



# Enriching Transdisciplinary Discourse with Nonviolence

**Sue L. T. McGregor**

Sue L. T. McGregor, PhD, IPHE, Professor Emerita Mount Saint Vincent University, Principal Consultant McGregor Consulting Group, Email: sue.mcgregor@msvu.ca

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**Abstract:** *Those engaged in transdisciplinary work and collaboration will encounter both positive and negative conflict. People can deal with negative conflict using violence or nonviolence. Violence is power over people, but nonviolence is power from within. Successful resolution of complex, wicked problems will require people to make significant changes in their human behavior. Nonviolence is proposed as a key element of this behavioral change. This paper brings the Gandhian notion of nonviolence to transdisciplinary discourse (i.e., communicating and exchanging thoughts and ideas with the intent to integrate into new knowledge). The objective of nonviolence is not to win or beat an opponent but to stop an injustice and change the situation. This entails learning and mastering the principles of nonviolence, which include several key concepts addressed in the paper: Satyagraha, seeking the Truth, self-discipline, self-sacrifice, suffering, no harm, resistance, and right actions.*

**Keywords:** transdisciplinarity, nonviolence, conflict, violence, Gandhi, Satyagraha.

## 1 Introduction

This paper recommends using nonviolence principles and strategies to deal with the conflict inherent in transdisciplinary work. Conflict is from Latin *conflictus* ‘a contest that unfolds in the presence of discord, disagreement, and opposing principles, attitudes, and *values*’ (Harper, 2025). Nonviolence entails not using physical force or violence to deal with conflict and injustice. Transdisciplinary discourse entails communicating and exchanging thoughts and ideas with the intent to integrate into new knowledge. This discourse will benefit from nonviolence because its three dominant manifestations inherently reflect conflict: (a) transcendent, (b) problem-solving and (c) transgression transdisciplinarity (Klein, 2014).

### 1.1 Transcendent Transdisciplinarity

To illustrate, those committed to transcendent transdisciplinarity (from Latin *transcendere* ‘to climb to a new space’) (Harper, 2025) are concerned with unity whether of worldviews or the sciences. This concern implies disunity, dissension, and disagreement. Related threads of this discourse include the (a) fragmentation of knowledge and culture, (b) interrelatedness of areas of knowledge (academic and otherwise), (c) coproduction of knowledge by myriad actors and (d) consciousness and spirituality. Proponents include CIRET (*Centre International de Recherches et Études Transdisciplinaire*), IIR (*Institute for Interdisciplinarity Research*), and the Integral Review journal (Klein, 2014).

## 1.2 Problem-solving Transdisciplinarity

Problem-solving transdisciplinary discourse focuses on complex, wicked problem identification, problematization (naming and framing), and problem addressing and solving. This discourse holds that what constitutes a problem arises from the lifeworld (i.e., everyday world shared with others) instead of from disciplines and academia. Thus, addressing complex, wicked problems depends on an array of stakeholders coproducing or cocreating integrated knowledge (Klein, 2014). This too intimates conflictual scenarios.

Associated threads of this discourse include (a) generativity (i.e., ability to produce or create something new), (b) accountability, (c) robustness, (d) ethical-critical agency, (e) integration and synthesis and (f) convergence (i.e., coming from different directions and perspectives to eventually meet). Proponents include ATLAS (*Academy of Transdisciplinary Learning and Advanced Studies*), td-Net (*the Swiss-based Network for Transdisciplinary Research*), and the NCI (*National Cancer Institute*) (Klein, 2014).

## 1.3 Transgressive Transdisciplinarity

Transgressive transdisciplinary discourse concerns “the pragmatic, philosophical, and political implications” (Klein, 2014, p. 68) of transdisciplinary collaborations. Transgressive is from Latin *transgredi* ‘to step across, go beyond’ (Harper, 2025). To transgress means going beyond limits set by law, moral principle, or standards. Klein (2014) explained that this type of discourse “questions dominant axioms and assumptions while exposing their contradictions, paradoxes, and conflicts. [Using resultant insights and information, people] critique, reimagine, and reformulate the status quo” (p. 68).

Related threads shaping transgressive transdisciplinary discourse include (a) divergence of values and factual knowledge, (b) complexities and contradictions, (c) liberation of marginalized ways of knowing, (d) renouncing exclusive logic and embracing inclusive and complexity logics, (e) democratic participation in knowledge cocreation and (f) problem contextualization and in situ application of new knowledge. The key proponents are both CIRET and the Zurich approach, which is informed by Mode 2 knowledge production theory and postmodern science (Klein, 2014).

# 2 Complex, Wicked, Problems

Encompassing three dominant discourses, transdisciplinarity has evolved as a powerful way to address complex issues that cannot be dealt with adequately using just disciplinary or sectoral knowledge (Klein, 2014; Nicolescu, 2014). In short, transdisciplinarity involves transcending disciplinary boundaries (e.g., mono, multi, and interdisciplinarity) to work collaboratively with governments, businesses, and civil society to address and perhaps solve complex, wicked problems (Nicolescu, 2002, 2014).

## 2.1 Complex Problems

Problems and issues are considered complex (i.e., more than not simple) when many areas of concern and associated voices are interwoven and intertwined. Complex problems are thus very hard to define, difficult to control, and challenging to solve. Indeed, they can only be addressed (i.e., think about and try to deal with), not solved (find a definitive solution or answer). People disagree about their cause and how to address them. Their solution is beyond any one entity and depends on disparate actors dealing with and reconciling contradictions so something new can emerge. While collaborating on complex issues, people end up working with and against each other, which is inherently conflictual (Moore, 2011; Stuart, 2018).

## 2.2 Wicked Problems

Some complex problems are so bad they are called *wicked* meaning fearful, intolerably bad, relentlessly aggressive, seemingly intractable, and distressingly severe. Proposed solutions may actually aggravate other problems that concurrently influence each other (e.g., climate change, social injustice, and unsustainability)

(Rittel & Webber, 1973; Stuart, 2018). These traits make wicked problems “highly resistant to resolution” (Australia Public Service Commission, 2007, p. 1).

What worked before may not work again. Wicked problems cannot be solved using standardized approaches nor high-level expertise. And the success of proposed solutions is uncertain and considered better or worse rather than right or wrong (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Stuart, 2018). Confoundingly, “complexity itself is not enough to trigger a wicked problem [and] mere disagreement among stakeholders does not make a problem wicked, but when serious disagreements are combined with complexity and uncertainty [and value and fact divergence] we have crossed a threshold” (Head, 2008, p. 103). The problem is *now* wicked.

### 3 Conflictual Transdisciplinary Discourse

Although “transdisciplinarity ... liberates the collaborative spirit” (Visser, 2003, p. 6), for that spirit to flourish, diverse complements of people, with wide-ranging interests, opinions, values, perspectives, and experiences, must move through and beyond the contradictions, antagonisms, and conflict that inherently characterize complex, wicked problems. Conflict arises through some combination of people (a) perceiving their interests and goals as incompatible with and threatened by their opponents, (b) overtly expressing their hostile attitudes toward others or (c) pursuing their self-interest (to gain an advantage or a benefit) in a way that harms or damages others (Kruvant, 2008).

#### 3.1 Positive or Negative Conflict

Conflict can be positive or negative. Conflict is positive when differences are communicated and respected, and issues are openly addressed, thus enabling different ideas and perspectives to be considered. Participation and commitment can increase, and issues and problems can be clarified and reassessed. Positive conflict is productive and beneficial. But when conflict is negative (i.e., counterproductive and dysfunctional), problems can grow even larger, people become focused on winning an argument, and they impose their point of view on others while ignoring and dismissing the latter’s position. Both sides lose, thus prompting retaliation and further conflict (Mangelschots, 2020; Minhaz, 2023).

#### 3.2 Violence vs. Nonviolence

People can deal with negative conflict using either violence or nonviolence (Nagler, 1999; Naidu, 1996). Violence is from Latin *violentus*, ‘vehement, strong feeling, forceful, intense’ (Harper, 2025). When people react to conflict using violent behaviour, they either (a) *fight* out of *anger* (strike back while suppressing fear) or (b) *flee* out of *fear* (lie down while suppressing their anger). Fleeing (i.e., running away from the situation) is also considered a form of violence (complicity) because the conflict is not confronted. For both fight and flight, people repress strong inner emotions rather than face them thus letting the emotions fester and simmer. This sets up future violent, unproductive flare-ups, and the conflict remains unresolved (Nagler, 1999; Naidu, 1996).

Given the dysfunctional and destructive effects of and outcomes from using violence to confront negative conflict, this paper brings the notion of nonviolence to transdisciplinary discourse. Both violence and nonviolence are powerful *forces* to deal with conflict. But while “violence is power over people; non-violence is power from within” (McGregor, 2016, p. 14). The latter are most conducive to dealing with transdisciplinary discourse between multidisciplinary and multisector stakeholders — discourse that can be contentious, tense, and challenging (Scholz & Steiner, 2015).

Many voices desperately vying for attention can create heated exchanges, volatile dynamics, and untenable tensions. “Transdisciplinary processes [and discourse] ... embody complexity, multi-layeredness of tradeoffs and conflicts, uncertainty, and incompleteness” (Scholz & Steiner, 2015, p. 528). People engaged in these exchanges tend to resist contrary-minded assertions from others as all strive “to understand the entanglements of everyday power and resistance” (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2020, p. 12). Trying to make

oneself heard by lauding power over people (i.e., violent reaction to negative conflict — using violence to combat violence) is unlikely to reap sustainable relationships and solutions. However, standing in one's truth while respecting others and their truth — drawing on a power from deep within — is a more sustainable, nonviolent approach (Ostergaard, 1974) to transdisciplinary discourse.

Also consider Nicolescu's (2007) proposition that during transdisciplinary engagements, a transdisciplinary value set emerges that supersedes any one person's individual value set. This engendered, agreed-to set of values “serves to keep conversations going, move deliberations forward, and ensure sustained commitment to the exercise” (McGregor, 2023, p. 5). One of those values could be *nonviolence* — coined by Indian lawyer Mohandas Gandhi in 1920 from Sanskrit *ahimsā* ‘lack of desire to harm or kill.’ It involves a strong inner force called *Satyagraha* (to be discussed) that deals with negative conflict in a much more constructive manner than violence (Nagler, 1999; Sharp, 2012). This paper is predicated on the assumption that people engaged in transdisciplinary discourse could commit to learning how to apply the principles of nonviolence.

Giri (2023) very recently recommended that “we move from violence to *Ahisma* — non-violence — and cultivate a new transdisciplinary commons of love, learning, and labor between and beyond disciplines, traditions, and cultures” (p. 139). Because transdisciplinary work “requires conversations across boundaries and cross-fertilization of roots” (p. 130), conflict is a natural part of the collaborative discourse among diverse stakeholders. However, normal conversations are “posited in an initial conflictual and dualistic opposition” (p. 129). Transdisciplinarity thus depends on “new visions and practices of communication, collaboration, and border-crossing between and beyond disciplines” (p. 128).

In like-minded thinking, Mumford (1998) asserted that the successful resolution of complex, wicked problems will require people to make significant changes in their human behavior. Employing nonviolence principles is proposed herein as a key element of this behavioral change. Nonviolence is presented as a viable approach to successfully navigate transdisciplinary discourse, so people can effectively address conflictual and vicious societal, economic, political, technological, and environmental problems that thwart humanity and the human condition.

For clarification, this paper is not an expose of when nonviolence will not work (e.g., practical challenges, power asymmetries, and cases where nonviolent approaches may not suffice) but on what it is as a set of principles whether it works immediately or not. Also, regardless of (a) the type of negative conflict (e.g., interpersonal, intragroup, and intergroup); (b) its manifestations (e.g., power struggles, grievances, discrimination, personality clashes, or resource competition); or (c) how it escalates (e.g., vertical [intense], horizontal [spreads], or spiral [out of control]) (Kruvant, 2008), nonviolence principles can be applied.

## 4 Principles of Nonviolence

Nonviolence concerns injustice (Nagler, 1999) from Latin *iniustus* ‘wrongful, unreasonable, improper, oppressive’ (Harper, 2025). People engaged in transdisciplinary work often experience a sense of injustice. They characterize their situation (e.g., a complex, wicked problem) as unfair, unjust, and inequitable. Things happening to them and others just *feel* wrong, undeserved, unwarranted, or unjustifiable. They may judge the situation as repressive, harsh, morally unfair, prejudiced, rife with ignorance, or partisan (Kettler, 2019). Others' actions, and/or threats from near environments, are causing harm, damage, hostility, instability, frustration, anxiety, fear, anger, and so on. Such are the nature and oppressive weight of an unjust situation.

### 4.1 Self-Interest

In effect, people working on transdisciplinary problems face conflict — a situation where someone else or the context is threatening or compromising their *self-interest*. This term refers to a personal benefit or advantage that (a) mitigates danger, harm, loss, and costs; and (b) ensures safety, well-being, gains, and rewards (American Psychological Association, 2023). When stakeholders finally come together to deal

with a complex, wicked problem impacting each differently, they will encounter the conflict inherent in contradictory and antagonistic rhetoric and discourse. Clashing, challenging confrontations often ensue because so much is at stake. They can react to this negative conflict with violence or nonviolence. Should they choose the latter, they can avail themselves of a rich collection of principles and ways of living that foster a nonviolent mindset (see Table 1). Reading the table in its entirety serves as a synthesis and semantic connection among principles further discussed throughout the paper with attendant (sub)headings.

**Table 1:** Nonviolent and Violent Principles and Assumptions (used with permission, McGregor, 2016).

Nonviolence Principles	Violence Principles
“Let us grow and move ahead together” – a positive-sum game (everyone wins)	“I win, you lose” – a zero-sum game (someone loses)
See people as <i>humans</i> and honor them (meaning you must always humanize the situation)	See people as <i>the enemy</i> , then label and treat them as such (enemy is from Latin <i>inimicus</i> ‘not friend’); enables dehumanization (degrading and debasing)
Oppose and resist <i>the action</i> , program, or agenda <i>not the person</i> ; resist the sin while affirming the opponent’s integrity, capacity for growth, and their ability to examine their values and beliefs; value their Truth	Oppressor opposes <i>the person</i> and resists the sinner by demoralizing, demeaning, and marginalizing them; opponent does not value the oppressors’ Truth, their capacity for growth, nor their values and beliefs
Respect the person, and <i>do not harm</i> (softens anger); this approach evokes respect rather than relies on respect	Harm others (and their property) with no respect for the person (hardens anger)
Positive feelings stem from the belief that we are <i>all connected</i>	Negative feelings stem from the belief that we are <i>all separate</i> and disconnected
<i>Never</i> sacrifice principles of freedom, truth, justice, dignity, peace, honor, and no harm, but <i>do</i> adapt strategies and techniques	Take a strategic approach to win, dismissing overarching principles; do whatever it takes to win
Set in <i>motion</i> forces that lead to a new equation and a new situation	Set in <i>place</i> forces that seize, crush, break, and beat down the opponent
In the end, people are liberated but friends ( <i>fellowship</i> )	In the end, people are dominated, and they are not friends (enemies and adversaries)
<i>Mutual learning process</i> for change; see life as a coevolution toward a loving community in which everyone thrives; <i>power is shared</i> for the common good	<i>Power struggle</i> ; people see life as a clash of egos where victors make material and symbolic gains (symbolic means a visible symbol for something abstract, like reputation); oppressors resist change and strive for the status quo, which keeps them in power
<i>Success</i> is “We moved ahead together” and did so by undermining the opponent’s sources of power and creating new webs of shared power	Success is “I won” by imposing one’s power over others while maintaining separateness; oppressors gloat, brag, and boast <i>a victory</i>

**Table 1:** (continued).

Nonviolence Principles	Violence Principles
Success is when <i>you overcame yourself</i> ; it is an inner victory over self, a personal gain that no one can take away (successful inner struggles, self-sacrifice, and learned self-discipline lead to <i>Satyagraha</i> )	Success is when you <i>beat someone</i> ; it is an <i>external victory</i> expressed as “I won, you lost;” however, this gain can be taken away with more force and more violence
Heal yourself <i>at the same time</i> you are trying to get the oppressor off your back, and heal them too because they are also oppressed (i.e., open their minds, so they can open their hearts)	Win the battle or the war, and <i>then</i> deal with each person (if at all); perhaps heal physical wounds but usually not spiritual or personal wounds
You and me against an unjust situation	You against me
Focus on eliciting <i>right action</i> (i.e., ethical, honourable, compassionate, and responsible)	Focus on overtly expressing wrong, nonvirtuous action (i.e., unethical, dishonourable, indifferent, and irresponsible)

By committing to nonviolence, people can stay the course until the conflict situation is changed and justice is served. Incidentally, using nonviolence is not a sign of weakness. It is different from passivity, which is the choice to do nothing (Ackerman & DuVall, 2001). Instead, using “nonviolence requires the greatest courage [and can] score resounding success” (Nagler, 1999, p. 32). “Nonviolence always works. Violence always fails. Violence always leads to further violence ...; nonviolence always leads to peace and reconciliation [and justice]” (Nagler, 1999, p. 30).

Furthermore, the objective of nonviolence is not to win over an opponent. Instead, the objectives are to (a) stop an injustice and (b) change the situation (McCarthy, 1992; McReynolds, 1998). This entails learning and mastering several key concepts constituting the nonviolence philosophy: *Satyagraha*, Truth seeking, self-discipline, self-sacrifice, suffering, no harm, resistance, and right actions. As a caveat, *Satyagraha* is usually italicized, as it is a foreign word in English (Merriman & Barrach-Yousefi, 2021).

## 4.2 Satyagraha, and Truth Seeking

Nonviolence focuses on seeking the Gandhian notion of Truth (*Satyagraha*), which is different from true meaning not false (McReynolds, 1989; Nagler, 1999). *Satya* means Truth, and *agraha* means holding firmly against some injustice. *Satyagraha* thus means clinging firmly or adhering to the Truth while pursuing justice (Naidu, 1996; Sharp, 1967). *Satyagraha* is a mental power and inner strength (positive force) that people gain from their *inner struggles* to overcome (a) negative emotions (e.g., greed, frustration, aggression, alienation, exclusion, or submission); and (b) automatic, negative reactions to conflict (i.e., flight or fight due to anger or fear) (Naidu, 1996).

This inner power accumulates as each person gains *inner victories* over themselves instead of victory and power over others. Successful inner struggles, self-sacrifice, and learned self-discipline produce a storehouse of *Satyagraha*. Imagine that this power source is stored in one’s breast (heart and soul). When people practice nonviolence, they reach deep inside and tap into this reserve of power, which is called “offering the *Satyagraha*.” The person doing so is called a *satyagrahi* who voluntarily *offers* their Truth and inner strength to the cause (Nagler, 1999, 2014; Naidu, 1996).

Seeking the Truth is almost more important than the Truth itself because people gain self-truth (*Satyagraha*) during the pursuit of the Greater Truth (Tahtinen, 1998). The search for the Truth is unending, whether one succeeds or not (McReynolds, 1998; Sharp, 1967). Once attained, however, *Satyagraha* sustains people over long periods of time (Nagler, 1999). “With truth as its lodestar, [*Satyagraha*] never fails: it is creative nonviolence leading to a constructive transforming of relationships ... ensuring a basic restructuring of the situation which led to the conflict” (Ostergaard, 1974, p.10). Operating from a position of Truth

better ensures that everyone benefits, and no legacy of bitterness is left behind. Also, nonviolent solutions to negative conflict are more sustainable because everyone's Truth is respected (Ostergaard, 1974).

### 4.3 Self-Discipline, Self-Sacrifice, and Suffering

*Satyagraha* builds up over time as people learn self-discipline, self-sacrifice, and suffering. Every time they have a victory over themselves, they gain more self-power that they can store and then draw on to strategically engage in nonviolent strategies (Nagler, 1999; Naidu, 1996).

#### 4.3.1 Self-discipline

Self-discipline and self-control pertain to harnessing and mastering one's negative emotions toward one's opponent(s) to create a storehouse of positive, inner energy (*Satyagraha*) for strategic release (Nagler, 1999). For clarification, an opponent is not the enemy. An enemy has contempt for and wants to harm you. Nonviolence does not view people as *the enemy*. An opponent is not against you as a person. Instead, he or she is set against your beliefs and what you want or is on the other side of a group. Conflict arises when opponents feel that their respective self-interests are incompatible (Nagler, 1999). Fortunately, the self-discipline process "does not depend on the opponent – it's entirely 'proactive' – it can go on constantly" (Nagler, 1999, p. 18).

The process of learning to control negative emotions, so the *Satyagraha* storehouse can grow, depends on unlearning the basic instinct to fight or flee in the face of fear or anger (i.e., automatic violent reaction to negative conflict). This instinctual response reflects assumptions of separateness, disconnectedness, and otherness, thus making room for enemies and seeing the bad or worst in people. As people practice nonviolence and unlearn (which can take years, decades), their *reasoning* is freed up. That is, they eventually gain awareness that everything is connected, thus making every person and their Truth matter. Having access to this reasoning ability helps people to continue to regain control of their baser emotions and seek the Truth as they observe it despite ever-present obstacles (Nagler, 1999).

#### 4.3.2 Self-sacrifice

Self-sacrifice concerns a willingness to always engage in inner struggles to (a) self-learn; (b) harness the positive force that is released during this struggle; and (c) then release it in constructive, strategic ways (Nagler, 1999, 2014). Sacrificing oneself for the cause (a) can shake up the opponents' conscience, (b) can persuade enablers of and bystanders to a current injustice to take one's side and (c) demonstrates one's worthiness (dignity) and commitment. For an action to be considered a true sacrifice, it must have a real cost for the one who sacrifices and for that person only. There can be no spillover effects (Levine, 2017).

Also, a relevant audience must appreciate that you are giving something up for the cause and will bear a steep cost in doing so. This sacrifice communicates to opponents that you will not be ignored and are willing to stay the course regardless of personal costs (Levine, 2017). Self-sacrifice thus "draws attention to your voice and clears away certain barriers to being heard" (Levine, 2017, para. 8). The more experience people have with self-sacrifice, the more their commitment to the practice increases (Mironova & Whitt, 2022).

#### 4.3.3 Suffering

People who live by the nonviolent philosophy also learn to suffer for what they believe in. They realize it will take time to win their opponents' hearts, so they are willing to patiently suffer while this is unfolding (Nagler, 1999; Naidu, 1996). Suffer is from Latin *sufferre* 'to bear' (Harper, 2025). To suffer is to patiently endure, carry (bear), put up with, or go through such things as emotional and physical pain, discomfort, inconvenience, distress, disadvantage, a loss, a penalty, punishment, and harm — and, in the extreme, death. Self-suffering is key to nonviolence because it is a powerful means of realizing an individual's dignity, which means being worthy of respect and having a sense of self-pride (Basebang, 2020).

Moreover, self-sacrifice is not cowardice (i.e., lacking courage). Rather, it is both noble and morally enriching, and it protects and/or bolsters everyone's dignity (Basebang, 2020). Thus, lack of dignity is problematic when dealing with injustice and seeking the Truth because people who are not respected tend not to be heard. Also, a lack of respect (i.e., loss of dignity) goes hand in hand with a loss of trust. This triadic connection (dignity-respect-trust) can ripple across a situation leading to more destructive conflict, which in turn leads to unproductive disagreements. People stop listening to each other, engagement decreases, and people get stuck in negativity (Dittloff, 2020). All are counterintuitive to transdisciplinary work.

#### 4.4 No-Harm Principle

A key element of nonviolent Truth is the do-no-harm principle. Nonviolent strategies must not harm humans or their dignity nor harm the opponent's legitimate interests (their Truth) (Ackerman & DuVall, 2001; Nagler, 2014). Gandhi posited that it is unconscionable to harm or take another person's life because you would lose a bit of the Truth that you were *seeking*. To elaborate, nonviolence is a search for the

Truth [which] is determined by observation. Truth is always partial and incomplete because reality (what people observe) is always partial and incomplete. Because people see things differently, they have a different reality, meaning they have a different Truth. From a non-violent perspective, people even listen to the people they detest and hate, just so they can catch some remarks about Truth that they would have otherwise missed [in their own observations]. (McGregor, 2016, p. 16)

#### 4.5 Resistance

Another key aspect of nonviolence is resistance from Latin *resistere* 'stop' (Harper, 2025). A stockpile of *Satyagraha* fosters steadfast resistance and cultivates relentless persistence. The nonviolence philosophy assumes that people in resistance mode are trying to *stop something*, which is different from the violent-attack mode, where they are trying to *harm someone* (Nagler, 1999). People in a resistance mode object to the current unjust situation and want to change it — make the complex, wicked problem *stop*. They can resist by (a) withstanding pressure (not backing down or buckling), (b) striving against (exerting great effort), (c) dissenting (differing in sentiment) or (d) taking a stand by asserting their position knowing they will be opposed but assuming they can progress forward (Sharp, 1973).

How stakeholders view their opponents informs the former's intent when resisting the latter's ideas that preclude justice. If viewed in a positive light, stakeholders will try to convert the opponent to their side of justice — get them to see the situation from their perspective, their Truth. If they succeed, others around the table will stand in a new Truth that better aligns with the satyagrahi's perspective. If a stakeholder intends to win another's participation in the search for Truth, they would try to convince them to partner up and jointly search for a common, *shared* Truth and a way forward grounded in an agreed-to strategy to ensure justice for everyone — they would stand in nonviolent resistance (Sharp, 1973).

#### 4.6 Right Actions

Finally, to both stop the injustice and change the situation, nonviolence practitioners would draw on *Satyagraha* while strategically using *right action* and the *right means* at the right time (McCarthy, 1992; McReynolds, 1998). An action that is right is ethical, respectful, honourable, compassionate, and responsible (McReynolds, 1998). When engaging in right action, people are patient, honest, conscientious, sympathetic, and they desire the welfare of all living beings. They speak and act from their Truth (Peck, 2020; Sharp, 1967).

Examples of actions that are *right* include (a) protesting (i.e., disapproving or objecting to the opponent's idea but not the person); (b) using persuasion (inducing through reason or argumentation — not the same as fighting); or (c) choosing to not cooperate socially, economically, or politically. (d) They can agree or



cooperate with the good that the oppressor is doing. (e) They can be constructive (take steps to address the injustice) while concurrently eroding the oppressor's power. And (f) they can employ information and consciousness raising campaigns as well as artistic expression (Sharp, 1973).

The nonviolence philosophy assumes that when confronted with a successful right action, opponents are thrown off balance. Their power is temporarily diminished thus creating a space for them to hear and heed those employing nonviolence. Their heart, which is hardened against the injustice, is more likely softened and moved. If this happens, opponents are more inclined to face any strong emotions underpinning their own violent stance (namely biases, worries, fears, anxieties, blind spots, prejudice, guilt, illusions, and compulsions). With a more open mind and softened heart, they become more receptive to nonviolent messaging about the injustice. There is a chance for new perspectives to emerge because the satyagrahi has the opportunity to appeal to their opponent's dignity, conscience (moral sense of right or wrong), and humanity (compassion, and fellowship) (McReynolds, 1998; Nagler, 2014; Sharp, 1967; Vellacott, 2000).

## 5 Conclusion

Transdisciplinary discourse in its many manifestations engenders conflict, both positive and negative. Given the wide array of stakeholders engaged in this discourse, each vying to have their voice heard, negative conflict is common. Nonviolence was tendered as a constructive and sustainable approach to deal with this conflict. Instead of violence, which is power over people, nonviolence is a powerful inner force that people can draw on to advance the cause. *Satyagraha* and related principles and practices foster steadfast resistance and cultivate relentless persistence in efforts to address an injustice — to make oppressors stop what they are doing and to change the situation, so everyone comes ahead together.

The collection of nonviolent principles is not presented as an absolute and universal solution, nor is the discussion herein idealistic in nature. The argumentation purporting nonviolence is fully respectful of dynamic real-world arrangements and bureaucratic (or science politically charged) debates and power struggles. It is a given that structural inequalities and institutional power imbalances will influence or limit the efficacy of nonviolent strategies, but that does not preclude striving to bring nonviolent principles into the TD mix.

Transdisciplinarity concerns complex, wicked problems. Nonviolence is a viable philosophy and strategy to collectively meet these problems head on. “Nonviolence always works. Violence always fails” (Nagler, 1999, p. 30). Humanity does not have the luxury to fail as it confronts seemingly inexorable complex, wicked problems. Regardless of which conflict-laden transdisciplinary discourse is playing out, transdisciplinary are entreated to embrace nonviolence whether in research, scientific investigations, education and curricula, system development, corporate innovation and growth, policy development, or civic engagement.

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