



Zero-Sum Game of Violence, by Michael Nagler

When we have a non-violent outlook, we no longer look on a dispute as what's called a 'zero-sum game.' Instead of thinking that for me to win, you have to lose, we now believe there must be a way that both of us can grow. The very fact that we can turn an argument into a problem-solving session, a dispute into a learning, alienation into unity, is a gain for all concerned. The nonviolent actor is never against persons. This is one of the ingredients of nonviolent power. Where ordinary conflict is 'you against me,' the nonviolent actor sees it as 'you and me against the problem.' Therefore, the nonviolent actor is never out to humiliate or in any way injure another person or group. He or she can be opposed to the other's *actions*, never the person her- or himself: as the Christian tradition teaches 'we hate the sin, but not the sinner.' The more you respect the opponent as a person, the more forcefully you can oppose his or her wrong agenda. Underlying this awareness is a belief that life is not a competition. To put it in economic terms, there is enough in the world for everyone's need; there is not enough for everyone's greed. By separating the 'greed' of the opponent, which we resist, from his or her legitimate 'need', which we support, it becomes easier to compel his or her reason to be free. --Michael Nagler