

1

The Concept of Violence

Understanding political violence is a principal preoccupation for anyone interested in politics, professional politicians and social scientists alike, which explains why in recent years there has been an influx of books on the topic of political violence, widely defined. The proliferation of interest in political violence in academic circles is to be welcomed. In particular the empirically-driven output from sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists and political scientists has been relentless, impressive in its quantity if not always its quality.

In recent years the bulk of these publications have tended to be edited volumes based on ethnographic case studies rich in the exposé of violence in all its forms, from hate crime to genocide.¹ Generally speaking each case study is informative and revealing, yet the reluctance of the editors to ground the disparate ethnographic case studies on a shared definition of violence takes away from the theoretical value of these books. We may learn a great deal about specific acts of political violence occurring within certain cultures in different parts of the world, without necessarily having a better understanding of the meaning of violence as a universal concept. At best these volumes remind us of the complexity of violence, they do not help us to understand it.

One of the aims of this book is to argue for the need of a clear, universally valid definition of violence, to be formulated with the help of the unfashionable but reliable technique of conceptual analysis. In the last analysis, distinguishing a violent act from an act of violence (Chapter One), attempting a comprehensive definition of violence (Chapter Two), deciding whether omissions that

allow harm to occur should count as acts of violence (Chapter Three), specifying the role that intentionality plays in an act of violence (Chapter Four), and highlighting the main features of the concept of violence (Chapter Five) is the sort of invaluable contribution that only philosophical conceptual analysis can make, bringing clarity and precision in an area of research still very much confused and confusing. Furthermore, it is only after the concept of violence has been defined, and its many obscure aspects clarified, that normative questions can be asked about the nature of an act of violence, for example determining why violence is bad and *prima facie* wrong (Chapter Six), revealing the overlap between political violence and social injustice (Chapter Seven and Eight), or establishing when and how violence can be justified (Chapter Nine).

For the most part this book will ignore the extensive empirical research on political violence, with the exception of specific examples throughout the book which only serve the purpose of elucidating theoretical distinctions or principles, and one longer specific case study on exploitation in Chapter Eight. The decision to restrict the scope of this work to questions of a more theoretical nature should not be interpreted as an indictment on empirical research, since there are some outstanding works in this tradition.² But it would be impossible to do justice to the full complexity of the phenomenon of political violence in one short book, therefore our scope will necessarily have to be much more modest, restricted to a philosophical analysis of the concept of violence.

One of the aims of this book is to propose and defend a new definition of the concept of violence. This task will be undertaken in Chapter Two, where an account of violence as a violation of integrity will be put forward. Of course any attempt to present a 'new' definition of a concept necessarily builds upon the previous history of this concept. The concept of violence is not an exception. Thus, the idea of violence as a violation of integrity builds upon two other well-known historical approaches to understanding the nature of violence. The first approach, which takes a minimalist line, defines violence as an act of excessive physical force. The other approach, which takes a broader line, suggests a definition of violence in terms of a violation of rights. These two approaches will be the subject of this first chapter. It is necessary to explore both the strengths and weaknesses of these two approaches not only as a mark of respect for all the important work that philosophers have done over the years, but also in order

to show how a new definition of violence, as violation of integrity, goes beyond what we already know about the idea of violence.

The aim of this first chapter is therefore to provide the reader with an overview of the scholarship, over the last 100 years, concerning the concept of violence. Readers who are not interested in the history of this concept may safely skip this chapter and start directly from Chapter Two. But for those who have an interest in seeing how the meaning of a concept, such as violence, has developed over the course of the twentieth century, this chapter will cover the following areas. Parts I and II will start by investigating the syntax and etymology of the word 'violence', followed in Parts III and IV by an account of the two dominant ways of thinking about violence, respectively as an act of excessive force, and as a violation. Part V will suggest that these two approaches correspond to what may be called a Minimalist and a Comprehensive Conception of Violence.

Part I: The syntax of violence

It is important not to confuse 'violent' (the adjective) with 'violence' (the noun), since a violent act is not always an act of violence, and vice-versa an act of violence need not always be violent. As Harris (1980, 14) reminds us, 'the descriptive use of 'violent' concentrates on the quality, the character, of the act itself, while it seems that it is the consequences, or perhaps also the intended consequences of such acts, which lead us to classify them as acts of violence'. The term 'violent' is an adjective, which qualifies a certain act or person. When a certain act is defined as being 'violent', it means that the act has exceeded some generally recognized limit or norm.³ If I brush my teeth with excessive vigour, causing my gum to bleed, I am performing a violent act, to the extent that some limit regarding how much force to use when brushing one's teeth was exceeded. The fact that I am brushing my teeth violently does not mean that I am indulging in an act of violence.

Similarly while most acts of violence entail violent acts, that is not always the case. Just as there are violent acts that are not acts of violence, there are also acts of violence that do not require violent acts. Slamming the door with all my force is a violent act, which may or may not be an act of violence. If at home alone I slam the door to my room in frustration, I am performing a violent act although not an act of violence. But if I deliberately slam the door on your

Table 1.1 Violent acts and acts of violence

	Act of violence	Act of non-violence
Violent act	Slamming the door on your hand	Slamming the door in frustration
Non-violent act	Gently closing the door of your cell and throwing away the key	Gently closing the door

hand, then I am performing both an act of violence and a violent act. And if I gently close the door to lock you into a cell, and I proceed to carefully dispose of the key leaving you to starve to death, I am performing an act of violence although not a violent act.

Perhaps what distinguishes a violent act from an act of violence is the degree of intentionality intrinsic to the latter. The question of intentionality is extremely complex, and I mention it here only to set it aside until Chapter Four, where the orthodox view whereby an act of violence is automatically equated with an intentional act will be challenged. For the time being, I suggest we work on the assumption that an act of violence is by definition intentional.

Going back to the distinction between violent acts and acts of violence, the permutations of the way violent acts interact with acts of violence are represented in Table 1.1.

Part II: Violence – a linguistic analysis

The term ‘violence’ is derived from the Latin *violentia*, meaning ‘vehemence’, a passionate and uncontrolled force. Yet because acts of excessive force frequently result in the violation of norms, rights or rules, the meaning of violence is often conflated with that of ‘violation’, from the Latin *violare*, meaning ‘infringement’. Indeed most attempts to define violence tend to combine the idea of an act of physical force with a violation. Thus for example Honderich (2002, 91; 2003, 15) defines violence as ‘a use of physical force that injures, damages, violates or destroys people or things’, while Steger (2003, 12) points out that violence ‘comprises a range of meanings, including “to force”, “to injure”, “to dishonor”, and “to violate”’.⁴

The prevailing synthesis between 'violence' and 'violation' is not necessarily to be welcomed, as it may lead to growing confusion rather than clarity.⁵ In fact while acts of excessive physical force often entail some form of violations, as in the case of rape, there are times when a violation occurs without the need of any excessive physical force, for example when a victim of rape was drugged before the event, or alternatively acts of excessive physical force may take place without anything or anyone being violated, as in the case of consensual sex of a particularly rough nature. For this reason, in what follows the relationship between violence and force, and between violence and violations, will be reviewed independently of each other. Separating issues of physical force from issues of violations has the virtue of identifying two competing perspectives on violence, where the approach taken will determine whether the concept of violence ought to be defined narrowly (violence as force) or more broadly (violence as violation).

Before we move on to examine these two approaches in more detail, it may be useful to clarify how the term violence ought to be distinguished from other terms of a similar nature, such as 'power', 'aggression' and 'coercion'. Arendt (1969), in her still very influential study on violence,⁶ suggests two reasons why violence should not be confused with power. First, because power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act *in concert*. Secondly, because power is an end in itself, whereas violence is by nature instrumental. Both claims are rather odd to say the least. The claim that power requires concerted action seems totally arbitrary. Whether we follow Weber in defining power as the ability to get outcomes despite resistance, or alternatively we take the more recent rational choice approach whereby power is defined as the ability to change the incentive structures of another actor or actors to bring about certain outcomes,⁷ the fact remains that power applies equally to single individuals as it does to groups. It is also puzzling why Arendt feels that power is an end in itself. As Barry (1989, 271) points out, the importance of the desire for power as an end in itself, perhaps because it is intrinsically gratifying, is often overestimated as a motive force in politics:

if we take care to avoid this kind of cheap and fashionable cynicism we shall, I believe, conclude that in the great majority of cases people value power because of the chance it gives them to bring

about states of affairs that they desire, and not primarily for any intrinsic gratification that they derive from power itself.

Barry suggests that we adopt an instrumental view of power, as a means to an end, and he is absolutely right on this point.

Notwithstanding my misgivings regarding Arendt's account of power, she is absolutely right in suggesting that we distinguish the concept of power from that of violence. It seems to me that the difference between these two concepts can be expressed more simply in the following terms. Power is, by definition, a dispositional concept, something that people who possess it have the option to use.⁸ Violence is different. Violence is not something we possess or not possess, it is not a capability we either have or not have, instead violence is something we do. Violence is the term we use in relation to an act, which refer to the process and/or the consequences of a certain action.

Regarding the distinction between violence and aggression, Bäck (2004, 223), argues that an aggression is made up of three components, namely forcefulness, intentionality and injury: 'We may then define "aggression" as "a forceful action, done intentionally by an agent, of a type of action that tends, or intends, to reduce both the freedom or the genetic fitness of those affected by that action"'. Bäck suggests that violence is in many ways similar to aggression, to the extent that violence also entails forcefulness, intentionality and injury, but with an added twist. Whereas aggression has no moral dimension, violence is morally loaded. That is to say, we may be able to eliminate the notions of moral evil from the concept of aggression, but we cannot do the same with the concept of violence, for as Bäck (2004, 223) points out: 'to call something "violent" is often to give it at least a *prima facie* reason why is it morally wrong'.

For the most part Bäck's account is correct, especially on the moral dimension present in the idea of violence but lacking in the idea of aggression. There are, nevertheless, at least two problematic issues with Bäck's analysis. First, as previously mentioned, it is imperative to distinguish 'violent' from 'violence', something that Bäck fails to do. Violent is to aggressive as violence is to aggression. The difference is that whereas violent and aggressive are adjectives that can be used to describe an agent or an action, violence and aggression refer to the action itself. But as we said before, an act of violence may not

be violent, just as an aggression may not require the perpetrator to be aggressive. There is also a problem with the issue of intentionality. Bäck claims that both aggression and violence by definition assume intentionality. That may be the case for aggression, but not for violence, which can be either intentional or unintentional. The question of intentionality (and non-intentionality) is crucial for an accurate understanding of violence, indeed it will be the central issue in Chapter Four.

Finally, the difference between violence and coercion. At the most general level, coercion undermines voluntariness, therefore in order to grasp the concept of coercion, we need to understand the meaning of voluntary and involuntary actions. This is a tall order. As Wertheimer (1987, 4) points out: 'while the principle that coercion undermines voluntariness may be uncontroversial, it is less clear what constitutes the coercion or duress that violates the voluntariness principle'. Much of the debate on coercion deals with the question whether coercion applies specifically and exclusively to interpersonal threats, or whether it also applies to circumstances that limit alternatives.⁹ Leaving this issue aside, I suggest we define an act of coercion as any act in which A (a person) directly or indirectly interacts with B (another person) so that B does Y (some action), even though B was in the process of doing, or about to do X (some other action).

Clearly the concepts of violence and coercion are close relatives, but they are not identical twins, therefore they should not be confused. First of all, as Miller (1971) points out, while violence can be used to coerce, in which case violence is a form of coercion, not all acts of violence are necessarily acts of coercion, since it is possible for coercion to occur without violence. For example, when a rapist uses violence to force a woman to have sex with him against her will, violence is used to coerce the woman. But violence and coercion can diverge, as when a deranged, armed individual goes into a public school and starts shooting innocent victims. This person is clearly performing an act of violence, but not an act of coercion, since they are not trying to get the victims to do Y instead of X. In these incidents, which are more common than they ought to be, it would appear that the perpetrator has one tragic aim, namely to kill innocent people, not to change their actions.¹⁰ Similarly, coercion can occur without violence, for example when I use moderate force to restrain a child

chasing a football from running across the road. In this case I am using coercion to prevent the child from doing a specific action, against his will, but I am not using or doing violence to the child.

There is also another issue that distinguishes an act of coercion from an act of violence. Coercion is by definition an act that undermines voluntariness, to the extent that the person being coerced ends up doing something against their will. But this is not always the case with violence. There are times when violence occurs even when the actions of the victim are voluntary, for example when in the past women in China voluntarily endorsed the practice of footbinding,¹¹ or when someone desperate for a job accepts working conditions that are highly dangerous, as in the case of miners in Africa or South America. In Volume 1 of *Capital* (Chapter XV 9) Marx points out that in a scotching mill at Kildinan, near Cork (Ireland) between 1852 and 1856 there were six fatal accidents and sixty mutilations, which could have been prevented by the simplest appliances, at a very small cost to the mill owners. I would argue that this is a case of violence, even though the workers were not forced by the owners to accept the job, but did so voluntarily.

Having distinguished the idea of violence from the concepts of power, aggression and coercion, we can now return to the task of defining the concept of violence. In what follows, two rival ways of understanding violence will be assessed, namely violence as force and violence as a violation.

Part III: Violence as force

Coady (1986) is probably right when he reminds us that the normal or ordinary understanding of the term 'violence' is in terms of interpersonal acts of force usually involving the infliction of physical injury, which suggests that the concept of violence cannot be understood independently from the concept of force. Indeed most definitions of violence assume that force plays a determining role. This strong affinity between the terms 'violence' and 'force' would appear to be vindicated by the Oxford English Dictionary, where violence is defined as 'the exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury on, or cause damage to, person or property'.

Notwithstanding its linguistic roots and common perception, the relationship between violence and force is one of the most debated

issues in the literature on violence. On one side there are those who have no qualms about defining violence in terms of force.¹² One of the earliest and most authoritative representatives of this group is the American pragmatist John Dewey. In a series of articles originally published in 1916, Dewey (1980, 246) argues that violence is force gone wrong, or in other terms force that is destructive and harmful: 'energy becomes violence when it defeats or frustrates purposes instead of executing or realizing it. When the dynamite charge blows up human beings instead of rocks, when its outcome is waste instead of production, destruction instead of construction, we call it not energy or power but violence'.

It is important to emphasize that Dewey is not saying that force and violence are synonymous. Clearly not all force is violence (rescuing someone from drowning or preventing someone from harming themselves), just as not all acts of violence require the use of force (murder by poisoning). Instead according to Dewey it is only when force becomes destructive and harmful that it turns into an act of violence.¹³ Apart from being destructive, it is generally assumed that an act of excessive force must also be deliberate (by the perpetrator) and unwanted (by the victim). Thus Gert (1969, 616) says that 'some might define an 'act of violence' as an unwanted intentional violation', and Keane (1996, 66–67) defines violence as 'the unwanted physical interference by groups and/or individuals with the bodies of others, which are consequentially made to suffer a series of effects ranging from shock, bruises, scratches, swelling or headaches to broken bones, heart attack, loss of limbs or even death'.

The reason for specifying the unwanted nature of an act of violence is in order to distinguish an act of violence, like torture, from other acts of intentional, excessive force that are clearly not acts of violence, such as surgery. The qualification of what is wanted or unwanted is revealed by what one consents to as opposed to what one does not consent to, where the implication is that what is being consented to, be it a wanted intentional violation or a wanted physical interference, cannot be an act of violence. The simple equation from what is being consented (not consented) to what is wanted (unwanted), is perhaps too simplistic, and should be resisted. Just like in the case of actions that do not always reveal our preferences, consent is a poor indicator of what is wanted or unwanted.¹⁴ It follows that simply assuming that an act of violence is always 'unwanted' increases the

risks that clear examples of violence, of a structural or institutional nature, are not recognized for what they really are.

Just because people consent to certain practices, and may even appear as if these practices are not unwanted, it does not mean that violence is not taking place. Rape laws in most parts of the world, including many states in the US, continue to require proof of physical force, where the 'force' must physically compel the woman to submit. But as Schulhofer (1998, ix-x) argues, there is a great deal of unwanted sex, which results from threats, coercive 'offers', and abuses of power, trust, and professional authority, that is considered consensual simply because it does not leave signs of severe physical abuse:

unwanted sex pervades the landscape of workplace interactions, relationships with doctors and lawyers, and contacts with strangers, acquaintances, and even our dating partners. Physically violent rape is its most obvious instance, but not its most common form. Sex can be compelled by overt brutality, by physical intimidation, by the coercive effects of status, power, or authority, and by the manipulative abuse of trust. . . . Sex can be coerced in a multitude of ways that the law tolerates and sometimes tacitly encourages.

Fully consensual acts of sexual perversions may also lead to some confusion about what is wanted and what is an act of violence. There is a tendency to suggest that acts of BDSM (bondage, discipline, dominance, submission) do not constitute acts of violence. This is in fact incorrect. Those who support BDSM and other erotic power exchange practices argue that such activities are morally acceptable because they are fully consented by the participating agents, and indeed they are right.¹⁵ Yet the fact that there is voluntary, informed consent between adults of a clear mind engaging in acts of BDSM does not mean that there is no violence being done. It only means that the violence being done or received can be justified on ethical grounds, but these remain acts of violence nevertheless. The definition of violence should not be confused with the justification of violence, and wanted violent physical violations remain acts of violence.

Apart from wrongly assuming that acts of violence are always unwanted, there also appears to be an underlying problem with any

attempt to define violence in terms of excessive force.¹⁶ Wolff (1969, 604) defines force as 'the ability to work some change in the world by the expenditure of physical effort', and Hannah Arendt (1969, 44–45) points out that

Force, which we often use in speech as a synonym for violence, especially if violence serves as a means of coercion, should be reserved, in terminological language, for the 'forces of nature' or the 'force of circumstances' (*la force des choses*), that is, to indicate the energy released by physical or social movements.

These two definitions underscore a fundamental qualitative difference between 'force' and 'violence'. First, force (like power) is a dispositional concept, to the extent that it refers to an ability or potentiality. Violence on the other hand refers to the action itself, or as Audi (1971, 50) points out, 'violence in this sense is always *done*, and it is always done *to* something, typically a person, animal or piece of property'. Secondly, violence is an evaluative concept, perhaps even a normative concept, while force (like aggression) is not.¹⁷ It is perhaps the moral neutrality of the concept of force that leads Hannah Arendt (1969) to dismiss its usefulness when searching for the meaning of violence.

So far we have explored the possibility of defining violence in terms of excessive force. While this approach has the merit of explaining many cases of violence, it also fails to explain many other cases that ought to be classified under the heading of violence. This suggests that perhaps we need to rethink the idea of violence along different lines, whereby it is not the forcefulness of the act that determines whether it qualifies as an act of violence, instead it is the violation endured by the victim that becomes the central issue.

Part IV: Violence as violation

We have seen that violence can be defined in terms of the notion of force. Alternatively, violence can be conceptualized in terms of the verb 'to violate', meaning to infringe, or transgress, or to exceed some limit or norm. Newton Garver (1973) goes as far as to suggest that the idea of violence is much more closely connected with the idea of violation than it is with the idea of force.¹⁸ Following Garver, many

contemporary theorists of violence have converged on the idea of defining violence in terms of a violation, although there seems to be some disagreement about what exactly is being violated when an act of violence takes place.¹⁹

The most popular answer to the question 'violation of what?' is 'violation of rights'. Unfortunately the immediate appeal of this answer is misleading. If violence is the violation of rights, then naturally one ought to say something about the nature of rights being violated. This next step is imbued with difficulty. There are at least three distinct ways of conceptualizing the set of rights that are being violated by an act of violence. First, we could be talking about the violation of personal rights, or those rights essential to personality. Garver (1968; 1973) is the best known exponent of this position. He argues that rights are of two kinds, referring to either the body or the dignity of the person.²⁰ Secondly, we could be talking about the violation of the right to ourselves, widely defined. This answer finds favour with those political philosophers who endorse the thesis of self-ownership, thus for example Nozick (1974, ix) famously tells us that 'individuals have rights, and there are things no person or group may do to them (without violating their rights)... any more extensive state [beyond a minimal state] will violate persons' rights not to be forced to do certain things, and is unjustified'. Finally, we could be talking about the violation of human rights, widely defined to include any obstacle or impediment to the fulfilment of a basic need. Galtung (1969) is perhaps the best-known advocates of this position, which is still very popular especially amongst radical opponents of globalization. For example Jamil Salmi (1993, 17) defines violence as 'any avoidable action that constitutes a violation of a human right, in its widest meaning, or which prevents the fulfilment of a basic human need'. He goes on to say that each time human beings starve or are undernourished because of social or political reasons, it is legitimate to consider these people as the victims of social violence.

The appeal of defining violence in terms of the violation of rights is evident, but once again further analysis exposes at least two intrinsic problems with this line of reasoning. Albeit rare, there are cases of violence occurring without rights being violated. This point has been made by Audi (1971, 59): '[while] in the most usual cases violence involves the violation of some moral right... there are also cases, like wrestling and boxing, in which even paradigmatic violence can

occur without the violation of any moral right'. Another objection regards the all-inclusive concept of rights being violated. Apart from the violation of our basic rights, such as the right to life, to personal security and to liberty, violence is understood to include also the violation of our socioeconomic rights. Yet the broader our definition of human rights, the more pervasive and inescapable violence becomes. Almost any act can be said to violate someone's rights, making violence ubiquitous and therefore meaningless. As Joseph Betz (1977, 341) points out: 'If violence is violating a person or a person's rights, then every social wrong is a violent one, every crime against another a violent crime, every sin against one's neighbour an act of violence'.

Part V: Minimalist vs comprehensive violence

So far two different ways of approaching the idea of violence have been investigated: violence as excessive force and violence as a violation. The first approach leads to a narrow conception of violence, while the second approach leads to a broader conception. Defining violence in terms of excessive or destructive force has the important advantage of delineating clear boundaries around what constitutes an act of violence, avoiding therefore the tendency to use the term violence as synonymous for everything that is evil or morally wrong.²¹ This in part explains why Norman Geras (1990, 22) suggests that violence be defined simply as 'the exercise of physical force so as to kill or injure, inflict direct harm or pain on, human beings', while Bill Starr (2006, 55) restricts his analysis of violence to physical violence: 'the notion of the use of physical force to the extent that it damages the recipient of the physical force will suffice as a working stipulation of what constitutes violence'. Definitions of violence that emphasize the notion of physical force deliberately used to cause suffering or injury will be referred to as the Minimalist Conception of Violence (MCV).²²

There is much to be said for precise, tight definitions of key concepts, therefore from a purely analytical point of view the MCV is to be welcomed. The problem with the MCV is that by restricting acts of violence to intentional, direct, physical acts against other persons the MCV misses out on too many other important dimensions of the phenomenon of violence. For example, in his influential and still

powerful definition of violence, Audi (1971, 59) reminds us that an act of violence can be physical or psychological, aimed at persons, animals, or property, as suggested by his definition of violence:

Violence is the physical attack upon, or the vigorous physical abuse of, or vigorous physical struggle against, a person or animal; or the highly vigorous psychological abuse of, or the sharp, caustic psychological attack upon, a person or animal; or the highly vigorous, or incendiary, or malicious and vigorous, destruction or damaging of property or potential property.

One of the major virtues of Audi's definition is the acknowledgment that violence has a psychological dimension. This has particular resonance within the growing literature on family violence, where the psychological impairment that comes from living under constant threat and fear of violence is recognized as being part of what constitutes domestic violence.²³ Similarly the growing literature of testimonies from genocide or torture survivors also suggests that psychological violence may be the worst aspect of an act of violence, even worse than physical violence.²⁴

Another problem with the MCV is that it seems to be oblivious to the most pervasive and destructive form of violence: structural or institutional violence. In his ground-breaking article on violence, peace and peace research, Galtung (1969) distinguishes between 'direct violence', where the instigator of an act of violence can be traced to a person or persons, and 'structural violence', where there may not be any person who directly harms another person. In structural violence the violence is built into the structure, and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances. Galtung is undoubtedly right when he reminds us that structural violence is more deadly and destructive than direct violence.²⁵

The attempt to broaden our understanding of violence, either along Audi's or Galtung's lines, may be referred to as the Comprehensive Conception of Violence (CCV).²⁶ As we have already seen, advocates of the CCV maintain that there are some notable advantages with going beyond the MCV, yet there are also serious problems with the CCV that must be confronted. For example, by introducing a psychological component Audi would appear to offer only a more obscure and less precise definition of violence. It is true that according

to Audi not all psychological abuses are acts of violence, but only 'vigorous' psychological abuses, yet as Audi himself recognizes, the term 'vigorous' is inherently vague, and perhaps even subjective.²⁷ A problem of an analogous nature troubles Galtung's notion of structural violence. When Galtung (1969, 168) explains that 'violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations', he fails to appreciate that this definition is much too inclusive, its scope much too broad. Not surprisingly Galtung has attracted much criticism, for example from Keane (1996, 66) who takes a very dismissive stand: 'attempts (such as John Galtung's) to stretch its meaning to include "anything avoidable that impedes human realization" effectively makes a nonsense of the concept [of violence], linking it to a questionable ontological account of "the satisfaction of human needs" and making it indistinguishable from "misery", "alienation" and "repression"'.²⁸

For definitional purposes, it is crucial to delineate the boundaries of what constitutes an act of violence. At present there appears to be no agreement regarding this issue, with some arguing for a narrower scope (MCV), while others defend a broader scope (CCV). This debate cannot be settled here, although it is important to emphasize that behind the controversy between the MCV and the CCV, there is a fundamental disagreement of a different nature, namely whether violence should be defined from the point of view of the perpetrators (violence as intentional, destructive force) or alternatively from the point of view of the victims (violence as a violation). There is of course a third alternative, yet not fully explored in the literature, which is to define violence from the point of view of an impartial spectator or third-party. This approach will be the subject of the next chapter, together with a working definition of the concept of violence that falls between the MCV and the CCV; namely, violence as loss of integrity.

Part VI: Conclusion

The problems of violence may be cardinal to a proper understanding of political life, yet the concept of violence remains elusive and often misunderstood. It was 1906 when Georges Sorel (1961, 60), the French social theorist of anarcho-syndicalism, remarked: 'the

problems of violence still remain very obscure'.²⁹ Writing sixty years later, Arendt (1969, 35) commented that 'what Sorel remarked sixty years ago . . . is as true today as it was then'. We can confidently say that what Arendt remarked forty years ago is also as true today as it was then.

Compared to Sorel's time, or even Arendt's time, today we have access to a much greater pool of empirical case studies on violence. The many different forms of political violence, including terrorism, civil disobedience, genocide, war and revolutions, all enjoy their own growing and specialized bodies of literature, while philosophical investigations of the concept of violence seem to be lagging behind.³⁰ In undertaking the almost impossible task of trying to make sense of the many definitions of violence, this chapter has focused on two predominant ways of thinking about this concept. The minimalist approach (MCV) sees violence as an act of intentional, excessive force, while the comprehensive approach (CCV) sees violence as a violation of rights. The ideological and methodological gulf between these two approaches is so fierce and deep-seated that one is left wondering whether there are not one but two concepts of violence. In the next chapter, an alternative to these two approaches will be put forward, which may succeed in capturing the virtues of these two rival conceptions while avoiding the pitfalls: the theory of violence as violation of integrity.

Notes

1. Recently published edited volumes on violence include Apter (1997); Turpin and Kurtz (1997); Besteman (2002); Worcester *et al.* (2002); Stanko (2003); Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004a).
2. See for example Gurr (1989; 1993), and Fearon and Laitin (1996; 2000).
3. Wolin (1963, 23–24) argues that 'violence' derives from either the Latin *violentia*, which meant 'vehemence', or from the verb *violare*, which means 'to treat with violence'. The latter carries the additional notion of exceeding some limit or norm. These meanings are reflected in the verb 'to violate'.
4. See also Riga (1969); Wade (1971).
5. See Van den Haag (1972).
6. See for example Bar On (2002).
7. Weber's analysis of power can be found in Weber (1978). For the rational choice approach to the concept of power, see Dowding (1991; 1996).

8. The best philosophical account of power is still, arguably, to be found in Morriess (1987).
9. Nozick (1969) famously argues that coercion does not apply to circumstances, but only to interpersonal threats.
10. While most people are familiar with the tragic events in Dunblane, Scotland (March 13, 1996), where sixteen children and one teacher lost their lives, and Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado (April 20, 1999), where fourteen students (including two killers) and one teacher were killed, it may come as a surprise that since 1996 there have been fourteen different incidents of school shootings worldwide.
11. Footbinding will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.
12. Apart from Coady (1986) see also Graham and Gurr (1969); Nieburg (1969); Audi (1971); Gotesky (1974); Geras (1990); Keane (1996); Steger (2003).
13. Ladd (1991, 27) goes as far as to say that 'destructiveness is the essence of violence'.
14. On the problem of revealed preferences, see Sen (1982).
15. On consent and the ethics of BDSM, see Archard (1998).
16. See Miller (1971).
17. Wolff (1969) argues that force, unlike violence, is morally neutral; Holmes (1973) suggests that the concept of violence is evaluative, although this does not make violence wrong by definition; Garver (1973) maintains that the concept of violence is a moral concept.
18. In 1973 Garver revised and expanded his original article 'What Violence Is' first published in 1968. See Garver (1968; 1973).
19. Waldenfels (2006, 80) argues that from the victim's point of view there are three possible answers to the question 'who or what can be violated?': something, a general rule, or somebody. He goes on to dismiss the first two, on the grounds that violence against things can be interpreted as an indirect violence against persons, and that not every case of breach of a rule is an act of violence. That leaves the third option, where violence ascribes the violation to somebody to whom it is done: 'Thus, violence has an addressee, someone from whom life is taken, to whom death is given or to whom something is done'.
20. Garver argues that one has the right to one's body and the right to autonomy; Holmes (1971, 112) defends a position similar to Garver, although he emphasizes the non-bodily side of violence: 'to do violence to someone . . . is to diminish him as a person, where what is central to this notion is the inflicting of mental harm'. See also Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004b).
21. The problems encountered by a definition of violence that is too broad will be discussed more fully in Chapter 6.
22. The Minimalist Conception of violence echoes what Coady (1986) calls the 'restricted' definition of violence, what Grundy and Weinstein (1974) refer to as the 'observational' definition, and what Platt (1992) identifies as the 'descriptive' concept of violence.

23. For an overview of the voluminous literature on domestic and family violence, see Breines and Gordon (1983); French *et al.* (1996); Daniels (1997); Bar On (1998).
24. Taking the Guatemalan genocide as a representative case study, see Zur (1998); Green (1999); North and Simmons (1999).
25. See also Garver (1973); Galtung (1996); Lee (1996); Curtin and Litke (1999). For an overview of Galtung's contribution to the study of violence and peace, see Lawler (1995).
26. The Comprehensive Conception of Violence echoes what Coady (1986) calls the 'wide' definition of violence, what Grundy and Weinstein (1974) refer to as the 'expansive' definition, and what Platt (1992) identifies as the 'polemic' concept of violence.
27. At the same time it is debatable whether the term 'vigorous' in 'vigorous psychological abuse' is more vague than the term 'excessive' in 'excessive physical force'.
28. See also Coady (1986).
29. On Sorel see King (2003); Jennings (1985); Roth (1980).
30. It is worth mentioning that there is an excellent anthology in French that looks at the meaning of violence in the history of philosophy. *La Violence*, edited by Frappat (2000), reproduces the relevant extracts from the usual suspects in the history of European thought, including Plato, Machiavelli, Spinoza, Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Engels, Nietzsche, Sorel, Schmitt, Freud, Benjamin, Weber, Foucault, Arendt and Derrida.

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10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
16	15	14	13	12	11	10	09	08