacifist connotations of Gandhi, pointing out the need for a cosmological approach. Arguing that a cosmological approach broadly connotes a cosmological awareness while inquiring into pacifism and Gandhism, I contend that such a cosmological approach enables us to see that the uncritical equation of both strands of thought in certain historical expressions of pacifism is symptomatic of the deep-rooted ontological and epistemological biases which inform Western cosmology. This is demonstrated by the channels through which Gandhian discourses are framed as pacifism, which in turn is rooted in a highly rigid set of assumptions based on the religious and secular domains associated with the Western cosmology. In the subsequent section, I highlight how an alternate relational cosmology, i.e. Gandhian hypophysics, with a radically different set of background assumptions, results in an idiosyncratic conception of Gandhian notions, which is significantly at odds with certain fundamental themes underlying pacifism. In the final section, I highlight a few potential theoretical contributions of my work, concluding with a few reflections vis-à-vis some of the contemporary global challenges.

In terms of approach, my work makes a contribution to post-Western IR, especially with regard to the upsurge in the scholarship on cosmologies.⁴ It also draws from (and augments) recent philosophical advances with respect to Gandhi⁵ as well as adding to the sociological and historical studies underlying the diffusion of social movements and ideas.⁶

³Gregory C. Elliott, ‘Components of pacifism: Conceptualization and measurement’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 24:1 (1980), pp. 27–54 (p. 30).

⁴See, *inter alia*, Giorgio Shani, ‘IR as inter-cosmological relations?’, *International Politics Reviews*, 9:2 (2021), pp. 306–12; Hartmut Behr and Giorgio Shani, ‘Rethinking emancipation in a critical IR: Normativity, cosmology, and pluriversal dialogue’, *Millennium*, 49:2 (2021), pp. 368–91; Giorgio Shani, ‘From “critical” nationalism to “Asia as method”: Tagore’s quest for a moral imaginary and its implications for post-Western international relations?’, *Global Studies Quarterly*, 2:4 (2022), pp. 1–11; Deepshikha Shahi and Gennaro Ascione, ‘Rethinking the absence of post-Western International Relations theory in India: “Advaitic monism” as an alternative epistemological resource’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 22:2 (2016), pp. 313–34; Tamara A. Trowsell, Arlene B. Tickner, Amaya Querejazu et al., ‘Differing about difference: Relational IR from around the world’, *International Studies Perspectives*, 22:1 (2021), pp. 25–64; Milja Kurki, ‘Relational revolution and relationality in IR: New conversations’, *Review of International Studies*, 48:5 (2022), pp. 821–36; Giorgio Shani and Navnita Chadha Behera, ‘Provincialising International Relations through a reading of dharma’, *Review of International Studies*, 48:5 (2022), pp. 837–56; Amaya Querejazu, ‘Cosmopraxis: Relational methods for a pluriversal IR’, *Review of International Studies*, 48:5 (2022), pp. 875–90.

⁵See, for example, Sankaran Krishna, ‘A postcolonial racial/spatial order: Gandhi, Ambedkar, and the construction of the international’, in Alexander Anievas, Nivi Manchanda, and Robbie Shilliam (eds), *Race and Racism in International Relations* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 139–156; Siddharth Mallavarapu, ‘Securing India: Gandhian intuitions’, in Kanti Bajpai, Saira Basit, and V. Krishnappa (eds), *India’s Grand Strategy* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2014), pp. 272–98; Ajay Skaria, *Unconditional Equality: Gandhi’s Religion of Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016); Shaj Mohan and Divya Dwivedi, *Gandhi and Philosophy: On Theological Anti-Politics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018); Anand Sreekumar, ‘Feminism and Gandhi: Imagining alternatives beyond Indian nuclearism’, *International Affairs*, 98:4 (2022), pp. 1189–209.

⁶Sean Scalmer, *Gandhi in the West: The Mahatma and the Rise of Radical Protest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Sean Chabot, ‘Framing, transnational diffusion, and African-American intellectuals in the land of Gandhi’, *International Review of Social History*, 49:S12 (2004), pp. 19–40.

The pacifist continuum and Gandhi: An overview

Needless to say, pacifism is far from a homogenous position. Drawing from Duane Cady, it is characterised by a wide range of disputes, contestations, and experimentation and is thus best conceived as a ‘continuum’ of positions, approaches, values, and philosophies.⁷ As Cheyney Ryan adds, it is a tradition of argument, constituted as such by some persistent disputes within pacifism itself.⁸ In this section, I first provide a range of such positions across the length and the breadth of this spectrum. Rather than providing an exhaustive overview, the aim of this section is to illustrate the degree of complexity underlying what is characterised as pacifism.

At one end of this spectrum lies the extreme position of absolute pacifism which argues that it is wrong to use force (often interpreted as the imposition of physical strength) against any other person irrespective of the situation. Moving further along the spectrum, one encounters positions against killing, even if non-lethal force is justified under certain circumstances (e.g. ‘personal self-defence against unprovoked physical attack’).⁹ These include interpretations of the Judeo-Christian doctrines such as ‘Thou shalt not kill.’¹⁰ Further along the continuum, the position of collective pacifism permits even lethal self-defence while retaining an objection to mass violence, including war. Similarly, epistemological pacifists posit that even if one can justify lethal violence in principle, ‘our knowledge is too limited to justify’ it.¹¹ One can see such lines of thinking in Jonathan Schell’s *The Fate of the Earth*.¹² There are also technological pacifists who argue that the extent of justification of a war is contingent on technological sophistication. This makes most current wars unjustifiable ‘because overkill and increased risks to noncombatants, nonparticipants, and innocent bystanders go hand in hand with technological “advance”, best exemplified in the essay on the dangers of total war by Father John Ford, “The Morality of Obliteration Bombing”’.¹³ Many variants of contemporary nuclear pacifism certainly draw from technological pacifism. Ecological pacifism is another variant of technological pacifism, which grounds its objection to wars primarily on their environmental impact.¹⁴

Advocated by the likes of Dustin Ells Howes, pragmatic pacifism lies at the opposite end of the spectrum, signifying ‘a principled commitment to non-violence grounded in a realistic understanding of the historical record and the inherent political liabilities of violence.’¹⁵ Gene Sharp, often dubbed the ‘Clausewitz of non-violence’, was instrumental in articulating the purely strategic character of non-violence in his canonical work *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, exemplified best in his enunciation of 198 methods or strategies of non-violent defence.¹⁶ This opposition to war on practical grounds is often juxtaposed with other expressions of pacifism such as principled and personal pacifism.¹⁷ Other pacifists like Ryan make a clear distinction between personal and political pacifism. As the name suggests, he conceives personal pacifism as a personal (and mostly religious) orientation, often translating to an absolute opposition to the taking of human life. He sketches the roots of this tradition primarily in Christian ethics from the early Christian responses to the Roman empire. This position later surfaced in the left wing of the Protestant Reformation, manifested in the protests of Anabaptists (and later Quakers) against the Roman Church and its

⁷ Duane L. Cady, *From Warism to Pacifism: A Moral Continuum* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).

⁸ Cheyney Ryan, ‘Pacifism, just war, and self-defence’, *Philosophia*, 41:4 (2013), pp. 977–1005 (p. 980).

⁹ Cady, *From Warism to Pacifism*, p. 67.

¹⁰ Cady, *From Warism to Pacifism*, p. 67.

¹¹ Cady, *From Warism to Pacifism*, p. 68.

¹² Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), pp. 129–130

¹³ Cady, *From Warism to Pacifism*, pp. 70–1.

¹⁴ Cady, *From Warism to Pacifism*, p. 74.

¹⁵ Howes, ‘The failure of pacifism and the success of nonviolence’, p. 428.

¹⁶ Joshua Ammons and Christopher J. Coyne, ‘Gene Sharp: The “Clausewitz of nonviolent warfare”’, *The Independent Review*, 23:1 (2018), pp. 149–56 (p. 152).

¹⁷ Robert L. Holmes, ‘Pacifism and weapons of mass destruction’, in Sohail H. Hashmi and Steven P. Lee (eds), *Ethics and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Religious and Secular Perspectives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 451–469.

imperial projects. Other prominent exponents of this position included Leo Tolstoy and abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison, followed by Dorothy Day and John Howard Yoder much later in the twentieth century. On the other hand, he identifies political pacifism as a more influential position rooted in the Renaissance humanism of Erasmus as well as the Enlightenment anti-war opinions of the likes of Kant. It emerged first in response to the Napoleonic wars and re-emerged in the context of the world wars, besides having a significant impact on the humanitarian and arbitration movements in the 19th century. Endorsed by the likes of William Jennings Bryan and Andrew Alexandria, it is opposed to 'war systems', i.e. it goes beyond mere opposition to episodes of wars to launch a scathing indictment of the entire complex of activities, institutions, and organisations (broadly grouped under warism or militarism) which make wars possible.¹⁸

In another vein, Mathias Thaler argues that there are broadly two approaches to the question of pacifism. The first can be termed as 'non-violentism' and is concerned with the ethics and morality of the use of non-violence in domestic as well as international settings.¹⁹ The second and narrower approach is focused on the opposition to wars.²⁰ Duane Cady also makes another distinction between positive and negative peace. Positive peace goes beyond the absence of war (negative peace) to highlight a global community woven by interrelatedness and interconnectedness and characterised by non-violent methods of peace building and conflict resolution, including a possible civilian defence.²¹

The tradition of conscientious objection is an inalienable part of the pacifist movement. Drawing on early Christian traditions of Origen and Tertullian as well as the later radical Protestant theologies of the Anabaptist, Quaker, Mennonite, and Brethren communities, it found a great deal of acceptance in both Christian and secular organisations.²² During World War I, the likes of the No-Conscription Fellowship (N-CF), the National Council against Conscription, and the Union of Democratic Control (UDC) were prominent exponents of this position. World War I also led to the formation of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (1915) as well as the secular War Resisters' International (1921). Both organisations are still active in assisting conscientious objectors, and both continue to reject participation in war. The interwar years similarly saw a prevalent anti-war ethos characterise a wide range of pacifist positions, manifested for instance in the short-lived yet significant influence of the Peace Pledge Union.²³

Women's movements and feminist movements were also often enmeshed with the pacifist movements. For instance, in addition to the advocacy of important pacifist organisations such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 'women's rights advocates such as Sylvia Pankhurst and Aletta Jacobs vehemently opposed World War I' at the 1915 Women's International Congress at the Hague.²⁴ While the likes of Virginia Woolf had linked patriarchy and wars as far back as the 1930s,²⁵ feminist pacifism emerged as a prominent position within the broad women's peace movements in the late 1970s and 80s. Recognising violence as a male principle, some feminist pacifists emphasised femininity and maternalism, while others such as the Feminism and Nonviolence Study Group emphasised 'a commitment to a project of social reconstruction – the restructuring of sex and gender relations'. Irrespective of varying understandings of pacifism, gender, and feminism, the women's peace movement during this period was a complex coalition

¹⁸Ryan, 'Pacifism, just war, and self-defense', p. 981.

¹⁹Thaler, 'Peace as a minor, grounded utopia', p. 1004.

²⁰Thaler, 'Peace as a minor, grounded utopia', p. 1004.

²¹Cady, *From Warism to Pacifism*, pp. 79–92.

²²Howes, 'The failure of pacifism and the success of nonviolence', p. 429.

²³Ian Patterson, 'Pacifist and conscientious objectors', in Adam Piette and Mark Rawlinson (eds), *The Edinburgh Companion to Twentieth-Century British and American War Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 304–314 (p. 311).

²⁴Howes, 'The failure of pacifism and the success of nonviolence', p. 429.

²⁵Patterson, 'Pacifist and conscientious objectors', p. 311.

united by the opposition to nuclear weapons as well as a commitment to civil disobedience and non-violent forms of resistance.²⁶

Against this backdrop, there is a conspicuous tendency within certain sections of the pacifist movement to portray Gandhi as a pacifist and to equate Gandhian philosophy with pacifism. Gandhi has been viewed as a stalwart or flag bearer of pacifism, despite his reluctance to use the terminology to label himself as such.²⁷ The predominant characterisation of Gandhi in IR theory is typified by Martin Wight's positioning of 'Gandhi outside his threefold typology of IR traditions (realist, idealist and rationalist) as an unelaborated fourth category typifying pacifism.'²⁸ While Robert Holmes refers to Gandhi as a 'notable principled' pacifist,²⁹ the likes of Duane Cady and Gregory C. Elliott³⁰ characterise Gandhi as one of the major and most famous pacifists of the twentieth century, who uses pacifist arguments from across the principled–pragmatic spectrum.³¹ While similar direct equations can also be seen in the writings of Richard Jackson and Cheyney Ryan,³² implicit associations of Gandhian writings with 'Eastern' pacifism can also be seen in the works of Dustin Ells Howes.³³

Before proceeding further, a few clarifications are necessary. First, certain pacifist works are at pains to distinguish Gandhian philosophy from pacifism.³⁴ Secondly, I do not dispute the fact that Gandhi undoubtedly has had a major influence on a wide range of positions within the broad pacifist continuum. My reservation is with the uncritical equation, i.e. the prominent tendency within certain influential sections of pacifist writers to uncritically characterise Gandhi as a pacifist (and Gandhian theory as pacifism). Before critically interrogating these notions, it is imperative to point out the shortcomings of existing attempts to problematise these notions and then outline the contours of a cosmological approach in addressing these issues. This shall be the task of my next section.

Gandhi, pacifism, and cosmology

There have been multiple attempts to critically interrogate the assertions of Gandhi as a pacifist. In the discipline of International Relations theory, Sankaran Krishna best represents the post-colonial critique by arguing how Gandhi 'was instrumental in a particular postcolonial rendition of race and space ... hostile to ideals of equality and democracy, non-violence and peace', using a wide range of examples from his personal life.

"Gandhi has become a universal signifier of a vacuous and apolitical brotherhood. And yet his actions ... reveal a man with serious issues when it came to caste, gender, inequality and a host of other matters."³⁵

In fact, Krishna uses Gandhi's racist and casteist arguments to highlight that the order he envisioned was entirely inimical to the values of peace and non-violence. He draws from a very vibrant debate which has highlighted a range of Gandhi's problematic assertions on the questions of caste,

²⁶Elizabeth Frazer and Kimberly Hutchings, 'Revisiting Ruddick: Feminism, pacifism and non-violence', *Journal of International Political Theory*, 10:1 (2014), pp. 109–124 (pp. 111–12).

²⁷Ashu Pasricha, 'World peace – the Gandhian way', in Anil Dutta Mishra (ed.), *Gandhism after Gandhi* (New Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1999), pp. 65–72 (p. 66).

²⁸Krishna 'A postcolonial racial/spatial order', p. 154.

²⁹Holmes, 'Pacifism and weapons of mass destruction', p. 468.

³⁰Elliott, 'Components of pacifism', p. 28.

³¹Cady, *From Warism to Pacifism*, p. 15.

³²Jackson, 'Pacifism', p. 4; Ryan, 'Pacifism, just war, and self-defense', p. 979.

³³Howes, 'The failure of pacifism and the success of nonviolence', p. 429.

³⁴Llewellyn, 'Building emancipatory peace through anarcho-pacifism', pp. 259–72.

³⁵Sankaran Krishna, 'On introducing Ambedkar', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 49:16 (2014), pp. 139–156 (p. 24).

gender, and race.³⁶ In a similar vein, Orwell had argued ‘pacifists ... have claimed him for their own, noticing only that he was opposed to ... state violence and ignoring the other-worldly, anti-humanist tendency of his doctrines.’³⁷ Another interesting line of critique can be found in the realm of nuclear ethics. There have been active attempts (though they do not explicitly state such) to transcend the familiar Gandhian pacifist anti-nuclear positions by drawing on Gandhi himself to formulate pro-nuclear positions and even justify India’s nuclearisation.

While these positions, especially those of the likes of Krishna, have definitely succeeded in the ‘imbrication of a universalizing narrative’ of Gandhian pacifism ‘within a wide range of alternate local epistemologies and imaginaries’, complicating and exceeding its scope,³⁸ I identify two major issues. The first is that it has culminated in a dichotomous either/or debate. Krishna himself alludes to the problem of the ‘selective and thin appropriations of his voluminous writings and political actions.’³⁹ Often both sides of the debate draw on the same selective deployment of his canon of work to prove the point that he either was or was not a pacifist.

This is especially evident in the Indian nuclear landscape, characterised by heated and polarised debates on Gandhi’s pacifist credentials, especially after India’s second nuclear tests in 1998.⁴⁰ On the one hand, a group of highly influential activists appeared, who adopted a pacifist opposition to nuclear weapons, constantly drawing on Gandhian non-violence and *ahimsa*.⁴¹ In response to them, there emerged a certain section of pro-nuclear military officials who responded through a Gandhian ‘*satyagraha* approach.’⁴² Claiming that non-violence was a distortion of his legacy, they argued that ‘Gandhi advocated *satyagraha* from a position of strength and moral conviction and not fear of “economic sanctions” as some of the present day “followers” of his want’. They thus draw on Gandhi’s assertion that violence is preferable to fear, thereby providing a Gandhian justification for the development of nuclear weapons and technology, questioning his very pacifist credentials.⁴³ In other words, as Bidwai argues, Gandhi was painted ‘as a legitimiser of the bomb’.⁴⁴ The enormous symbolic capital wielded by Gandhi internationally as well as the credentials of India as a ‘rising power’ has only complicated this task further, resulting in even more polarised international contestations of the legacy of Gandhi.

Secondly, as articulated by the likes of Kratchowill and Shahi in the backdrop of Eurocentric IR versus post-colonial/de-colonial IR, this debate suffers from the unresolved tension between ‘single’ (read ‘universal’) and ‘plural’ (read ‘particular’). The latter seeks to counteract the problematic universalism of Eurocentric IR through ‘equally strong assertion of particularities’.⁴⁵ In other words, in an effort to challenge the universalist claims of Eurocentric IR, the non-Eurocentric post-colonial and de-colonial IR present a holist view of reality which seeks to combine the missing particularist narrative. However, the issue here is that:

³⁶ Rajmohan Gandhi, ‘Independence and social justice: The Ambedkar–Gandhi debate’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 50:15 (2015), pp. 35–44; Arundhati Roy, ‘All the world’s a half-built dam’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 50:25 (2015), pp. 165–73.

³⁷ George Orwell, ‘Reflections on Gandhi’, *Partisan Review*, 16:1 (1949), pp. 85–92 (p. 92).

³⁸ Lars Eckstein and Anja Schwarz, ‘Introduction: Towards a postcolonial critique of modern piracy’, in Anja Schwarz and Lars Eckstein (eds), *Postcolonial Piracy: Media Distribution and Cultural Production in the Global South* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 1–25 (p. 18).

³⁹ Krishna ‘A postcolonial racial/spatial order’, p. 139–140.

⁴⁰ For a detailed overview of the debates on Gandhian nuclear ethics in the Indian context, see Anand Sreekumar, ‘Towards advocating a “tradition approach” to Gandhian nuclear ethics’, *E-International Relations* (24 May 2023).

⁴¹ For such an overview of a range of positions, see Smitha Kothari and Zia Mian (eds), *Out of the Nuclear Shadow* (Delhi: Zed, 2001).

⁴² Katherine K. Young, ‘Hinduism and the ethics of weapons of mass destruction’, in Sohail Hashmi and Steven P. Lee (eds), *Ethics and Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 277–307 (pp. 298–9).

⁴³ Young, ‘Hinduism and the ethics of weapons of mass destruction’, pp. 289–99.

⁴⁴ Praful Bidwai, ‘Nuclear India: A short history’, in MIND (Movement in India for Nuclear Disarmament), *Out of Nuclear Darkness* (New Delhi: Colour Prints, 2002), pp. 9–15 (p. 15).

⁴⁵ Deepshikha Shahi, ‘Foregrounding the complexities of a dialogic approach to global international relations’, *All Azimuth: A Journal of Foreign Policy and Peace*, 9:2 (2020), pp. 163–176 (p. 171).

“this holist view of reality presented by post-colonial and de-colonial IR recommends the same Eurocentric dualism: while Eurocentric IR maintains the separation between the West and the Rest, the non-Eurocentric post-colonial and de-colonial IR reverse this knowledge-situation and retain the separation between the Rest and the West. While the West claims universality and, therefore, conveniently confines the non-West to a ‘local’ domain, the non-West too eagerly appropriates for itself the ‘local’ domain as a reaction against the West’s arrogant claim to universality.”⁴⁶

In other words, non-Western voices either are reduced to a ‘derivative discourse’ of Western IR or nurture an ‘exceptionalist discourse’ which is ‘narrowly applicable to the experiential realities of a native time–space zone.’⁴⁷

For instance, as the previous section illustrates, Gandhian thought is often reduced to a derivative discourse of pacifism, at times even an Eastern manifestation of pacifism (this is analogous to the oft-quoted example of Kautilya being reduced to an Eastern Machiavelli).⁴⁸ Dustin Ells Howes, for example, divides pacifism neatly into Western and Eastern, and Gandhi becomes the representative of pacifism in the East.⁴⁹ Even in the anti-nuclear landscape of India, Gandhian thought is often considered synonymous with pacifism. While this dialogue is certainly very simplistic and reductive, most critiques of such discourses assume an oppositional stance, foreclosing any conversation altogether. Krishna’s post-colonial argument here, for instance, immures Gandhian arguments in a problematic spatial temporality. The implication is that Gandhian discourses should not be deemed universal, as they belong to an outmoded time frame highlighting a problematic spatial order. Thus, even against the backdrop of the demands for IR to become more global or even pluriversal, pathways towards a more substantial dialogue between ‘Western’ and ‘non-Western’ voices are effectively walled off.

I argue that a more substantive and varied form of conversation can be initiated through a cosmological approach to the Gandhi–pacifism nexus. Before proceeding to elaborate on a cosmological approach, it is necessary to ask: what are cosmologies? The word cosmos is derived from the Greek word *kosmeo*, which means ‘to organise’ or ‘to order.’⁵⁰ Cosmologies entail a series of ontological as well as epistemological claims regarding the origin and evolution of the cosmos, as well as our position vis-à-vis the cosmos. They include normative claims about the human condition and ideas about time and space, as well as the relationships between humans and non-humans, and so on.⁵¹ Bentley Allan perhaps provides the most exhaustive definition of a cosmology as a series of ideas on:

- the fundamental units of matter, the forces that govern them, and categories of representation (ontology);
- the modes and procedures likely to produce reliable or true knowledge of the universe (episteme);
- the nature and direction of time (temporality);
- the origins and history of the universe (cosmogony);
- the role or place of humanity in the cosmos (destiny).⁵²

⁴⁶Shahi, ‘Foregrounding the complexities of a dialogic approach’, p. 171.

⁴⁷Shahi, ‘Foregrounding the complexities of a dialogic approach’, p. 172.

⁴⁸Shahi, ‘Foregrounding the complexities of a dialogic approach’, p. 169.

⁴⁹Howes, ‘The failure of pacifism and the success of nonviolence’, p. 429.

⁵⁰Shimshon Bichler and Jonathan Nitzan, ‘Capital as power: Toward a new cosmology of capitalism’, *Real-World Economics Review*, 61 (2012), pp. 65–84 (p. 66).

⁵¹Behr and Shani, ‘Rethinking emancipation in a critical IR’, p. 15; Milja Kurki, *International Relations and Relational Universe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 14.

⁵²Bentley B. Allan, *Scientific Cosmology and International Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 11.

In determining the meaning and purpose of the universe and human beings as well as generating a series of rules and institutions to these ends, cosmologies assume a powerful and totalising character. Cosmological assumptions and ideas are integral to how one acts in the international sphere and render certain 'goals, interests, and purposes as natural or inevitable and others as unthinkable or illegitimate'.⁵³

A cosmological approach simply refers to a mode of thinking through cosmologies. In other words, drawing on Kurki, it exhorts theorists of IR to pay a keen attention to the background cosmological assumptions and how they shape the very process of how one thinks, including in terms of international relations and security.⁵⁴ The first part of my approach thus highlights how these background assumptions underlying pacifism framed Gandhi as a pacifist during the diffusion of Gandhian ideals. To elaborate the importance of cosmologies even better, the second part of my approach reveals how the same ideals acquire drastically different connotations under the parameters of a different cosmology. In this process, such a dual approach seeks partly to make sense of the above contradictory characterisations of Gandhi as well as to facilitate a possible shift to a more productive pluriversal conversation. The subsequent section thus details the first part of my approach.

Framing Gandhi as pacifism

The first half of the twentieth century saw numerous *satyagraha* campaigns led by Gandhi, built around the principles of *ahimsa* and non-violence. His most notable interventions include his campaigns in South Africa, the non-cooperation movement, the salt marches, and the Quit India movement, as well as a series of constructive grassroots programmes, peasant as well as labour struggles.⁵⁵ Besides his iconic work *Hind Swaraj*, the Gandhian canon also includes his speeches, newspaper articles, letters, and other writings, which span hundreds of volumes.⁵⁶ How was such an extensive (and at times seemingly contradictory) repertoire reduced to pacifism within certain sections of the pacifist community, despite Gandhi's reluctance to label himself and his philosophy as such?

To begin understanding this, one must understand the diffusion of Gandhian ideas. As Sean Scalmer puts it, 'Gandhism' was a history of connections, campaigns, and international flows.⁵⁷ The linkage between Gandhi and pacifism began with the interpretation and diffusion of Gandhian ideas by his contemporary pacifists in the USA and the UK. Associations, comprising transnational networks of pacifists, played a critical role in the dissemination of international Gandhian discourses. They informed both America's civil rights and pacifist movements as well as the British campaign against nuclear weapons, becoming 'models for activists' and inspiring emulation across the world.⁵⁸ The process of adaptation of Gandhian ideas into the West through the conduit of pacifism was lengthy and troublesome, riddled with complications and contradictions, and of course heavily shaped by Euro-American cosmological background assumptions.

One of the most fundamental assumptions here is the distinction between the secular and religious domains. As the likes of Shani have argued, this very distinction itself is specific to Western cosmology.⁵⁹ In his influential work, Talal Asad traces the history of this separation by charting out the transmutations within Christianity from the Middle Ages to the modern era. While the authority of the Church remained predominant during the Middle Ages, 'in the later centuries, with the

⁵³ Bentley B. Allan, *Scientific Cosmology and International Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 13.

⁵⁴ Kurki, *International Relations and Relational Universe*, p. 5.

⁵⁵ 'How Gandhi shaped our independence: 7 major freedom movements initiated by Mahatma Gandhi', *India Today*, available at: {<https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/gandhi-freedom-movement-839041-2016-10-01>}, accessed 12 February 2018.

⁵⁶ Mohan and Dwivedi, *Gandhi and Philosophy*, p. 11.

⁵⁷ Scalmer, *Gandhi in the West*, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Scalmer, *Gandhi in the West*, p. 7.

⁵⁹ Shani, 'IR as inter-cosmological relations?', p. 309.

triumphant rise of modern science, modern economy and the modern state, the churches would also be clear about the need to distinguish the religious from the secular.⁶⁰ These crises within Christianity facilitated the separation of the religious and the secular domains in a progressive manner. Thus, the earliest attempts towards producing a systematic definition of religion began in the seventeenth century, amidst the fragmentation of the unity of the Holy Roman Church and the resultant wars of religion. By 1795, Immanuel Kant had forged a highly essentialist understanding of religion. In summation, these interventions resulted in the understanding of religion as having an autonomous essence, independent of politics or science. Religion was thus relegated to an independent sphere, enriched with discourses to classify higher and lower religions, which were propagated by colonial missionaries.⁶¹

Similarly, the non-religious domain also underwent several transformations. Allan provides an exhaustive overview of this shift to highlight the entrenchment of a natural and socio-political reality which was shaped by a representationalist epistemology and a materialistic ontology.⁶² To put it simply, this implies a cosmology where “things” (e.g. people, states) “move” (e.g. balance, trade) ... in “patterns” traceable and understandable by “us”, “humans”, a species often imagined as a special, intelligent agent.⁶³ Imbibed further with a rationalist and modernist notion of intervention for progress, this knowledge of the socio-political reality was not merely traceable and attainable. It could also be used to control an unending future.⁶⁴ In other words, socio-political realities could be represented, measured, controlled, and manipulated.⁶⁵

Gandhi’s contemporary pacifist movements were no different in this regard and had both religious and secular dimensions. Though the religious and the secular pacifists were not wholly independent of each other, and they definitely interacted with (and influenced) each other,⁶⁶ one can certainly identify this binary throughout the trajectory of their intellectual and political development. The tension (or at least separation) between the religious and secular grounds of pacifism remains a prominent theme across many contemporary pacifist writings as well.⁶⁷ While religious pacifists were opposed to wars and violence on religious (especially Christian) grounds, secular pacifists mostly emphasised the strategies and methods, often on the grounds of notions such as power and strategic utility. It is against this backdrop that I approach the diffusion of Gandhian ideas into the West. While there are remarkable scholarly interventions on the processes involved in this diffusion, the cosmological assumptions underlying this diffusion are far less touched upon. During the process of diffusion, I argue that there were primarily two distinct modes of negotiation of the Gandhian canon with pacifism, corresponding to both its underlying ‘secular’ and the ‘religious’ domains. I focus especially on the USA as a case study to highlight how the Gandhian repertoire grappled in contrasting manners with both and, over time, was regarded as an intrinsic part of (and at times even synonymous with) pacifism.

Consider in the first instance Gandhian negotiations with secular cosmology. A major mode of diffusion of Gandhian ideas was through cosmopolitan translators, especially pacifists such as Richard Gregg and Krishnalal Shridharani, who came to be the hegemonic interpreters of Gandhi in the West. Richard Gregg’s *The Power of Nonviolence* and Shridharani’s *War without Violence* emerged as the two most widely cited handbooks of Gandhian non-violence, sealing their ‘place

⁶⁰Talal Asad, ‘The construction of religion as an anthropological category’, in Michael Lambek (ed.), *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), pp. 110–126 (p. 121).

⁶¹Asad, ‘The construction of religion as an anthropological category’, pp. 121–2.

⁶²Allan, *Scientific Cosmology and International Orders*, pp. 22–4.

⁶³Kurki, *International Relations and Relational Universe*, p. 5.

⁶⁴Allan, *Scientific Cosmology and International Orders*, p. 24.

⁶⁵Bichler and Nitzan, ‘Capital as power’, pp. 72–3.

⁶⁶The 1940s in particular saw a close association between religious pacifists as well as those non-resistance activists who deployed a more strategic approach.

⁶⁷Anthony C. Siracusa, ‘From pacifism to resistance: The evolution of nonviolence in wartime America’, *Journal of Civil and Human Rights*, 3:1 (2017), pp. 57–77 (p. 57).

on the pacifist bookshelf'.⁶⁸ Shridharani stripped Gandhian methods of their mystic and religious overtones, interpreting *satyagraha* as a 'matter-of fact pragmatism' which followed a realistic approach.⁶⁹ In other words, Gandhian methods constitute successful means to a realistic end and can be discarded if ineffectual. This is best exemplified by his detailed enunciation of the 12 'stages' of *satyagraha*.⁷⁰ Similarly, Gregg drew on the vocabulary of 'modern psychology', citing the likes of F. C. Bartlett and A. F. Shand.⁷¹ These texts were the foundational blocks which informed the 'methods' of the most iconic 'Gandhian' protests in the USA and UK, especially the civil rights movements and the anti-nuclear movements. There also emerged a sizeable presence of Gandhians in the largest pacifist organisations of the UK and USA – the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR) and the Peace Pledge Union (PPU).⁷²

On a close analysis, Gandhism could carve its niche when it was secularised and stripped of its religious and mythical underpinnings by the likes of Gregg and Shridharani.⁷³ Shridharani dismissed 'the traditional "mysticism of the Orient"' as a basis for understanding Gandhism. Similarly, through the language of modern psychology, Gregg provided a veneer of scientific rationality to Gandhi's writings. In this sense, this pragmatic and scientific reading neatly inserted itself within the components of the predominant Western rational, secular, and social-scientific cosmology. This also has to be read in the context of the predominance of the philosophy of pragmatism which emerged in the USA from the latter part of the 19th century onwards. Pragmatism is a philosophical system which argues that all actions are experiments and theories and principles ought to be judged on the basis of outcomes. As highlighted earlier, this was reflected in Shridharani's claim that 'the movement has been a weapon to be wielded by masses of men for earthly, tangible and collective aims and to be discarded if it does not work'.⁷⁴ This was ironically entirely inimical to Gandhi's conviction that means and ends of political action cannot be separated.⁷⁵ On a more fundamental level, the Greggian or Shridharanian secular frames of Gandhi differed significantly from Gandhi's firm conviction that politics and religion were inseparable.⁷⁶

Similar interpretations saw a resurgence in the latter half of the twentieth century, bolstering Gandhi's scientific and pragmatic credentials even further. Gene Sharp's technique approach, which includes 198 methods of non-violence,⁷⁷ as well as Galtung's activist pacifism,⁷⁸ reinforced Gandhi as an expert realist and a strategist. It has to be highlighted that the proliferation of mathematical modelling during the second half of the twentieth century further intensified the cosmological notion of the socio-political reality as a series of systems and abstract objects, used to control and manipulate the future. This was reflected in several quantitative studies to measure the 'components of pacifism' as well as the variables to determine the success or failure of non-violence.⁷⁹ Another important mode of integration of Gandhi prominent during this time was through the frame of power. Against the backdrop of the seismic shifts brought by the notion of autonomous power in

⁶⁸ Sean Scalmer, *Gandhi in the West: The Mahatma and the Rise of Radical Protest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 48.

⁶⁹ Krishnalal Shridharani, *War without Violence: A Study Of Gandhi's Method and Its Accomplishment* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1939), p. 28.

⁷⁰ Shridharani, *War without Violence*, pp. 28–58.

⁷¹ Richard B. Gregg, *The Power of Nonviolence* (London: James Clarke, 1960), pp. 43–44.

⁷² Scalmer, *Gandhi in the West*, p. 116.

⁷³ Leilah C. Danielson, "In my extremity I turned to Gandhi": American pacifists, Christianity, and Gandhian nonviolence, 1915–1941', *Church History*, 72:2 (2003), pp. 361–388 (p. 376).

⁷⁴ Krishnalal Shridharani, *My India, My America* (Garden City, NY: Halcyon House, 1941), p. 276.

⁷⁵ Latha Poonamallee, 'Advaita (non-dualism) as metatheory: A constellation of ontology, epistemology and praxis', *A Transdisciplinary and Transcultural Journal for New Thought, Research, and Praxis*, 6:3 (2010), pp. 190–200 (p. 194).

⁷⁶ Mohandas Gandhi, *Young India* (2 March 1922), p. 131.

⁷⁷ Ammons and Coyne, 'Gene Sharp', p. 152.

⁷⁸ Thomas Weber, 'The impact of Gandhi on the development of Johan Galtung's peace research', *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 16:1 (2004), pp. 31–43 (p. 32).

⁷⁹ Elliott, 'Components of pacifism', p. 30; Sharon Erickson Nepstad, 'Nonviolent civil resistance and social movements', *Sociology Compass* 7:7 (2013), pp. 590–598.

Western cosmology, Gene Sharp's innovative notion of pluralistic-dependency power, linked to a formulation of six sources of citizen-controlled power drawing on Gandhian scholarship, added to the legitimacy of Gandhian scholarship even further.⁸⁰ As Chenoweth argues, there was a high degree of focus on the enormous power wielded by Gandhi.⁸¹ Much later, in the USA, the likes of Karuna Mantena and Farah Godrej churned out extensive scholarship reshaping Gandhi as a political realist and a shrewd tactician. Taken together, these developments were critical in the interpretation of Gandhian philosophy as a form of 'pragmatic pacifism.'⁸²

Besides its secular or social scientific basis, pacifism also had a very distinct Christian core. As Shridharani argued, 'American pacifism is essentially religious and mystical. The West can be more unworldly than East, and the history of the peace movement in the United States is a good illustration of that.'⁸³ The dynamic of Gandhian interaction vis-à-vis this religious cosmology was quite different from its secular counterpart. I primarily highlight two modes through which Gandhian politics negotiated with the Christian cosmological formations underlying pacifism. They can be termed as (a) hyper-difference and (b) over-likeness.⁸⁴

Hyper-difference here denotes a form where the difference between both were emphasised prominently. The early negotiations in particular were critical of Gandhi's methods as backward or otherworldly or even inimical to the Christian canon. This has to be understood against the backdrop of a particular Oriental configuration of Gandhi that was spiritual and mystical, child-like, feminine as well as poor.⁸⁵ Coloured by these characterisations of Gandhi, which were also commensurate with the Orientalist descriptions of Hinduism, British pacifists such as Emily Green Balch and John Nevin Sayre were critical of the tactics during Gandhi's salt *satyagraha* on the grounds that it was coercive and violated the values of the New Testament.⁸⁶ The Asian, Hindu aspects of Gandhian methods, including fasting, asceticism, *advaita*, and so on thus found little resonance. Though aspects of *satyagraha* such as meditation acquired a limited degree of resonance in the Gandhian interpretations of Aldous Huxley, they had their basis in an Orientalist exoticism and were stiffly contested by other pacifists. Another perhaps less scathing mode of hyper-difference was the prevalent notion that Gandhian philosophy was too localised for a specific religious and social context. This position was exemplified best by the *News-Chronicle* in 1942: 'To our Western minds Mr. Gandhi's line of argument does not, and cannot, make sense. It is based upon a philosophy and a logic which are alien to our ways of thought.'⁸⁷ Lastly, there were also academic interventions which sought to categorise his ideas as different and to compartmentalise them as Hindu pacifism, which was distinct from Christian pacifism.⁸⁸

The second mode of over-likeness was in fact the conduit through which Gandhian ideals assumed legitimacy from a Christian cosmological point of view. There were efforts often to reduce him to familiar Christian examples from Christ to Tolstoy. As a corollary, *satyagraha* was translated as 'the method of the Cross' by John S. Hoyland, and Gandhi was seen even as Jesus, who was carrying out the demands of the gospel.⁸⁹ It has to be understood that Gandhian ideas arrived at a crucial juncture of the crisis of Christian pacifism, which was deadlocked in the dichotomous

⁸⁰ Ammons and Coyne, 'Gene Sharp', pp. 151–2.

⁸¹ Erica Chenoweth, 'Civil resistance: Reflections on an idea whose time has come', *Global Governance*, 20 (2014), pp. 351–358 (p. 352).

⁸² Howes, 'The failure of pacifism and the success of nonviolence', pp. 436–7.

⁸³ Shridharani, *My India, My America*, p. 276.

⁸⁴ Scalmer, *Gandhi in the West*, p. 86.

⁸⁵ Scalmer, *Gandhi in the West*, p. 7.

⁸⁶ Siracusa, 'From pacifism to resistance', pp. 61–2.

⁸⁷ Quoted in Scalmer, *Gandhi in the West*, p. 53.

⁸⁸ Mulford Q. Sibley, 'The political theories of modern religious pacifism', *American Political Science Review*, 37:3 (1943), pp. 439–454 (p. 439).

⁸⁹ Scalmer, *Gandhi in the West*, p. 90.

dilemma between ineffectiveness and violence.⁹⁰ In this context, relational encounters between Gandhi and Christian pacifists added to newer interpretations of Christianity as well as Gandhian ideals. The liberation theology of Howard Thurman exemplified this process. He was largely critical of the racist and imperialist underpinnings of Western Christianity. As a result of his meeting with Gandhi in 1936, Thurman developed a radical ethic grounded in the identification of God with all life, resulting in an anti-racist and anti-imperialist interpretation of Christianity.⁹¹ In addition, his liberation theology also expressed basic Gandhian ideals in familiar Christian language. These were instrumental in the diffusion of non-violence, which was expressed in decidedly Christian ideals and debated within movement spaces such as churches. Gandhi and Christian pacifism thus seamlessly blended in the 1940s. During the famous summers of *satyagraha* of the late 1950s and 1960s, these interventions met with a resurgence under the auspices of Martin Luther King, Bayard Rustin, and Glenn Smiley. These actions thus solidified the firm entrenchment of Gandhian discourses within the Hebraic-Christian pacifist traditions and is still persistent today.⁹²

As highlighted earlier, cosmologies and cosmological ideas are powerful because they render some goals, interests, and purposes as natural or inevitable and others as unthinkable or illegitimate. Gandhism had to negotiate with both the religious and scientific cosmological modalities of pacifism, which ignore (or are indifferent to) a wide range of aspects inherent in Gandhian thought. Besides the specific Hindu aspects of *satyagraha* that I mentioned earlier, the economic aspects of the Gandhian *satyagraha* such as *Swadeshi* (self-reliance) and *Sarvodaya* (welfare for all) were also ignored within mainstream pacifist discourses. This is reflective of the ‘propensity to compartmentalize non-Western IR knowledge as “cultural” (or “spiritual”), not “economic” (or “material”)’ within Western cosmology.⁹³

My argument is not that Gandhi was not a pacifist. His ideals have enriched and shall certainly continue to enrich pacifism. Rather, I contend that the interpretation and equation of Gandhi as a pacifist have to be understood against the backdrop of their negotiation with the rigid cosmological parameters underlying Western pacifism. In order to make my point clearer, I extend my cosmological approach in the next section to illustrate how the same Gandhian discourses attain radically different connotations when viewed through a different cosmology – hypophysics. As Kurki reminds us, ‘some important things about how we think ... [change] if we think about relations differently, with different cosmological background assumptions.’⁹⁴

Gandhi, hypophysics, and pacifism

Before proceeding to hypophysics, there first needs to be to an understanding of the immensely challenging task underlying the interpretation of Gandhi. As highlighted earlier, Gandhi’s words, speeches, newspaper articles, and writings span hundreds of volumes. This is partly why interpretation of his work remains such a daunting, even intimidating, challenge, resulting in a wide range of interpretations across time and space. Besides pacifism, his ideas have been interpreted through a wide range of theoretical lenses, ranging from anarchism, post-modernism, and post-colonial theory to ecologism and cosmopolitanism. Due to the sheer volume of his writings and their interpretations, Gandhi represents ‘several research puzzles rolled into one.’⁹⁵ As Mohan and Dwivedi put it:

⁹⁰Jack C. Winslow, ‘Mahatma Gandhi and aggressive pacifism’, in S. Radhakrishnan (ed.), *Mahatma Gandhi: Essays and Reflections on His Life and Work* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 2019), pp. 314–317 (p. 282).

⁹¹Gail Presbey, ‘Between Gandhi and Black Lives Matter: The interreligious roots of civil rights activism: Review of Sarah Azaransky, *This Worldwide Struggle: Religion and the International Roots of the Civil Rights Movement*’, *The Acorn*, 19:2 (2019), pp. 197–202.

⁹²Chabot, ‘Framing, transnational diffusion, and African-American intellectuals in the land of Gandhi’, p. 31.

⁹³Shahi, ‘Foregrounding the complexities of a dialogic approach’, pp. 170–1.

⁹⁴Kurki, *International Relations and Relational Universe*, p. 17.

⁹⁵Mallavarapu, ‘Securing India: Gandhian intuitions’, p. 258.

“Reference to Gandhi is ever increasing – Mont Blanc pens, the Occupy movement, the Oval Office, ethnocentric rallies, philosophy, religious protests, peace studies, and ecological movements. However, today Gandhi does not speak, while choruses are raised in his name. His words are selected according to needs across the political spectrum.”⁹⁶

The question of how to read, interpret and negotiate with Gandhi’s writings, as well as his personal and political acts, has always informed major debates within Gandhian studies. Of course, the familiar recourse to reduce him to a derivative ‘Eastern’ mode of universalist ideas has been discussed at length in this paper. The likes of Douglas Allen are more reflexive, adopting a hermeneutical orientation of multiple contextual and contingent Gandhis, signifying a wide variety of possible interpretations.⁹⁷ Other attempts seek to read Gandhi through certain recurrent themes or ‘precepts’ underlying his thought, including *ahimsa*, *swaraj*, and *satyagraha*.⁹⁸

Given the contextualisation of Gandhi’s political and personal evolution, there is also an increasing debate on what to emphasise when reading Gandhi. Should his political contributions be emphasised over his wide-ranging writings? Can one trace a well-rooted ontology? Even within his writings, which texts should be privileged? For instance, the likes of Partha Chatterjee argued for the supreme importance of *Hind Swaraj*, since it was the most fundamental and systematic exposition of his ideas and philosophy, a thesis which continued to inform his later works as well.⁹⁹ While it was written in 1908, Gandhi himself proclaimed later in 1921, ‘My conviction today is deeper than ever’,¹⁰⁰ and even later in 1938, he remained steadfast: ‘But after the stormy thirty years through which I have since passed, I have seen nothing to make me alter the views expounded in it.’¹⁰¹ However, the scholarly interventions privileging the *Hind Swaraj* saw a pivotal shift later, with a wide range of scholars seeking to uncover a systematic unity in the entire Gandhian corpus. They include the likes of Akeel Bilgrami, R. C. Pradhan, and Joseph Alter. While initial attempts in this direction mostly focused on his wider writings, they later went further, integrating both his ideas and his practices. Gandhi himself argued as late as 1946 that a generative order was present in his works.¹⁰²

Extending these interventions, Shaj Mohan and Divya Dwivedi treated his corpus (especially his canonical *Hind Swaraj*) as a body. They then proceeded to construct a precise systemacy of thought by using a body-to-body approach. This produced a radical and intriguing cosmology, which they refer to as hypophysics. The word hypophysics is drawn from the terminology used by Immanuel Kant to refer to the morals linked to the ‘occult’. Rather than the oft-quoted Tolstoyean or Thoreauvian influences or his religious influences such as the *Gita*, they draw on his unconventional influences spanning esoteric Christianity, French occultism, theosophy, Neoplatonism, American transcendentalism, Gospel of Vitality, German romanticism, and Eastern mysticism. In his days in London and South Africa, Gandhi was heavily influenced by such ideas, in which ‘religion, occultisms, and pantheism swirled together’, leaving an indelible mark on his politics and methods.¹⁰³

“I gather that God is Life, Truth, Light. He is Love. He is the Supreme Good.”¹⁰⁴

⁹⁶ Mohan and Dwivedi, *Gandhi and Philosophy*, p. 8.

⁹⁷ Douglas Allen, ‘Mahatma Gandhi on violence and peace education’, *Philosophy East and West*, 57:3 (2007), pp. 290–310.

⁹⁸ Mallavarapu, ‘Securing India: Gandhian intuitions’, p. 258; Bidyut Chakrabarty and Rajendra Kumar Pandey, *Modern Indian Political Thought: Text and Context* (New Delhi: Sage, 2009), p. 43.

⁹⁹ Mohan and Dwivedi, *Gandhi and Philosophy*, p. 20.

¹⁰⁰ Mohandas Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1939), p. 15.

¹⁰¹ Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 17.

¹⁰² Mohan and Dwivedi, *Gandhi and Philosophy*, p. 1.

¹⁰³ Mohan and Dwivedi, *Gandhi and Philosophy*, p. 29.

¹⁰⁴ Gandhi, ‘Truth is God: God is:’, Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal and Gandhi Research Foundation, available at: <https://www.mkgandhi.org/ebks/mindofmahatmagandhi.pdf>, accessed 20 May 2022.

Gandhian hypophysics is a form of new materialism whereby nature is tantamount to the moral and is thus infused with value. In other words, in Gandhi's theory of nature, 'nature is value, the moral is the natural'. This unity of morality and value has been regarded by Alter as bio-morality.¹⁰⁵ Nature, in turn, is equivalent to God, who is synonymous with his law or divine law which governed both the physical and spiritual universe. Gandhi was extremely critical of the dichotomy of politics and religion. As he argued, 'I could not be leading a religious life unless ... I took part in politics.'¹⁰⁶ There was no difference between God (the Maker) and the divine law he created. In other words, the Law-giver is synonymous with Law.¹⁰⁷ As Gandhi himself argued, 'God is Himself the Law and the Law-giver.'¹⁰⁸ Thus, Gandhi believed in 'a science of nature infused with the sacred and the moral.'¹⁰⁹ This culminated in 'a serialization of equivalences in a closed and circular system ... nature = value = morality = moral law = divine law = God = the Creator = the created world = truth = nature.'¹¹⁰

While the sacred was akin to nature or God, the profane within the Gandhian cosmos was a deviation from nature, understood as violence. This deviation was measured using the scalology of speed. In other words, 'the quick is the evil and the slow is the good ... The slow, understood as the holding fast to the natural, is the good. Evil is the speeding away from the natural, be it in thought or in deed.'¹¹¹ As Gandhi explains, 'Good travels at a snail's pace ... But evil has wings.'¹¹² In terms of the deed, this explains his bewildering opposition to a whole range of machines and technology, including most famously the railways. The railways, critical to the British process of colonisation, were an indication of speeds which far exceeded the speeds set by 'nature' and were thus evil. As he elaborates: 'Good travels at a snail's pace – it can, therefore, have little to do with the railways.'¹¹³ Gandhi drew inspiration from prevalent discourses on nostalgia, speed, and modernity, exemplified most prominently in Thomas F. Taylor's *The Fallacy of Speed*. Taylor had lamented the loss of village life as a result of motorised vehicles, describing speeds exceeding the rhythms of nature. This was integral to Gandhi's construction of his idyllic a priori, the Indian village, which exemplified the East as the good speed, in accordance with the rhythm of Nature/God:

"I believe that independent India can only discharge her duty towards a groaning world by adopting a simple but ennobled life by developing her thousands of cottages and living at peace with the world. High thinking is inconsistent with complicated material life based on high speed imposed on us by Mammon worship. All the graces of life are possible only when we learn the art of living nobly."¹¹⁴

This was juxtaposed against the West, which was the representation of bad speed, overrun with machines including the railways. As Mohan and Dwivedi continue, 'God sets limits and nature is a set of limits. Hypophysics is the recognition by man of his own limits.'¹¹⁵ Gandhian hypophysics posits that God had blessed man with the faculties to know his Maker and thereby his limits, but he

¹⁰⁵ Mohan and Dwivedi, *Gandhi and Philosophy*, p. 20.

¹⁰⁶ Gandhi, *Harijan* (24 December 1938), p. 393, available at: <https://www.mkgandhi.org/ebks/mindofmahatmagandhi.pdf>, accessed 20 May 2022.

¹⁰⁷ Mohan and Dwivedi, *Gandhi and Philosophy*, p. 34.

¹⁰⁸ Mohandas Gandhi, *Harijan* (14 April 1946), p. 80, available at: <https://www.mkgandhi.org/ebks/mindofmahatmagandhi.pdf>, accessed 20 May 2022.

¹⁰⁹ Mohan and Dwivedi, *Gandhi and Philosophy*, p. 26.

¹¹⁰ Benadetta Todaro, 'Neither "matter" nor "mutter": On Dwivedi and Mohan's *Gandhi and Philosophy*', *Positions Politics*, available at: <https://positionspolitics.org/neither-matter-nor-mutter-on-dwivedi-and-mohans-gandhi-and-philosophy/>, accessed 30 July 2022.

¹¹¹ Mohan and Dwivedi, *Gandhi and Philosophy*, p. 2.

¹¹² Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 35.

¹¹³ Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 35.

¹¹⁴ Mohandas Gandhi and Shriman Narayan, *Voice of Truth* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1968), p. 265.

¹¹⁵ Mohan and Dwivedi, *Gandhi and Philosophy*, p. 45.

was abusing them to move away from the Maker.¹¹⁶ The West, exemplified by speeds far exceeding the limits, was doomed to perish, and only the East would survive this apocalypse. With characterisations in his *Hind Swaraj* ranging from a Satanic civilisation to a Black Age,¹¹⁷ Gandhi was confident that ‘this civilization is such that one has only to be patient and it will be self-destroyed.’¹¹⁸

The dominant Western cosmology I outlined in the earlier section mostly seeks to maintain clear divides between politics, religion, nature, and science. However, there are alternate relational cosmologies which seek to combine them in myriad manners. For instance, the intersection of God and nature is not unlike recent formulations such as deep ecology, pantheism, and so on. Stuart Kaufman, for instance, argued that nature unfolds to an entirely natural God.¹¹⁹ Esoteric Christianity considered ‘nature as made up of “spirits close to the earth and hence allied with matter”’.¹²⁰ However, Gandhian hypophysics arguably goes furthest in seeking to integrate politics, religion, nature, and science. The only dichotomy was the sacred and profane measured in terms of the distance from the natural limits set by the Maker. Gandhi often alluded to natural disasters and famines as retribution for man moving away from the Maker. For instance, about the 1934 earthquake in Bengal, Gandhi had this to say: ‘A man like me cannot but believe that this earthquake is a divine chastisement sent by God for our sins.’¹²¹ In addition, Gandhian hypophysics moves beyond anthropocentrism as well to place God/Nature (albeit his notion of God) at the centre. The notion of man moving closer to or further away from nature, in terms of speed, is also radically different from the hegemonic Western cosmos shaped by relations between men with nature as the backdrop.

Thus, I have illustrated how a shift in cosmology helps us to conceive Gandhian thought in different terms, even expanding its horizons. So how does such a cosmology conceive the ‘pacifist’ concerns with war and peace? Consider warfare first. It is far from likely that a Gandhian hypophysical cosmology would be permissive of it (especially its modern variants). In a cosmology which negates even technological advances such as vaccines and railways, weapons and arsenals, ‘typified in their extreme in the atom bomb’,¹²² represent speeds beyond the limits of nature, furthest from God. Lamenting ‘after all you cannot go beyond the atom bomb’, nuclear weapons would be reprehensible because of their speed of destruction and violence beyond any natural limit of speed.¹²³ It is perhaps no accident that Gandhi referred to nuclear weapons as the ‘most diabolical use of science’.¹²⁴

While such a position on warfare may seem consistent with various positions of pacifism including anti-warism and negative peace, there is a very important difference. The pacifist strands discussed in the previous section ground their opposition chiefly on the basis of loss of human life. Even when the likes of Ryan¹²⁵ add the rationale of the unjust nature of wars, the unjustness results from the disproportionate loss of life of civilian and ordinary humans.¹²⁶ The objection of Gandhian hypophysics to warfare is far more nuanced and complicated than the mere loss of human lives. Rather, it is based primarily on the technological manifestations at speeds far exceeding the natural rhythms of God or divine law. For example, consider Gandhi’s endorsement of an

¹¹⁶ Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 37.

¹¹⁷ Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 30.

¹¹⁸ Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 30.

¹¹⁹ Mohan and Dwivedi, *Gandhi and Philosophy*, p. 26.

¹²⁰ Mohan and Dwivedi, *Gandhi and Philosophy*, p. 29.

¹²¹ Cited in D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, volume 3 (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of India, Government of India, 1960), p. 247.

¹²² Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal and Gandhi Research Foundation, ‘Gandhi on nuclear arms’, available at: <https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/NuclearArms.htm>, accessed 31 July 2022.

¹²³ Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal and Gandhi Research Foundation, ‘Gandhi on nuclear arms’.

¹²⁴ Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal & Gandhi Research Foundation, ‘Gandhi on nuclear arms’.

¹²⁵ Ryan, ‘Pacifism, just war, and self-defense’, pp. 982–3.

¹²⁶ The same logic underlies technological pacifism as well.

article ‘Pacifism and National Security’ by John Nevin Sayre, which had offered an extensive critique of the war system of the USA in the interwar years. It is interesting to note that Gandhi was as concerned with the ‘destruction of men, women and children with a button’ as he was with the ‘drift’ of the West, which ‘is surely leading us to our death’.¹²⁷ To a question of whether the spinning wheel (often symbolic in the Indian context as the Gandhian village, the correct speed) can ‘serve as a counter weapon to the atom bomb’, he replied, ‘I do feel ... that it has a message for the USA and the whole world. ... I have not the slightest doubt that the saving of India and of the world lies in the wheel.’¹²⁸ Thus, the only recourse was the adoption of the good speed of the spinning wheel, in harmony with God and nature.

Gandhi’s views on life and death on multiple occasions make the above point abundantly clear. Gandhi’s objections to hospitals and vaccines also stemmed from his observation that ‘the West attaches an exaggerated importance to prolonging man’s earthly existence’.¹²⁹ In relation to the UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights), he expressed his opposition to human rights, particularly the right to life. During the horrors of the violent partition accompanying the division into India and Pakistan, Gandhi observed: ‘Man does not live but to escape death. If he does so, he is advised not to do so. He is advised to learn to love death as well as life, if not more so.’¹³⁰ Gandhi’s lack of concern for the absolute value of life was also evident in his oft-cited polarising views on the Nazi genocide: ‘the Jewish mind could be prepared for voluntary suffering, even the massacre I have imagined could be turned into a day of thanksgiving and joy that Jehovah had wrought deliverance of the race even at the hands of the tyrant. For to the god-fearing, death has no terror.’¹³¹ As historians of Gandhi such as Faisal Devji have made abundantly clear, Gandhi’s concerns about warfare and violence were hardly humanitarian and were thus quite distinct from pacifist objections.¹³²

Another key theme of many contemporary modes of pacifism, including in IR, is the notion of a global community woven by interrelatedness and interconnectedness, shaped by cooperative social conduct, best exemplified by notions such as positive peace. How well does Gandhian hypophysics survive this test of pacifist emancipatory futures? His views on caste, race, and gender, through the lens of hypophysics, might provide a useful starting point here.

Gandhi hardly distinguished the natural and the religious from the political (and social). However, the deviation from nature at the social and political level manifested in an extremely insidious manner, because when ‘Gandhi speaks of the quick and the slow he has in mind the place of an individual being and its practice of speed in relation to its assigned place’.¹³³ The natural, in the Gandhian hypophysical cosmos was the strict adherence to functional isolation. He exhorted: ‘Discard irregularity as an enemy.’¹³⁴ Thus, function restricts the potential possibilities and actions of any object/person, and functional isolation reduces the possibilities to a single function: ‘When something capable of many functions gets functionally isolated, this has immense significance for politics because it means that one kind of action has to give way to some other kind of action,

¹²⁷ Mohandas Gandhi, *Young India* (22 August 1929), available at: <https://www.mk Gandhi.org/mynonviolence/chap17.htm>, accessed 21 March 2023.

¹²⁸ Gandhi, ‘Gandhi on nuclear arms’; Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal and Gandhi Research Foundation, ‘Gandhi on nuclear arms’.

¹²⁹ Mohandas Gandhi, ‘Interview to Capt. Strunk’, *Harijan* (3 July 1937), in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 71 (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), p. 406, accessed 21 March 2023.

¹³⁰ Cited in Faisal Devji, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 187.

¹³¹ Cited in Devji, *The Impossible Indian*, p. 136.

¹³² Devji, *The Impossible Indian*, p. 188.

¹³³ Mohan and Dwivedi, *Gandhi and Philosophy*, p. 37.

¹³⁴ Mohandas Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* no. 95 (New Delhi: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India Press, 1958–94), p. 190.

and they both cannot co-exist.¹³⁵ In other words, it curtails *polynomia*, which is the ability of an object/person to take on multiple possibilities and functions resulting in freedom. Functional isolations at the socio-political level translated to a particular function or a singular form of existence corresponding to one's position vis-à-vis caste, race, or gender. Gandhi's views on the caste system, race, and gender best exemplify this notion:

“There is a moral equality in nature between all things, in so far as they keep to their naturally assigned speeds; nature renders them equal since they belong to their place; Gandhi was fond of the image of the equality of all the parts in a perfectly working machine which could justify the racial assignment of labour in the subcontinental societies; even if the men who performed manual labour due to their lower racial status were equal when one considered the totality of the system.”¹³⁶

Caste was perhaps the best example of functional isolation in a society where everyone was assigned to a singular function by virtue of caste, which effectively foreclosed any possibility of *polynomia* and thus, freedom. Such a system was often lauded by Gandhi on account of its regularity and social stability. The ideal Gandhian a priori of the Indian village underlined by the law of the caste system can best be summed up by his argument against the one of the greatest anti-caste crusaders, Ambedkar: ‘Indeed one traces even now in the villages the faint lines of this healthy operation of the law.’¹³⁷ While it is true that Gandhi was a vocal critic of untouchability and later revised certain attitudes towards caste, a number of critics have noted that these interventions were largely conservative and did not go beyond reformation on a merely cosmetic level.¹³⁸ Gandhi also had similar objections to the employment of women in factories, since it was deemed unnatural, out of place from their homes. He lamented: ‘Women, who should be the queens of households, wander in the streets or they slave away in factories.’¹³⁹ On a related note, ‘sterile’ women and ‘prostitutes’ were indicative of, and often used as metaphors by Gandhi to symbolise, irregularity or deviance from the ideal ‘Gandhian’ woman.¹⁴⁰

Summing up this discussion, while the hypophysical rejection of warfare differed from the major pacifist iterations on the specific grounds of opposition, its endorsement of racisms and casteisms is hardly emancipative. The latter is far from any iteration of positive peace or the cooperative ‘harmonious’ futures envisioned by many modern iterations of pacifism, who ironically draw on Gandhi to this end. As Krishna reminds us, the Gandhian racial-spatial order was hostile to values of non-violence and peace.¹⁴¹ Thus, cosmological background assumptions emerge as critical in the construction of Gandhi as a pacifist and his ideals of pacifism. When viewed through a different cosmological prism, the same ideals assume a character which is distinctly different from pacifism.

Returning to the shortcomings of existing approaches which seek to problematise Gandhi and pacifism, I contend that a cosmological perspective also enables us to complicate a debate which is

¹³⁵ Reghu Janardhanan, ‘The deconstructive materialism of Dwivedi and Mohan: A new philosophy of freedom’, *Positions Politics*, available at: {<https://positionspolitics.org/the-deconstructive-materialism-of-dwivedi-and-mohan-a-new-philosophy-of-freedom/>}, accessed 1 April 2022.

¹³⁶ Mohan and Dwivedi, *Gandhi and Philosophy*, p. 38.

¹³⁷ Cited in B. R. Ambedkar, S. Anand, and Arundhati Roy, *Annihilation of Caste: The Annotated Critical Edition* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2014), p. 159.

¹³⁸ Sarath Sasikumar and Prapti Roy, ‘Gandhian approach to oppressive structures: An engagement with the critical readings’, in Swaran Singh and Reena Marwah (eds), *Revisiting Gandhi: Legacies for World Peace and National Integration* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2021), pp. 21–39; Kancha Ilaiah, ‘Gandhi was not a caste abolitionist’, *The Week* (22 June 2019), available at: {<https://www.theweek.in/theweek/cover/2019/06/21/gandhi-was-not-a-casteabolitionist-kancha-ilaiah-shepherd.html>}, accessed 26 February 2023.

¹³⁹ Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 30.

¹⁴⁰ Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 27; Ashwini Tambe, ‘Gandhi’s fallen sisters: Difference and the national body politic’, *Social Scientist*, 37:1–2 (2009), pp. 21–38.

¹⁴¹ Krishna ‘A postcolonial racial/spatial order’, pp. 139–140.

polarised between whether or not Gandhi was a pacifist. Responding to Krishna's call that 'mainstream Gandhian international relations discourses have to be subject to critical scrutiny', I do not merely argue that a cosmological approach enables us to make sense of these supposedly baffling contradictions.¹⁴² Rather, a better question would be to ask: what role do cosmologies play in these characterisations? For instance, a hypophysical cosmology enables one to see that Gandhi was opposed to warfare on grounds which were entirely different to pacifism. The same cosmology also saw him entertaining notions which were racist and casteist, thereby facilitating an order which was hostile to peace and non-violence. On the other hand, the former Western religious and scientific cosmological rigidities and assumptions constructed (or constrained) him as a pacifist, resulting in many of his notions being ignored, overlooked, or glossed over, including his 'anti-humanist ideals'. Different cosmological backdrops with their respective ontological and epistemological modalities influence and ultimately shape the discourses of Gandhism.

Conclusion

Against the backdrop of the recent resurgence in pacifist scholarship, I critically interrogated the prevalent characterisation of Gandhi as a pacifist and Gandhian philosophy as pacifism within certain sections of this scholarship. After reviewing the existing literature on pacifist scholarship, I pointed out the limitations of existing critical attempts which problematise such assertions. I then articulated how a cosmological approach can be more fruitful in this regard, first by highlighting how Gandhian philosophy was fitted into the rigid boundaries of the religious and secular cosmological underpinnings underlying pacifism during the diffusion of Gandhian discourses to the West and was subsequently equated with pacifism. Secondly, I highlighted how the same Gandhian discourses assume a character which is almost entirely inimical to pacifism within the horizons of another cosmology, i.e. hypophysics. I conclude this section by highlighting some of the potential contributions of my work to the interrelated themes of cosmology and agency, followed by certain reflections posed by this work in relation to the current poly-crisis unfolding in the world.

First, the distinct contribution I seek to make to this scholarship on cosmologies is an appreciation of the role played by cosmologies in the diffusion of intellectual ideas between the 'East' and 'West'. While classical diffusion models used to assume that ideas flowed from one locale to another through different stages, until they were finally adopted or discarded, several new theoretical frameworks have complicated the linearity of this unidimensional model. They have illustrated a far more nuanced reality of diffusion, highlighting the role of interlocutors, dialogues, and debates to culminate even in the reinvention of these ideas themselves.¹⁴³ My work seeks to add to this scholarship by adding another dimension – the role played by cosmologies – in the diffusion of ideas. I have elaborated how cosmologies could be a potential guide to examine how a range of multidimensional, broad, and complicated intellectual resources from the East flow and are constrained and even reduced to certain Western notions (and potentially even vice versa).

Secondly, I hope to reinforce and build on a strand of scholarship which critically interrogates the question of Eastern agency in International Relations. As Hobson and Sajed argue, even within Critical IRT, Eastern agency is often reduced to either defiance or silence, ignoring a wide spectrum of the manifestations of agency.¹⁴⁴ Here, for instance, though the gravitational centre of the Gandhian–pacifism nexus remains Western pacifism, the process of agency of Eastern (at least on a geographical level) Gandhian philosophy was a very complicated mechanism of relational interactions and adaptation fraught with tensions and contradictions. Such a negotiation cannot be

¹⁴²Krishna, 'A postcolonial racial/spatial order', p. 154.

¹⁴³Richard Gabriel Fox, 'Passage from India', in Richard Gabriel Fox and Orin Starn (eds), *Between Resistance and Revolution: Cultural Politics and Social Protest* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), pp. 65–82; Scalmer, *Gandhi in the West*; Chabot, 'Framing, transnational diffusion, and African-American intellectuals in the land of Gandhi'.

¹⁴⁴John M. Hobson and Alina Sajed, 'Navigating beyond the Eurofetishist frontier of critical IR theory: Exploring the complex landscapes of non-Western agency', *International Studies Review* 19:4 (2017), pp. 547–72.

shoehorned into the dichotomy of defiance or silence. This brings us to a more fundamental question: does Gandhian philosophy exactly correspond to the East? Dwivedi and Mohan argue that the cosmology Gandhi inhabited was a product of a wide range of ‘Western’ ideas in combination with Eastern mysticism.¹⁴⁵ As Bilgin reminds us, ‘What we think of as “non- Western” approaches to world politics may be suffused with “Western” concepts and theories’ and vice versa.¹⁴⁶ This case study complicates this distinction even further. The West here often corresponds to the African American civil resistance perspectives which were peripheral even within the geographical West. On the other hand, Gandhian ideas were highly dominant and hegemonic within the geographical East, marginalising the likes of subaltern and Ambedkarite perspectives, for instance. In addition, the Western ideas inherent in his philosophy included Occultist perspectives which are not exactly hegemonic in the geographical West either. Thus, drawing from Chabot, the very utility of the categories of West and East/Non-West become highly debatable.

Finally, does this exercise offer any insights today, especially in relation to the global, interlocking nature of crises across the world? To begin with, Gandhi’s hypophysical notion of the speeds of modernity beyond environmental limits could constitute a productive locus of conversation against the reality of the unfolding climate change. Additionally, and more importantly, my exercise encourages pacifists to critically reflect on the cosmological biases and constraints which shape their worldviews. This is especially important given the fact that pacifism is an emancipatory world-enterprise against not just wars and violence. As Richard Jackson reminds us, pacifism seeks to forge a future ‘enabling social justice and empowering the oppressed’, aiming towards ‘a revolutionary transformation of society, promoting concrete utopias and emancipatory politics – and more’.¹⁴⁷ At the very least, this necessitates a critical glance at the anti-human, racist, casteist, and gendered notions of a person regarded as one of the most ‘influential members of this tradition’. A cosmological perspective seeks to perform precisely this task.

To conclude, this work started as an attempt to problematise certain uncritical assertions of a man and his philosophy, hoping to make sense of some of the varying characterisations of him and his ideals. In the process, I have sought to go even further, exploring a possibility of pluriversal dialogues and uncovering spheres of oppression and pathways of emancipation. Even if it ultimately falls short of these lofty ends, at the bare minimum, my hope is that I have attempted to answer a simple challenge raised by Kurki to IR scholars: ‘think creatively about cosmology’.¹⁴⁸

Acknowledgements. I am grateful for the suggestions received from the participants of the workshop panel held in April 2022, especially the detailed feedback of Prof. Jason Ralph and Prof. Navnita Chadha Behera. I really appreciate and value the time as well as kind and incisive feedback of the anonymous reviewers and the editor. I am also grateful to Dr Priya Chacko, Dhananjay Rajendran, and Adarsh Badri for their interactions and comments on various drafts. Finally, I started to engage with Gandhi and these ideas seriously during my MPhil dissertation, and thus I would like to thank Prof. Swaran Singh for his supervisory guidance during this period.

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¹⁴⁵ Mohan and Dwivedi, *Gandhi and Philosophy*, p. 29.

¹⁴⁶ Pinar Bilgin, ‘Thinking past “Western” IR?’, *Third World Quarterly*, 29:1 (2008), pp. 5–23 (p. 5).

¹⁴⁷ Richard Jackson, ‘Introduction: Rethinking the relevance of pacifism for security studies and IR’, *Critical Studies on Security*, 6:2 (2018), (pp. 155–9).

¹⁴⁸ Kurki, *International Relations and Relational Universe*, p. 4.