

ture and history. Each is equally possible, but each, if it does not serve as the preparation, but as the conclusion of an investigation, accomplishes equally little in the interest of historical truth.

Gandhi's Method of Situational Truth

Another source for our view of interpretive methods is the thought of Mohandas K. Gandhi, sometimes referred to as Mahatma Gandhi. We have argued that Gandhi's thoughts about truth challenged the hegemony of modernist objective truth prevalent in his time. Gandhi's view of truth resembles those of some post-modernists and of American pragmatists such as William James and John Dewey.

Let us begin with the views of Gandhi's chosen heir, the high modernist Jawaharlal Nehru. In an exchange of letters with Gandhi in 1945, Nehru told Gandhi that his 1909 critique of "modern civilization" in *Hind Swaraj* was "completely unreal," a Nehru euphemism for obscurantist. For Nehru, Gandhi's ideas were, at best, those of a traditionalist rooted in an archaic past. They were, of course, anything but. Gandhi's critique of "modern civilization" in *Hind Swaraj* foreshadows postmodern critiques, and his thinking about knowledge and truth resembles that of American pragmatists.

Gandhi's thinking about knowledge and truth resembles pragmatists' in its refusal to embrace modernism's preference for foundational truths, truths that claim to be universal, knowledge that claims to be objective, and master narratives that make claims to universal explanations of historical change. The seventeenth-century inventors of modernity held that laws of nature, axiomatic ideas, and ubiquitous self-interest were independent of time, space, and circumstance; they were, as it were, the same everywhere and always.

As the knowledge claims of foundational truths, particularly those of the Newtonian model of natural science, spread to other domains of knowledge, its adherents began to claim that "scientific method" was the only valid way of knowing. "Science" alone, it was said, can ask and answer questions. If it wasn't "scientific," it couldn't be true.

As a self-declared *karma yogi*, Gandhi's epistemology was rooted in "truth in action," a concept that locates truth in experience, in the facts and circumstances of particular situations. Before launching a *satyagraha* campaign, he thoroughly familiarized himself with its particular context. In a process evocative of the pragmatists' concern for context and of the discovery phase of a legal proceeding, he carefully investigated the relevant circumstances, including the attitudes and motives of the contending parties. The goal of the campaign was formulated with reference to the situation's unique problematic. As a *satyagrahi*, he practiced firmness in the pursuit of contextual or situational truth.

Gandhi respected experimental science and its methods as a way to access truth. In his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments With Truth*, he used the word "experiment" quite deliberately in the title of the book. In language suggestive of Karl Popper's about falsification, Gandhi wrote: "I claim nothing (more for the experiments) than does a scientist who, though he conducts his experiments with the utmost accuracy, forethought and minuteness, never claims any finality about his conclusions, but keeps an open mind regarding them." He continues in language paralleling that of pragmatists' such as William James and John Dewey: "I am far from claiming any finality or infallibility about my conclusions" but "I do claim that my conclusions are . . . cor-

rect, and seem for the time being to be final. For if they were not, I should base no action on them."

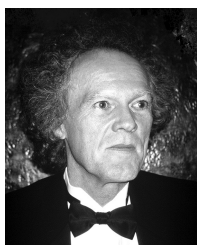
Gandhi's reasoning about truth starts with his commitment to the view that "truth is God." Gandhi makes clear in a variety of ways that seeking God, like seeking absolute truth, is not the same as knowing God or knowing absolute truth. The absolute truth or God could be approached, but not known, by mortals. Unlike those moderns who think that they can know absolute truth in the form of objective truths and universal laws, Gandhi thought that making such claims was to envy God and seek to be like Him.

As an adherent of the Jain doctrine of *ane-kanata-vada*, he viewed truth as many-sided and its understanding by the human mind as "fleeting and fragmentary." Gandhi sometimes compared absolute truth to a diamond that could not be seen whole, but whose many facets or surfaces revealed partial truths.

For Gandhi, truth had several meanings and forms. It could be situational, as in the goal of a *satyagraha*; contextual and contingent, as in the experimental truths found in his autobiography; and absolute, as in his commitment to "Truth is God." "For me," he continued, "truth is the sovereign principle . . . not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth . . . that is God. . . . I worship God as truth only. I have not yet found Him . . . but as long as I have not realized this Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it. That relative truth must, meanwhile, be my beacon, my shield and buckler." ■

NOTE:

1. James Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths," in James Clifford and George Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 8.



Kim Quaile Hill was elected to the position of president-elect of the Southern Political Science Association at its annual meeting in Atlanta in January 2010. Professor Hill will assume the presidency of the association at its 2011 annual meeting. The SPSA is a professional organization of political scientists that publishes the *Journal of Politics*, hosts an annual conference, and presents awards for outstanding academic contributions. Hill is the Cullen-McFadden Professor of Political Science at Texas A&M University. He previously served as the editor of the *American Journal of Political Science* from 2002 to 2005 and as director of Texas A&M's graduate program in public administration in the Department of Political Science. Over the years, he has served in consultant and advisory capacities for the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the U.S. Presidential Management Internship Program, the Texas Legislature, the Texas Department of Human Services, the Menil Foundation, and the City of Galveston, Texas. He has authored, co-authored, and edited several political science textbooks and original research, including *The Criminal's Image of the City* (1979), *Democracies in Crisis: Public Policy Responses to the Great Depression* (1988), and *Democracy in the Fifty States* (1994). ■

People

ADMINISTRATIVE APPOINTMENTS

H. Lee Cheek, Jr., associate vice president for academic affairs and professor of political science, Athens State University.

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Leonard Feldman, associate professor, department of political science, Hunter College, CUNY.

Jeremy Kedziora, assistant professor, department of political science, University of Minnesota.

Robyn Marasco, assistant professor, department of political science, Hunter College, CUNY.

Yves Winter, assistant professor, department of political science, University of Minnesota.

Samuel Workman, assistant professor, department of government, The University of Texas at Austin.

PROMOTIONS

Kenneth Greene, associate professor, department of government, The University of Texas at Austin.

Roger Karapin, professor, department of political science, Hunter College, CUNY.

Eric McDaniel, associate professor, department of government, The University of Texas at Austin.

Patrick McDonald, associate professor, department of government, The University of Texas at Austin.

Ami Pedahzur, professor, department of government, The University of Texas at Austin.

Bruce M. Wilson, professor, department of political science, University of Central Florida

AWARDS

Scott Abernathy, associate professor of political science, University of Minnesota, received the Morse-Alumni

Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education, the University's highest honor for undergraduate teaching.

Marianne Githens, Distinguished Professor of political science, Goucher College, received the Caroline Doebler Bruckerl Faculty Award, given to a faculty member whose accomplishments in the areas of teaching, scholarly activity, and service deserve special recognition.

Andrew J. Polsky, professor of political science at Hunter College, CUNY, received the Northeastern Political Science Association 2009 Distinguished Service Award for his work as *Polity* editor.

Edward Sidlow, professor of political science at Eastern Michigan University, received a Teaching Excellence Award from the Eastern Michigan University Alumni Association. He was also recognized earlier in 2009 as Honors College Faculty Member of the Year.

IN THE NEWS

Ross Alexander, associate professor of political science, North Georgia College & State University, quoted in *Gainesville Times*, "Census Results May Alter Districts, Delegates."

Ross Baker, professor, Rutgers University, quoted in the AP article, "Facing Ethics Probes, Rangel Drops Tax Leadership."

Jody Baumgartner, assistant professor of political science, and **Jonathan Morris**, associate professor of political science, East Carolina University, quoted in "The Effects of Social Networking on Political Behavior" on New Hampshire Public Radio.

Rodolfo Espino, assistant professor of political science, Arizona State University, quoted in *USA Today*, "Senator John McCain's Re-Election Bid Faces Hurdle."

James Fowler, professor of political sci-

ence, University of California San Diego, quoted in the *San Diego Union Tribune*, "Funding Key to Growth of Scientific Innovations."

Donald Green, professor, Yale University, quoted in the *Boston Globe*, "Who's Still Biased? Diversity Training has Swept Corporate America. Just One Problem: It Doesn't Seem to Work."

Marc Lynch, associate professor and director of Middle East Studies, George Washington University, spoke on U.S. involvement in Iraq in the *Washington Post*, "U.S. Plans for Possible Delay in Iraq Withdrawal."

Doug Muzzio, professor, Baruch College, quoted by NPR, "When Politicians Refuse to Leave the Stage."

John Pitney, professor, Claremont McKenna College, quoted in *Politico*, "Big State Busts: Govs Hit the Skids."

Larry Sabato, professor of American politics, University of Virginia, were quoted in the Reuters article, "In Texas Governor Showdown, Nice Doesn't Cut It" on the Republican primary electorate.

Stephen M. Saideman, associate professor, department of political science, McGill University, appeared via CBC Syndicated on radio stations throughout Canada to discuss the effects of Canada's military withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2011.

Randall W. Stone, director of the Peter D. Watson Center for Conflict and Cooperation and director of the Skalny Center for Polish and Central European Studies, University of Rochester, quoted in the *New York Times*, "I.M.F. Help for Greece Is a Risky Prospect." ■