Chapter 3
Violence: Direct, Structural and Cultural

Violence is any avoidable insult to basic human needs, and, more generally, to sentient *life* of any kind, defined as that which is capable of suffering pain an enjoy well-being. Violence lowers the real level of needs satisfaction below what is potentially possible. Violence to human beings hurt and harm body, mind and spirit. Hurting/harming one of them usually affects the other two through psycho-somatic transfers; an example of one of the most solid theorems in social science: *violence breeds violence* within and among actors, in space and over time.[1]

Violence leaves deep wounds, *trauma*, that is difficult to heal. Violence to the mind takes the form of distorted cognitions and emotions, and to the spirit the form of hopelessness, possibly because a meaning-producing project failed. In the phenomenology of violence meaning for one may be violence to the other; like the German, Italian and Japanese quests for *Neuordnung*, *nuovo ordine*, and *dai-to-a kyoeiken* for the peoples living in Europe, in the Mediterranean space, and in Greater East Asia respectively.

Threats of violence are also violence, as insults to mind and spirit, creating distortions and hopelessness through fear.

The object of violence is any carrier of life, particularly a human being, an actor, individual or collective (group, country).

The subject of violence can be any actor, as in intended actor or *direct violence*. Or, a structure at work, churning out harm, causing basic human needs deficits, as in un-intended, indirect, or *structural violence*. Or, culture at work when used to legitimize direct and structural violence, the legitimation then being indirect-direct/indirect, or *cultural violence*. Or, it can be Nature at work, like a tsunami, but then not always avoidable.

The effects of direct and structural violence on four classes of basic needs, i.e. *basic violence*, are indicated in Table 3.1. The basic needs—identified through dialogues in many parts of the world—are: *survival* (negation: death, mortality); *wellness* (negation: misery, morbidity); *freedom* (negation: repression); *identity*,

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[1] This text was initially written for the *Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace*. This text and all others that are following are reproduced here with the permission of Johan Galtung who holds the copyright for all his own texts.

meaning (negation: alienation). The result is four types of direct and four more complex types for structural violence:

First comment: Table 3.1 is anthropocentric. A fifth column could be added for the needs of the non-human rest of nature; the *sine qua non* for human existence. 'Ecological balance' is a frequently used term for environment system maintenance. If not satisfied there is ecological degradation, breakdown, imbalance. Eco-balance is to the environment what survival + wellness + freedom + identity are for human basic maintenance; if not satisfied the result is human degradation. The sum of all five, for all, might be one definition of 'peace'.

But 'ecological balance' is a very broad category treating a biota (non-life) and biota (life) alike. Violence defined as insults to life would focus on biota, only indirectly on a biota. Moreover, there are such difficult and important questions as 'balance for whom?' For human beings to reproduce themselves? At what level of economic activity, and for what numbers of humans? Or, for the 'environment' (a very anthropocentric term!) to reproduce itself? All parts, equally, at what level, what numbers of non-human life? Or both human and non-human?

Second comment: the mega-versions of the pale words used above for violence should be considered. For 'killing' read *extermination, holocaust, genocide.* For 'misery' read *silent holocaust.* For 'repression' read *gulag/KZ.* For 'alienation' read *spiritual death.* For 'ecological degradation' read *ecocide*. For all of these together read 'omnicide'. The words might sound like someone's effort to be apocalyptic were it not for the fact that the world has experienced all of this during the last 50 years; closely associated with the names of Hitler, Stalin, Japanese militarism and US fundamentalism. Violence studies, an indispensable part of peace studies, may be a horror cabinet, but like pathology reflects a reality to be understood.

Third comment: the content of Table 3.1, as it stands.

The first category of violence, killing, is unproblematic. So is maiming. Added together they constitute 'casualties' used in assessing the severity of a war. But 'war' is only a particular form of orchestrated violence, usually with at least one actor being a government.

To see peace merely as the opposite of war, and limit peace studies to war avoidance studies, and more particularly to avoidance of big wars or super-wars (defined as wars between big powers or super-powers), and even more particularly to the limitation, abolition, or control of super-weapons, is rather narrow.

Table 3.1 A typology of insults to needs due to violence

	Survival	Wellness	Freedom	Identity
Direct violence	Killing	Illness	Repression	Alienation
	Maiming	Misery	Detention	Desocialize
	Siege		Expulsion	2nd class
	Sanctions			Citizenship
Structural violence	Exploitation A	Exploitation B	Fragmentation	Penetration
			Marginalization	Segmentation

Source The author

Important interconnections among types of violence are left out, particularly the way in which one type of violence may be reduced or controlled at the expense of maintaining or even increasing an other. Like 'side-effects' in health studies, very important, and very easily overlooked. Peace studies should avoid that mistake.

Included under maiming is also the insult to human needs brought about by siege/blockade (classical term) and sanctions (modern term). To some this is nonviolence since direct and immediate killing is avoided. To the victims, however, it may spell slow, intentional killing through malnutrition and lack of medical attention, hitting the weakest first, the children, the old, the poor, the women. By extending the causal chain the perpetrator does not have to face the effect of his violence.

He even 'gives the victims a chance', usually to submit, meaning loss of freedom and identity instead of life and limbs, trading the latter for the former types of direct violence. But the mechanism is the threat to the livelihood. Gandhian economic boycott, however, combined refusal to buy English textiles with the collection of funds for the merchants precisely not to confuse the key issue by threatening their livelihood.

The category of 'repression' has a double definition, the 'freedom from' and the 'freedom to' of the International Bill of Human Rights. Two categories have been added as concomitants of other types of violence: detention, locking people in (prisons and concentration camps) and expulsion, meaning locking people *out* (banishing them abroad, or to distant parts of the country).

The category of 'alienation' is based on 'socialization' in the sense of internalization of culture. There is a double aspect: to be desocialized, taken away from own culture, and to be resocialized into another, like the prohibition of one and the imposition of another language or religion. One of these does not presuppose the other. But they often come together in the category of second class citizenship, with the subjected group (not necessarily a 'minority') being forced to express dominant idiom and not their own, at least not in public space.

The problem is that any socialization of a child, in the family, at school, by society at large, is also brainwashing imposed upon a defenceless child. We might conclude that nonviolent socialization is to give the child a choice, e.g., by offering him/her more than the cultural idiom of the parents.

To discuss the categories of structural violence an image of a violent structure, and a vocabulary, a discourse, is needed to identify the aspects and see how they relate to the needs categories. The archetypical violent structure has exploitation as a centre-piece, meaning that some, the topdogs, get much more (here measured in needs currency) out of the interaction in the structure than others, the underdogs. There is 'unequal exchange'. Hiding behind this euphemism are in fact underdogs so disadvantaged that they die (starve, or wither away from avoidable diseases): Exploitation A. Or they may be alive in a permanent, unwanted state of misery, including malnutrition and illness: Exploitation B. Under A they die from the deficits, from having less. Under B they suffer, but linger on.

The way people die from exploitation differ in space and time. In the Third World typically from diarrhea and immunity deficiencies, and in the 'developed' countries

from avoidable and premature cardio-vascular diseases and malignant tumors. Toxic pollution and the stress induced by the social environment play a major role at the end of long and very ramified causal chains and cycles. Add to this the world No. 1 morbidity: unipolar depression (bipolar is No. 4). Clearly Nature has us programmed to die sooner or later. But an avoidable 'sooner' may have causes that are structural rather than natural. And most human beings prefer 'later', even much later. And the limits of the avoidable are pushed outward all the time.

A violent structure does not only leave marks on the human body but also on the mind and the spirit. The next four terms can be seen as parts of exploitation, or as reinforcing components in the structure. They function by impeding consciousness-formation and mobilization; two conditions for struggle against exploitation. *Penetration*, implanting the topdog mind inside the underdog so to speak, combined with *segmentation*, giving the underdog only a very partial view of reality, will impede consciousness-formation. *Fragmentation*, keeping the underdogs away from each other, with *marginalization* keeping the underdogs on the outside, will impede mobilization.

However, these four should also be seen as structural violence in their own right, and more particularly as variations on the general theme of structurally built-in alienation and repression. They have all been operating in gender contexts, as parts of patriarchy, even if women do not have higher mortality and morbidity rates but in fact higher life expectancy than men, provided they survive gender-specific abortion, infanticide, and the first years of childhood. Exploitation, alienation and repression go hand in hand, as violence, but are not identical.

So far the focus has been on vertical structural violence, on structures allocating human beings to niches where some get (much) more and some (much) less than others for basic needs. But there is also a horizontal structural violence where the person is trapped, equally and equitably, in a web of horizontal structures so tight that no individuation is possible. *Too tight*, and *too vertical*, do not exclude each other but add up to a structural too much. And there is also a *too little*, under-structuration rather than over-structuration, where the person is left without any structural steering or guidance.

How about violence against nature? There is the direct violence of slashing, burning etc., also like in a war. But the structural violence would be more insidious, not intended to destroy nature but nevertheless doing so by the pollution and depletion associated with chemical industry, leading to dying forests, ozone holes, global warming etc. What happens is transformation of nature through *industrialization*, leaving non-degradable residues and depleting non-renewable resources, combined with a world-encompassing *commercialization* that makes the consequences non-visible to the perpetrators. Two powerful structures at work, indeed, legitimized by economic growth. Consequently, the buzz-word 'sustainable economic growth' may turn out to be only a more refined form of cultural violence.

Let us turn to cultural violence as those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence—exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics)—that can be used to justify, legitimize direct or structural violence. Stars, crosses and crescents; flags,

anthems and military parades; the ubiquitous portrait of the Leader; inflammatory speeches and posters come to mind. However, the category is much broader.

Thus, mentioned above are 'aspects of culture', not entire cultures. A person encouraging a potential killer, shouting 'Killing is self-realization!' may prove that the English language is capable of expressing such thoughts, but not that the English language as such is violent. Entire cultures, or religions, can hardly be classified as violent; this is one reason for preferring the expression "Aspect A of culture C is an example of cultural violence" to cultural stereotypes like 'culture C is violent'.

On the other hand, cultures—like *machismo*, or fascism—could be imagined and even encountered, with not only one but a set of aspects so violent, extensive and diverse, spanning all cultural domains, that the step from talking about aspects of cultural violence to violent cultures may be warranted. For that conclusion, however, systematic research is needed.

One place to start would be to clarify 'cultural violence' by searching for its negation. If the opposite of violence is peace, the subject matter of peace research-studies, then the opposite of cultural violence would be 'cultural peace', meaning aspects of a culture that serve to justify, legitimize direct peace and structural peace. If many and diverse aspects of that kind are found in a culture it can be referred to as a 'peace culture'. A major task of peace research, and the peace movement in general, is the never-ending search for a peace culture. It is problematic, however, because of the temptation to institutionalize that culture, making it obligatory with the hope of internalizing it everywhere. And that imposition of a culture would already be direct violence-against identity.

Cultural violence makes direct and structural violence look and feel right, or at least not wrong. Just as political science is about two problems, the use of power and its legitimation, violence studies are about two problems, the use of violence and the legitimation of that use. Negative peace studies are about the non-use of violence and its delegitimation, and positive peace studies about the use of harmony and its legitimation. The psychological mechanism is always internalization. The study of cultural violence highlights the ways in which the acts of direct and structural violence are legitimized, internalized, and thus rendered acceptable in society.

Cultural violence may work by changing the moral colour of an act from red/wrong to yellow/permissible or even green/right; an example being 'murder on behalf of the country as right, on behalf of oneself as wrong'. Another way is by making reality opaque, permitting us not to see the violent act or fact, or at least not as violent. Obviously this is more easily done with some forms of violence than others; an example being *abortus provocatus*. Peace studies needs violence typologies; much like a pathology is among the prerequisites for health studies.

One such typology is given in Table 3.2. Focusing on visible and invisible effects of direct violence in six 'spaces'.

It is telling evidence of the materialism of our culture that usually only the first column is considered and the second column not. The military headquarter body counts in terms of numbers killed and wounded (only recently the numbers raped and displaced are sometimes included) is a caricature of reality.

Table 3.2 Visible and invisible effects of violence. *Source* The author

Space	Material, visible effects	Nonmaterial, invisible effects
NATURE	Depletion and pollution; damage to diversity and symbiosis	Less respect for non-human nature, reinforcing "man over nature"
HUMANS	*Somatic effects*: numbers killed numbers wounded numbers raped numbers displaced	*Spiritual effects*: bereavement traumas, hatred revenge addiction victory addiction
SOCIETY	The material damage to buildings, infra-structure	The structural damage the cultural damage
WORLD	The material damage to infra-structure	The structural damage the cultural damage
TIME	Delayed violence; land-mines transmitted violence; genetic	Structure transfer culture transfer; *kairos* points of trauma and glory
CULTURE	Irreversible damage to human cultural heritage	Violence culture of trauma, glory; deterioration of conflict-resolving capacity

The case is reminiscent of mainstream economic analysis with its focus on only material factors (nature/land, labour, capital) and their effect in producing and commercializing goods and services, adding it up as net and gross national products; but neglecting the enormous costs of "modernization" on nature, the human spirit, structure and culture in general. A major task of peace studies is to unmask the structural violence behind the cultural violence of economism, and the direct violence behind the cultural violence of militarism.

One aspect of militarist propaganda is how it makes the spiritual effects of direct violence invisible. Imagine an average of ten persons bereaved for each person intentionally killed: family, kith and kin, friends, close neighbours. The killed are dead, the bereaved are traumatized. The trauma may be converted to hatred that may be converted into revenge addiction. To this should be added the sense of glory and victory addiction that may result from being the winner, and we have two major mechanisms behind 'violence breeds violence'.

Two additional mechanisms are hinted at in Table 3.2:

- structural damage, the verticalization of structures organized for violence with hidden chains of command that easily become permanent features of countries liberated through violence;
- cultural damage, the rapid growth of a culture of violence to justify all the direct violence, with long lasting impact.

Conclusion: violence is a pathology, to be treated as such.