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# Violence

## Summary

**DEFINITION OF THE TERM:** Arriving at an adequate definition of the term “violence” is problematic due to the complexity involved in understanding the intentions of a perpetrator of violence. Different approaches to violence depend on the researcher’s methodological and contentual approach.

**HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TERM:** The article outlines the historical context of the various approaches to violence, including those of the Sophists and those formulated within modern political philosophy founded on the ideas of Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The two concepts differ but share the conviction that institutional violence used by a sovereign is an important aspect of enforcing legal order in a state.

**DISCUSSION OF THE TERM:** Violence is not a typical ethical problem. In this section of the article, the causes of violence are analysed and characterised from psychological, sociological, and cognitive science perspectives. Violent behaviour is treated as resulting from both individual and socio-institutional dysfunctions. Analysis is based on axiological theories (Max Scheler), political philosophy (Hannah Arendt), theories based on cognitive research on the causes of evil (Simon Baron-Cohen), and the findings of social psychologists and sociologists who investigate violence (Irena Pospiszyl, Agnieszka Widera-Wysoczyńska, Jacek Pyżalski).

**SYSTEMATIC REFLECTION WITH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:** The philosophical approach to violence seeks to

understand the essential nature of violence, which in the context of this article is understood as a key aspect of moral evil. We often encounter various forms of aggression and violence (both physical and mental) in social life. Recently, we have witnessed an intensification of verbal and pictorial violence within the media. This section of the article lists the publications that are devoted to violence (apart from those that are included in the References).

**Keywords:** institutional violence, ethical attitude, ethical personalism, ethics of nonviolence, Arendt, Baron-Cohen

## Definition of the term

Violence is present in all known societies. Although it is true that perpetrators of violence are always people with certain psychological predispositions, the functioning of an organization or a state can make certain processes weaker or stronger. In structures in which intimidation and violence are present, an atmosphere of constant fear and threat is created. Employees feel bad as they fail to develop and are oriented towards short-term and pragmatic goals; an internally conflicted company is one that ceases to develop. Social (political) ethics critically evaluates those situations in which violence is used. It is not only about stigmatising people who use violence but also about eliminating situations that are conducive to the emergence of phenomena based on violence.

Social (political) ethics analyses the phenomenon of violence as a form of moral evil which has certain observable direct consequences but also consequences that are remote in time. For the sake of order, it should be pointed out that there are circumstances in which we have a problem with an unequivocal assessment of violence as a moral evil. When used in self-defence, violence is a reaction to violence. On the one hand, according to the ethical imperative to protect one's own life, one must defend oneself against an aggressor; on the other hand, the use of violence in an act of retaliation is another form of moral evil. In the case of evil inflicted on us by another person, it is better to rely on legal norms and court decisions than on one's own judgment. Of course, this is not possible in a life-threatening situation to which we must react immediately. Then the question arises of what adequate means are when used for our defence. In this situation, violence may result from an unintended direct consequence of our actions. Generally, we deal with moral evil when the result of a person's act is harm done to himself or to another person or the violation of some public good of significant value. However, we have the right and the duty to protect our own lives even when – under certain circumstances – we have to use violence against a person who poses a potential threat to us.

Political ethics is interested in moral assessment of the social dimension of human life. This is particularly true of institutional structures in which certain human relationships are formed that are based on trust, cooperation, subordination, a motivational system, and punishment for

work not done properly. The fundamental question is whether the forms of institutional life that we know are just or whether they are based on some form of violence. Social ethics, as opposed to individual ethics, relates to institutional structures and has a specific moral action in mind: the sphere of *praxis* (Anzenbacher, 2010, pp. 16–18). This raises some questions: Do our institutions serve the common good? Do they generate some form of violence? Are employees of these institutions conscious perpetrators of violence or will-less tools who merely carry out the orders of their superiors? However, “will-lessness” or “thoughtlessness” is not being devoid of guilt, but rather it should be treated as an expression of an employee’s attitude whereby he gives up his conscious freedom of action in favour of subordination to an institution. In such a situation, an employee transfers moral responsibility to the decision-maker, who, in a way, makes decisions on his behalf. However, this results in the individual “escaping” moral responsibility or having a sense of guilt for the consequences of physical or mental violence, which is inappropriate.

Social (political) ethics is based on certain normative assumptions that result from the conviction that one should 1) respect the dignity of the human person, 2) care about the values of community life, 3) act responsibly, 4) realize the postulate of good communication, 5) maximize social benefits and minimize suffering. These principles are inscribed in specific ethical concepts: personalism, communitarianism, utilitarianism, the ethics of responsibility, and communication ethics (Anzenbacher, 2010, pp. 106–130). Any differences in the theoretical bases of these concepts do not affect the fact that they consider violence to be a moral evil. Based on values and accepted principles, the following are judged as appropriate/inappropriate and just/unjust: the behaviour of specific individuals; social relationships; actual communication practices; the rules under which individuals and institutions function; and management models in organisations. Ethical reflection that is based on the critical analysis of the functioning of institutional structures formulates proposals to change or improve these structures in order to eliminate violence; largely, this is done within ethical personalism.

Using the terms “good” and “evil” is problematic due to their ambiguity. This particularly applies to the concept of evil, especially when we focus on institutional violence, which involves not physical violence but

various forms of psychological violence (e.g. mobbing or other forms of psychological harassment). The perpetrator's subjective perception of what is good or bad may be different from what is considered good or bad from a social perspective and different from the point of view of the violation of fundamental moral principles and values, e.g. human dignity. Sometimes, violent individuals find justification for their behaviour or shift responsibility for it to external circumstances (e.g. alcoholism, poverty, violence inflicted on them by others) or to their victim; they may put the blame for their violent behaviour onto their victim with the specious justification that the victim provoked them to resort to violence. Moral facts can be analysed from different perspectives: those of perpetrators, victims, institutions, or witnesses. Subjective perception of a given behaviour does not affect the nature of the assessment of violent behaviour.

Institutional violence can be explained by excessive rivalry, which, instead of contributing to the efficiency and effectiveness of the institution, changes into devastating rivalry that undermines trust within the team. This is the case with competition for a job, salary, or for credits which translate into an assessment of an employee's usefulness. With the direct intention of improving the quality of the work of the team, rivalry may consequently lead to violence. Bullying is an indirect form of rivalry, and sometimes it is not intended by its perpetrator(s). However, understanding the psychological or social causes of violent acts does not change any negative moral evaluation of the act of violence itself.

## Historical analysis of the term

From the point of view of political ethics, the origins of philosophical reflection on violence should be sought in ancient concepts of political philosophy and philosophy of the state. In antiquity, the Sophists examined the issues related to the state and the rules governing life in the *polis*. Protagoras, the precursor of this trend, considered himself both a specialist in practical skills and a professional teacher of wisdom that was closely related to the *polis* (city-state) and its needs. His reflections were continued by Hippias, Gorgias, Thrasymachus, and Callicles. In ancient Greece, practical wisdom was treated (as it is today) as a way of earning social prestige, gaining lucrative employment, or as a means

to leading a fulfilled life. The main educational goal of the Sophists was to educate leaders. Leaders were chosen from among the wisest citizens, i.e. those who had mastered both political and communication skills (e.g. they were able to convince the citizens to support their ideas) and the art of rhetoric (in Greek: *techne*). A sage-politician must not be like a sheep dog but like a wolf among sheep. Referring to the metaphor of a wolf and sheep, the Sophists believed that the wolf-ruler gains control over a herd of sheep in the fight against other wolves. In certain circumstances, he must also use violence against sheep that do not submit to his will. The dispute over how to understand justice in the state that took place between the Sophists and Socrates and his disciple Plato influenced both ancient and later understandings of the foundations of social order in the state. The Sophists believed in axiological-ethical relativism and acknowledged that justice is a relative value and depends on the will of the ruler. Plato maintained an opposite position, i.e. axiological-ethical objectivism, which recognized justice as an objective value. When citizens of the *polis* learnt about justice, they were able to judge the acts of the ruler as just or unjust. Based on the Sophists' reasoning, it should be assumed that the will of the ruler and the principles of justice are the same. However, given the multidimensional nature of the various representatives of this trend, the Sophists' views on justice eventually led to the justification of tyranny and resorting to violence and coercion in order to enforce the obedience of the citizens (Korkiewicz, 1995, pp. 231–241).

In the context of exercising power in a state or an organisation, coercion often becomes a prelude to institutional violence. Much depends on how we define the moral competence of the person-citizen. In other words, what are we like by nature? If we consider that a person, at his deepest spiritual foundation, is good, then it is necessary to strengthen his positive attitude towards working with others in order to create community. This should be achieved by means of the maieutic method, which is a dialogical method that was proposed by Socrates to educate and persuade. This thesis was recognised by Aristotle, for example, who treated man as a *zoon politicon*, i.e. a social being. If we accept the opposite thesis that man is an egoist who is focused on his own pleasure or benefit – a creature capable of taking goods away from others – then we must control his selfish tendencies. Although Protagoras considered man good

by nature, the bloody conflicts between Greek poleis during the Peloponnesian War led younger Sophists to believe that man is an egoist. Man becomes a social being after a system of punishment is applied; through legally sanctioned violence, man is forced to accept the rules of life in a *polis*. Medieval philosophy was dominated by Aristotle's view of human nature, which did not, however, affect the fact that at that time institutional state violence and institutional ecclesiastical violence were frequently used tools for disciplining citizens and members of church communities. The origins of modern political philosophy are linked to Thomas Hobbes, who returned to a pessimistic view of human nature. An individual's inclinations to use violence against other individual, with the fear and insecurity that results from it, were a key reason for choosing a sovereign, i.e. a ruler whose will had to be obeyed. At the same time, this led to sanctioning the institutional violence used by rulers against their subjects (Hobbes, 2005, pp. 307–309). In Jean-Jacques Rousseau's concept, the sovereign is replaced by a people's assembly, but the essence of state compulsion based on violence does not change. According to Rousseau, man possesses elements of primordial good (conscience), but his human nature has been deprived by civilisation and determined by the desire to own property. Consequently, the introduction of new political rules that are based on the will of the people involves institutional violence. Law that is based on a social contract is a criterion for distinguishing between good and evil. When forced to engage in unwanted but at the same time necessary protection against the effects of the evil desire to possess goods and to have an advantage over others, the human mind decides to acknowledge violence and the system of penalties. In ancient, medieval, and modern concepts, the political order was based on the will of a sovereign – a single man or a group of people (Rousseau, 1956, pp. 176–187). The idea of exercising power based on impersonal rules that result from procedures and algorithms has only emerged in the modern era.

## Discussion of the term

From an axiological perspective, violence is a negative value that requires opposing by means of specific procedures. A moral action that is based on a sensitive conscience is a sign of opposition to a situation in which



violence is used. This is not just about inflicting violence on others, but also about reacting actively and responsibly when we witness actual or alleged violence ourselves. This includes situations involving violence in the workplace, domestic violence that we witness as neighbours, or verbal violence in public spaces. A lack of violence can be treated as an axiological opposition to violence. To broaden this perspective, following the German axiologist, Max Scheler, it can be claimed that positive values are those that encourage us to realize them, while negative values are those that encourage us to oppose them actively (Scheler, 1988, pp. 62–63). Thus, anti-violence values include respect for the other person, tolerance, recognition, trust, and the ability to cooperate despite different characters and attitudes to the world. However, not all behaviours can be tolerated, just as not all life strategies are acceptable. Tolerance should be understood as a value in relation to other values that define the principles of social coexistence. In this sense, one should not tolerate people resorting to violence. This is especially important when we talk about institutional structures in which superiors inflict violence on their subordinates. The demand to act for the good of an institution cannot be placed above the good of those working in it. Following the premises of ethical personalism and Catholic Social Teaching, we assume the primacy of man over objects and, consequently, the primacy of man over the good of the institution.

Descriptive social ethics can take advantage of the findings of moral psychology and cognitive science by looking, for example, for the causes of violence in the individual thinking and acting determinants of people with specific mental or social dysfunctions (psychopaths, sociopaths). The sociology of morality tells us where to look for the social causes of violence, most often as an element of determinants that are linked to family, economic, and/or organizational factors. In order to explain the phenomenon of violence, it is necessary to determine what conditions must be met for a given behaviour to be considered violent. Usually these conditions include the behaviour of the perpetrator(s), the intentions of the acting persons, and the consequences suffered by the victims of violence.

According to one definition of violence, it is

any non-incident act which damages an individual's personal freedom or contributes to the physical and psychological harm to a person that goes beyond the social rules of mutual relations (Pospiszyl, 2008, p. 57).

The subject literature distinguishes between physical and psychological violence. The former concerns behaviours that are related to the risk of bodily harm (regardless of whether it ultimately occurs) and which result in an actual injury to the victim. The latter, i.e. psychological violence,

consists of words and verbal and non-verbal behaviours or attitudes aimed to maintain control over another person by reducing his self-esteem, creating helplessness in him, and negatively affecting his perception of the meaning of life. Such actions are intentional in nature. The perpetrator will do anything to control the emotions and thoughts of the victim in order to satisfy his own needs (Widera-Wysoczyńska, 2010, p. 37).

These definitions point to the essential role of the intentional factor in the perpetrator's conduct. However, this issue is problematic, as it is not always possible to identify this intentional factor. A violent intention may be incorporated into a number of other intentions, or the perpetrator may not be aware of the fact that his organising activities involve violence. This is especially true in the case of psychological violence.

There is a difference between harming another person and inflicting violence. The former means an act of absolute evil, because it is impossible to do harm (to do evil) for the sake of good. It is not about people with psychopathic tendencies but about those considered "normal", well adapted to the rules of social life, and able to coexist and cooperate with others. It is important to realize that the term psychologically "normal" is problematic. It may just so happen that people with psychopathic or sociopathic tendencies work in institutions, but this does not explain the nature of institutional violence. For example, if the boss, who is not a psychopath, is the perpetrator of a violent act, his decision may benefit the institution in which he works even if it results in violence involving harm to his employees. In such a case, violence is simply a technical tool that is utilised to discipline employees and is aimed at improving the quality of the company's operations, for example by assigning new duties to an employee, changing his current duties, or replacing him with someone else, even though he has performed his duties well. This can result in psychological harm to employees, which can be expressed through professional burnout, depression, or suicide. This is especially true of people who are fragile and cannot cope with life's failures effectively. A person who resorts to institutional violence against employees

does not call it violence but associates it with actions that aim to optimize the functioning of the organization rather than actions that aim to harm others.

The functioning of an institution does not always involve violence: it is more often an aberration or a deviation from the norm, although it is inherent in human nature. However, within structures in which violence is in some sense considered a normal state of affairs, it ultimately translates into the quality of the employees' lives. When considered on a global scale, violent structures lead to economic exploitation, an increase of social inequalities, debt, and the instrumental treatment of human resources and natural goods. On the one hand, structural violence is associated with poverty, social exclusion, the professional incompetence of poorly educated people, and an inability to change one's pathological environment. On the other hand, structural violence leads to a loss of trust, a sense of helplessness, a lack of commitment to improving the functioning of the organisation and, as a consequence, a lack of hope that the individual will be able to change the pathological environment in which he lives or works (as he considers that it must remain this way). Interestingly, the perpetrators of institutional violence, as opposed to domestic violence, are most often kind, success-oriented people who have a good reputation regarding their professional competence and social skills.

An additional dimension of analyses of verbal violence concerns internet communication in which the intentions of the sender of the message are to ridicule, mock, offend, and harass. These terms refer to various forms of psychological violence. As a result of the uninhibited nature of the internet and the apparent anonymity it affords, its users believe that the need to observe the rules of proper public communication do not apply to them. Illusory anonymity (the internet is a public space) gives users a twisted consent to verbal aggression. Internet violence directed at specific recipients takes the form of electronic violence, called cyberbullying. A person who does such things is called a stalker. This phenomenon was investigated based on analysing the communication strategies of (mainly) young people. It seems that electronic aggression is now spreading amongst people of all ages and all walks of life (Pyżalski, 2012, 15–20). Among Polish-speaking internet users, problems that are related to the exchange of words based on aggression

concern disputes over political and worldview preferences. However, the issue of internet violence needs further study, which exceeds the scope of this article.

## Causes of violence

In the context of contemporary cognitive research, violence is associated with moral evil. The inclination to do evil to others is understood in terms of a lack of empathy, i.e. the ability to feel compassion and to co-think with others. This lack is treated as a kind of psychological dysfunction that results in inflicting pain and causing suffering to other people. The tendency of some people to inflict violence on others is frequently linked to the experiences of war and mass extermination during World War II. However, violence that is committed on a massive scale exposes a problem that is somehow inscribed in the human condition and is independent of time; violence is a behaviour that treats the other person instrumentally, i.e. as an object. From an ethical point of view, this behaviour means rejecting or not respecting the personalistic norm, i.e. the postulate to treat the other person and oneself as an end, never as a means. Immanuel Kant was the author of the personalistic norm, which was adapted to Christian thought by Karol Wojtyła (Wojtyła, 1986, pp. 67–68). Lack of empathy makes us treat other people as objects we can use to maximize economic profit, to give us pleasure, or to secure the realization of political or institutional goals.

All kinds of addictions, e.g. to drugs, alcohol, the internet, or work, are examples of the instrumental treatment of oneself. We usually do not equate such situations with violence towards ourselves, although there is much to suggest that we should. The number of things that one can become addicted to is huge. The essence of addiction lies in narrowing down and disrupting one's perception of the world. It manifests itself in a fear of losing control over oneself and other people. Addiction, with its related brain disorders, can lead to violence against others in order to maintain control over them and, indirectly, over oneself and one's own decisions. In their daily activities, most people do not show empathy for the needs and suffering of others unless they are our nearest and dearest, with whom we are emotionally connected. An emotional experience

of being angry with someone may lead us to consider the hypothetical harm we might want to do to this person, but in most cases we abstain from this. We remain at the level of imagining such a situation, but we refrain from actual action. From the researchers' point of view, it is interesting to consider why some people go beyond these images and use violence. This phenomenon is analysed in the context of empathy-related cerebral responses that are switched on or off. However, this is still not a conclusive study because we know little about the proper functioning of the human brain (Baron-Cohen, 2014, pp. 19–30).

When the switch for empathy is turned off, we think primarily of our own needs and interests. When the empathy switch is turned on, we take the welfare, interests, and situation of others into account. There are two stages of empathy: recognition and reaction. Both are necessary because they refer to sensitivity to harm being done and to an active attitude, i.e. one of helping the victim. A lack of empathy means that a perpetrator of violence is unable to feel compassion towards the victim or imagine that he might be in the victim's shoes one day, or that a witness of violence being inflicted on others is unable to oppose it. Passive observers often involuntarily agree to violence when they are not directly affected by it. In social psychology, this type of behaviour is explained by obedience to the authority principle (as shown in the experiments of the American psychologist Stanley Milgram, for example) or by the social proof principle. The former revealed that the presence of an authority figure (an experimenter dressed in a medical doctor's uniform) removed responsibility from most of the participants of the experiment. Under the influence of the presence of an authority, the participants decided to apply penalties that they probably would not have applied under other circumstances. Of course, the role of an authority can be played by the state, institutions, corporations, or other individuals who have the power to influence others psychologically and are able to convince the system's officers to use coercive measures, even when they involve some form of violence.

The lack of social reaction to evil experienced by others is explained by the social proof principle. People who witness violence or watch violence from a safe distance believe that someone else should react and actively oppose it, rather than themselves. Inactivity and withdrawal from reaction to evil very often leads to its involuntary acceptance and then a social escalation of violence. An extreme example of this type

of phenomenon is the increase in violence in totalitarian states (Hitlerism in Germany, Stalinism in the Soviet Union in the 20<sup>th</sup> century) and the associated passive attitude or even acceptance of the majority of society. This occurred in accordance with the belief that justified this passivity: that apparently the victims must have deserved it, which is why the system's officers use violence-based measures against them. A passive observer thinks that he is acting honestly and that it is not his business or that it will not happen to him. When the system's officers come for him, there is no one else to protest.

The social scale of empathic sensitivity varies; it is a continuum, at one end of which people have zero empathy. Alcohol intoxication, fatigue, and depression are examples of conditions that can reduce one's level of empathy. In the case of brain dysfunctions, a lack of empathy is associated with misunderstanding the rules of social life, as is the case with the mental disabilities of people on the autism spectrum. Other brain dysfunctions result in a tendency to use violence against others, which is the case with psychopaths and sociopaths, both of whom suffer from personality disorders characterized by a lack of empathy. These dysfunctions manifest themselves when an individual is under the influence of environmental factors and thus reacts in accordance with his genetic predispositions. Both factors, social and genetic, are equally important (Baron-Cohen, 2014, pp. 136–139).

The environmental factor is also an institutional factor. However, it is impossible to accept the thesis that institutional violence results merely from the fact that superiors and employees of an institution suffer from psychological disorders. The thesis that some professions attract people who lack empathy can be posed, especially when the use of violence is embedded in professional activities performed by uniformed officers of the police or the military, for example. This assumption does not explain all the pathologies of institutional systems, as they themselves produce internal pathologically violent situations.

When describing the phenomenon of witness passivity towards violence inflicted on others, the German philosopher Hannah Arendt came to interesting conclusions about evil within the system.

In every bureaucratic system the shifting of responsibilities is a matter of daily routine, and if one wishes to define bureaucracy in terms of political science, that is, as a form of government – the rule of offices, as contrasted to the rule of

men, of one man, or of the few, or of the many – bureaucracy unhappily is the rule of nobody and for this very reason perhaps the least human and most cruel form of rulership (Arendt, 2003, p. 64).

To describe the structures of institutionalised violence, Arendt used the technical metaphor of an employee (an officer within the system) understood as a cog in a machine. Such employees carry out orders without thinking about the meaning of their actions, and their individual responsibility is a marginal issue. Sometimes this takes place in circumstances in which the welfare of the individual is threatened by the loss of employment, livelihood, or a reduction in their living standards, for example. Sometimes the individual is not fully aware of his consent to violence because he is an opportunist; he wishes to avoid problems, or he looks for easy solutions. This refers to violence that one inflicts and violence that is inflicted on one. Employees are expected to approve and follow impersonal, parameterised, more or less clearly articulated rules of conduct. With time, and in accordance with the etymology of its Latin name, an organisation (or *organum*) wants to become a whole, so it demands more and more recognition and approval for its own priorities and assumes that the company's goals and mission are also its employees' goals and mission.

Within institutions, the perpetrators of violence are most often decent people who perform their duties perfectly, adhere to high standards in their private lives, and are exemplary parents to their children. As employees in the system, they stop thinking and compartmentalise their own responsibility into the narrow range of duties that are assigned to them. Hence, violence can be made trivial and mechanical and is no longer identified as a sign of moral evil. Under these circumstances, an employee's conscience, even when he does use it, will not allow guilt. In these circumstances, it is difficult to speak of awareness of moral guilt for an act that has been committed. Paradoxically, using and experiencing violence becomes an element of one's everyday professional activities and an element of distorted work regulations (Arendt, 2003, pp. 65–69). This argument does not excuse the perpetrators of violence because the legal and moral responsibility for the committed act concerns the individual. The problem is the violence mechanism of the institution itself.: its extreme forms can be observed during wars and social conflicts, but in a milder form this mechanism is part of almost all bureaucratic structures.

The expression “nobody’s rule” also deserves attention. We usually imagine the rule of tyrants (dictators) as a centralized source of power that enforces control over almost every aspect of the life of the individual (the citizens and workers). However, this form of nobody’s rule is in fact the rule of impersonal mathematical procedures and computer algorithms that translate into practice for employees’ social and professional lives. Our consenting to becoming subordinate to procedures makes us hostage to a system of rewards for compliance and penalties for non-compliance. In this way, violence blends into the system of penalties (and sometimes rewards) when a deserved prize is not awarded or when it is given to the obedient for their faithful service to the system. The ruler (the president of a corporation) of a hierarchical structure may be a friendly and sensitive person who is responsible for the proper mode of the functioning of the institution. He does not have to suffer from any psychological dysfunctions in order for an institution to act oppressively. He does not want evil for his employees and is empathic, which, however, does not affect the violent nature of the institution’s functioning. A person who manages an institution always has someone (a different kind of nobody) or something (social prestige, economic results, public opinion) to which he is actually or allegedly subordinate. In such a situation, violence is only a consequence of widespread oppression to which everyone is subject, and this is, interestingly, almost voluntary.

## Social ethics and violence: conclusions and recommendations

Is it possible to create non-violent institutions? Man is a free being and can influence the processes in which he functions. People work in institutions. The individual’s impact is often significantly limited either by his personal dysfunctions, such as his misunderstanding or poor understanding of the rules of social life, or by the hierarchical dependencies that exist within institutions. The lower the position of an employee within the structure, the less influence he has on the functioning of the institution as a whole. The efficiency and range – and thus the responsibility – of decision makers’ activities is greater than that of their subordinates. The vast majority of institutions are of a hierarchical nature; however, it



is important to be familiar with and to understand the individual and institutional causes of phenomena in which violence is manifested and to oppose them to the best of our ability. We should not give up hope of changing the functioning of institutions, even though the efforts of single individuals may have little social impact.

In Catholic Social Teaching, the problem of violence is treated as an aspect of moral evil which is linked with social injustice and the malfunctioning of sin-based human management structures. Because of pride and selfishness, people are hermetic in their understanding of the world and have an unhealthy need to dominate others. These tendencies manifest themselves in various institutions and take real shape within them; they are based on concrete forms of violence. Showing and describing various forms of social evil becomes the basis for a critical assessment of institutions and for defending the rights of the poor, the weak, the wronged, and the professionally excluded. The sharpness of this judgment depends on the scale of injustice and the forms of violence. The intent of Catholic Social Teaching is not to structure and organise social life but to guide and form the consciences of workers and superiors in order to improve their institutions. It is based on the assumption that man should strive to achieve a “complete form of humanism” in his personal and social life. The aim of Catholic Social Teaching is to liberate man from everything that oppresses us and to strive for the “development of the whole man and of all men” (Pontifical Council of *Justitia et Pax*, 2005, p. 126). The question that arises, however, is how we are to achieve this.

Throughout history, people have developed concepts of action that, by nature, were non-violent and yet led to radical social and political changes. This was the case with Gandhi’s non-violence movement and the Polish Solidarity movement, for example. The social movement that focused on the idea of solidarity in 1989 led to the collapse of structures based on violence in the block of socialist countries. In the case of the Ahimsa principle, promoted by Gandhi in India in the 1940s, and in the case of the “solidarity movement”, great importance was attached to the values and attitudes they upheld, such as friendship, kindness, the willingness to sacrifice one’s own life for the good of others, social justice, the defence of the weak and the wronged, and an understanding between people from different social groups, who often represented

different political views. Nowadays, people from Poland and Europe suffer from a lack of solidarity and have lost hope that something can be changed for the better in the world of politics and the functioning of institutions.

Enthusiasm for the social changes of those times is difficult to recreate now, although it is not impossible. The “fight without violence” idea advocates moving away from destruction and focusing on shaping a person’s ethical attitude by controlling individual desires and passions. A person’s ethics-based refusal to cooperate with a violence-governed state or institution is of great social significance. Even if only a handful of people refuse to cooperate with such states or institutions, this is not meaningless because it can affect others. Authentic social life is based on an ethical demand, which in fact consists of a radical and conscious responsibility for what is subject to individual human choices. The thoughtless acceptance of structures based on violence has no excuse. An ethical attitude that is directed at affirming the dignity of the human person consists in avoiding excuses for tolerating, using, or submitting to violence within institutions; in actively protesting against violence (even when it does not directly affect us); and in trying to oppose it as well as we can. This is based on ethical, metapolitical, and meta-institutional factors that confront us with people’s vulnerability and the harm that is done to them.

Human communities are communities because of the values they share. Developing and cultivating a community of values such as respect for the other person, the common good, solidarity, or social justice, involves a commitment to social life. A community of values does not mean political monism, in which everyone has to share the same views, but pluralism in terms of common values. This is desirable in order to appreciate the diversity of attitudes and forms of participation within society. The requirements of acceptance and our respect for difference lead us beyond the bounds of procedures and rigidly defined rules of conduct, thus liberating institutions from violent practices. An ethical attitude requires, on the one hand, openness to a diversity of views and attitudes and, on the other hand, affirmation of the fundamental value, i.e. human dignity.

The issue of violence has been analysed from different perspectives, including personal, social, economic, media, and ethical ones.

Researchers approach violence from a descriptive or normative perspective. In addition to the literature listed in the References section, the following works are worth recommending: 1) Jean-Hervé Lorenzi, Mickaël Berrebi. (2015). *Un monde de violences. L'économie mondiale 2016–2030*, 2) Agnieszka Lewicka-Zelent (ed.). (2017). *Przemoc rodzinna. Aspekty psychologiczne, pedagogiczne i prawne [Domestic violence. Psychological, pedagogical, and legal aspects]* Warszawa: Difin; 3) Simon Critchley. (2006). *Infinitely Demanding. A Political Ethics*; 4) Robert B. Cialdini. (2016). *Pre-suasion. A Revolutionary Way to Influence and Persuade*; 5) Bogdan Wojciszke. (2002). *Człowiek wśród ludzi. Zarys psychologii społecznej [A man among people. An outline of social psychology]*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar; 6) Józef Sowa. (2007). *Przemoc w aspekcie aksjologicznym [Violence in an axiological aspect]*. In: Beata Szluz (ed.), *Przemoc – konteksty społeczno-kulturowe [Violence – social and cultural contexts]*. Vol. 1: *Społeczne i psychologiczne aspekty zjawiska [Social and psychological aspects of the phenomenon]*, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, pp. 12–15.

The following book by a French management theorist, Frederic Laloux, deserves special attention: Frederic Laloux, *Reinventing Organizations* (2014). In this publication, the author presents an alternative to the authoritarian and hierarchical model of management, i.e. turquoise management, which has an important advantage as it eliminates the traditional causes of institutional violence. It should be verified in practice as to whether the turquoise management model is feasible within various institutional structures.

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