Violence

SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES

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PREFACE

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This book addresses different challenges regarding violence that endangers so many people's lives. The arguments reflect something of the multidimensionality of our unique South African context.

The text intends to position itself as a resource for specialists, locally and globally. It provides the research of several South African scholars – from different disciplines and backgrounds – based on scholarly analyses, insights, reasoning, and expertise. Although the contributions are largely written by academics and researchers from a specific South African race group (white), this was unfortunately due to circumstances beyond the editor's control. The intent of the manuscript was never to offer a narrowed (white) perspective on violence in South Africa. All the authors of this book are proponents of transformation, social sensitivity, integrity, and inclusivity. We value and respect all people's humanity and convictions. We all are well-meaning South Africans who want to be change agents and who strive to create a universalist egalitarian society free from violence. We want to take hands with whoever shares our vision of building a new violent-free country, because to be free, in this case from violence, is to be truly human.

The book challenges conventional borders and shows that a study on the different manifestations of violence from a South African perspective is an absolute necessity. We have a shortage of compiled academic books on these specific and important issues, especially written from a diverse but inclusive South African perspective. We think there is a global need and interest in hearing respected South African voices, from different backgrounds, reflecting academically on these issues.

Many people across the globe are actively engaged in a struggle for a better society (politically, socially, economically, ecologically, etc.) – they even risk their lives, but sometimes tend to become impatient towards theoretical reasoning regarding the issues they are involved in. However, academic discussion is necessary for a number of reasons. Where we try to avoid such discussions, it can be to the detriment of ourselves and the effectiveness of our actions. We all operate with certain presuppositions and assumptions which inform our decision-making regarding the different spheres of life. There should be a constant need to critically examine and assess the implicit theory that informs our actions. By exposing ourselves to the (ethical) assumptions and theories of others, we are compelled to assess and evaluate our own views critically.

Engaging in academic debate allows one the opportunity to challenge the presuppositions and assumptions of others too. The presuppositions of society were traditionally sustained by an academic foundation, however, this is not necessarily the case anymore. There is thus a need amongst the authors to re-introduce this notion in order to constantly review, debate and modify these societal presuppositions through academic excellence, in the interest of all of us. We hope that this book will equip its readers to participate in this debate (Villa-Vicencio & De Gruchy 1994:ix-x).

The book starts with an introductory chapter on violence as an evolutionary phenomenon in the historical development of *Homo sapiens*, written by Karoo palaeontologist Juri van den Heever and theologian Chris Jones. They refer to archaeologists and social scientists who have long presented explanatory hypotheses to account for the origin and utility of aggression in human affairs. A recent advance has been the discovery that violence is not a unimodal phenomenon but is in fact bimodal, consisting of a proactive and reactive component. The presence of a domestication syndrome in mammals, including humans, offers insight as to the mechanisms involved in the reduction of reactive aggression in humans as evinced by suite of physical, physiological, and behavioural characteristics attesting to the feminisation of human males over the past 300 000 years. *Homo sapiens* appears to be the sole *hominin taxon* (any taxonomic grouping within the genera *Homo* and/or *Australopithecus*) undergoing a reduction in reactive aggression during this time – successful explanations for this phenomenon need to tease out relevancy from the mass of available data, take note of the bimodal approach, and evaluate, amongst a number of alternate hypotheses for reduced reactive aggression, the efficacy of language-based conspiracies.

In chapter two, Chris Jones gives a broad overview of violence against children. It is largely limited to physical, sexual, and emotional violence, as well as child negligence. This is done in view of global and local perspectives on child violence, and how violence in society is rooted in patriarchy and culture. Although legislation is important and essential to protect children against violence, more is needed, such as moral commitment and support by, amongst others, faith communities. The chapter ends with a more extensive focus on possible recommendations and remedies that can be considered and implemented by different role players in combating violence children so often experience and are exposed to.

Marlene Mahokoto focuses in chapter three on gender-based violence (GBV) as experienced in the South African context. Our country has been battling this scourge of violence against our womxn¹ and children for so long but despite the energetic outcry in this respect, fatigue, displeasure and disgust for the lack of change seem to be setting in. Even though incidents of sexual violence against men are acknowledged,

1 This alternative spelling is used to “avoid the suggestion of sexism perceived in the sequences m-a-n and m-e-n, and to be inclusive of trans and nonbinary women”. See <http://www.dictionary.com>

overwhelmingly it is womxn who suffer from domestic violence. Therefore, the focus will be on GBV against womxn. Several attempts have been made from different organisations in our society to fight this evil with no end in sight (so it seems). Each year during the month of November, our country embarks on a campaign of 16 Days of Activism for no violence against womxn and children. Yet, even during these times, our womxn are still dying. We continue to be confronted with the senseless and brutal killings of our womxn and children.

This chapter wrestles with the high rate of GBV in South Africa and how the ritual of lament could possibly assist in the healing process of victims and the country at large. The chapter looks at GBV as experienced during the hard lockdown, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in South Africa in 2020. The different campaigns against GBV in our country and what role they are playing, are also considered. The chapter ends by looking at how the ritual of lament may provide emotional and spiritual relief to those affected, but also to our country.

In chapter four, Christina Landman takes as a point of departure the premise that a person does not have one 'true identity', but several identities, including a worker identity, gender identity and a religious identity. This chapter presents the stories of women who shift between these identities in order to evade violence. A woman, for instance, who has a high managerial position in a company takes on an identity of submissiveness at home towards her husband, and even her son(s), in order to escape their anger and physical abuse. In order to protect the women, the stories, inspired by real events, are not specific to any one of them, but represent the lived experiences of a variety of women. Race, age, as well as economic and marital status are variables in the construction of these stories. Since the stories are constructed, speculative unique outcomes as methodologically described by narrative therapy are presented. The stories and their proposed outcomes lead to the question how healthy it is to shift between identities or whether the women are simply cleverly contextualising.

Pieter van Niekerk, in chapter five, gives a glimpse of the painful reality, and mostly silent cries, of persons with disabilities who are confronted with acts of violence during their lifetimes. It shows the ugly face of violence in South Africa and focuses on the greater risks of falling victim to violence for persons with disabilities. Violence and disability as phenomena are discussed. The conceptualisation of disability has developed from the charity model to the medical model and shifted to the social and human rights-based model. Seven major categories of abusive behaviour specific to having an impairment are identified by persons with disabilities themselves. Stereotyping and stigmatisation of persons with disabilities are pervasive in some communities, and some of the myths associated with different forms of disability pose a threat to the bodily integrity and dignity of some individuals. The Multifactorial Model of Sobsey and Calder (1999) gives an explanation of the forces of interpersonal power that operate in situations of violence where persons with disabilities are

concerned. The various forms of abuse and neglect are contextualised by persons with disabilities telling their own stories. The chapter is concluded with reporting on a ground breaking court case in South Africa during which various barriers to justice was successfully challenged.

In chapter six, Simphiwe Sesanti refers to the Kenyan philosopher, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who has noted that for European colonialists to effectively dominate Africans physically and psychologically, they sought to displace Africans' cultural memory, replacing it with Europeans' cultural memory. At the physical level, they partitioned the African continent and made citizens of different African countries perceive one another as 'foreigners' in the territories demarcated by European colonialists. At the psychological, through Eurocentric miseducation, European colonialists taught Africans that they were disparate ethnic groups with nothing in common. Such miseducation undermined African oneness and alienated Africans from one another. The internecine violence amongst Africans, known as xenophobia, is a consequence of this physical and psychological alienation. This chapter reflects on African philosophers' calls for Afrocentric education which, from a primary level, should promote Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance. Special attention is paid to the political philosophies of Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere – philosophers and scholars committed to Afrocentric education, Pan-Africanism, and the African Renaissance.

In chapter seven, Christi van der Westhuizen writes that the history of Afrikaner nationalism – hence, of Afrikaner identity – is a history of the violences of exclusion and inclusion. The excision of Afrikaner women, particularly dissident Afrikaner women from Afrikaner nationalist history, is approached through the conceptual lens of epistemic violence. Western colonial knowledges imposed a heterosexualist gender paradigm which relegated women to biological and social reproducers of the nation, or *volk* in Afrikaner nationalism.

Afrikaner women came to be excluded from various forms of production and ownership, including of knowledge. This form of epistemic violence in the South African context is analysed through the relatively unknown historical figure of Dr Petronella 'Nell' van Heerden (26 April 1887 to 10 January 1975), the first woman to open a practice as a medical doctor and to specialise as a gynaecologist in South Africa. Trouillot's frame on silences in processes of history-making is applied to biographical texts pertaining to Van Heerden's life. Despite the uses that Afrikaner nationalism found for such an eminent and commanding subject, the cumulative silencing of Van Heerden's sexuality as her primary expression of dissidence overwhelmed her normative accomplishments to the extent of relative abjection until the democratic era. Still, recent revisiting of the archive has enabled the first steps towards the restoration of Van Heerden as a political and sexual dissident and sexually agentic lesbian.

In chapter eight, philosopher Bert Olivier explores the hegemonic economic system of today, namely neoliberal capitalism, or in political-economic terms, neoliberalism, with a view to demonstrating the violence that this abstract system visits upon people's lives daily. At the outset, neoliberalism is characterised in historical and conceptual terms, pointing to its roots in the 18th century theory of Adam Smith, and drawing on David Harvey and Robert McChesney to come to grips with its emphasis on individual economic freedom, private property rights, free markets, and free trade, combined with (supposedly) minimal state intervention. Rana Foroohar's work on the detrimental effect of neoliberal "financialisation" on society also receives attention, before the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri is enlisted to focus more specifically on the kinds of violence inflicted on society by neoliberalism, including widespread poverty, indebtedness, and securitisation.

This leads into Slavoj Žižek's exemplary explication of *capital* as the Lacanian "real", which exceeds all symbolic comprehension, and yet has very concrete, violent effects on the lives of people. Naomi Klein's indefatigable unmasking of capitalism as a violent economic practice – in relation to the "shock doctrine" of "disaster capitalism", as well as to the ecological crisis and to Donald Trump's financial cruelty or "perversion" – is presented to highlight the different ways in which such violence is perpetrated. Other theorists who are enlisted to drive the point home about neoliberalism's "dirty little secret" are Manuel Castells and Gilles Deleuze.

Sakhile Zondi writes in chapter nine that there is unanimous agreement today that corruption is a crime against humanity. The literature evidence describes corruption as the misuse of public resources for private gains and is often viewed as a facilitator of poverty and inequalities. It has a devastating effect for the billions of citizens across the world, particularly the poor who live in disadvantaged backgrounds. Corruption comprises the myriad of unethical, deviant, and unacceptable activities that permeate government institutions in a given country. The main objective of this chapter is to argue that good governance and ethical conduct are the prerequisites for sustainable development in South Africa and elsewhere in the world. Therefore, the promotion of ubuntu and anti-corruption strategies should be prioritised. To achieve this vision, corrupt activities by public officials should be dealt with without fear or favour in order to bring about the much-needed clean governance in South Africa. Much of the arguments presented in this chapter build on ethics scholarship which delves much on the causes, effects, and consequences of public sector corruption. The methodological approach applied in this chapter is premised on specific paradigms of unobtrusive research techniques, including conceptual and document analysis. Unobtrusive research refers to methods of collecting data that does not interfere with the subjects under study (because these methods are not obtrusive). In the context of this chapter, unobtrusive research was necessary to collect data without interacting with the subjects. The findings of the study are imperative to bolster the efforts

of theorists who have endeavoured to enhance an understanding of the impact of corruption in the public sector. The study is anticipated to contribute to the new insight and further broadens the set of assumptions that can be employed by scholars to bring about corruption-free public sector institutions.

In chapter ten, Chris Jones addresses the influence of violence of inequality, unemployment, and hunger on many South African residents. This is done from a qualitative research methodology and focuses largely on the period of hard lockdown in South Africa in 2020, and how these extremely problematic but also complex realities, worsened by Covid-19, can possibly be addressed.

In chapter eleven, Sakkie Spangenberg discusses religions and violence by stating that religions do not remain the same over the centuries. They change according to societal needs. These changes eventually impact on the relationship between religion and violence. The chapter takes its cues from Nicholas Wade's reasoning that religion started in the hunter-gatherer phase of *Homo sapiens* when music, dance, and trance experiences fostered cohesion amongst group members and violence was a rarity. Egalitarianism characterised these communities. However, things changed during the settler phase when groups settled down and started practising agriculture. Hierarchies came into being and settler groups started competing with each other for the best agricultural area with the best natural resources. Collective violence was born.

This competition continued during the phase when communities started building cities and sanctuaries. City states often fought against each other's states for prestige and to take hold of their wealth. Religion played a role in motivating citizens to fight courageously. The local religion not only contributed to the well-being of the city and its inhabitants but also to the belief that their gods will accompany them in war, protect them, and give them victory. It soon transpired that state religion and state violence were two sides of the same coin. The most dangerous period in human history is the phase when empires came into being. Empires often turn religions into ideologies and these ideologies do not benefit the conquered countries and their diverse populations and cultures. The history of the religions called Yahwism, Judaism, and Christianity serve as a foil to reflect on the issue of religions and violence.

Marthie Momberg, in chapter twelve, asks the question: What qualifies as violence when social movements resist state oppression? She then draws on theological, legal, and moral perspectives to explore concepts of violence and non-violence in contexts of resistance to state discrimination. It uses the lenses of the South African and the Palestinian experiences of systemic injustice to problematise views that limit the concept of violence to physical force, and to transgressions by only non-institutional movements. The discussion includes an overview of phases in the Palestinians' civil reactions to Israel's discrimination since 1948; theological responses to state oppression inspired by the South African Kairos Document of 1985; the perspectives of South African and Jewish Israeli respondents to a case study on the reasons for transnational

activism in the Palestinians' liberation struggle; as well as legal and moral definitions of violence. These layers of meaning add texture and nuance to some of the moral questions and understandings tied to uprisings against discriminative states.

In chapter thirteen, philosopher Anton van Niekerk critically analyses the notion of "structural violence", which is a pervasive theme in critical theory. After an introduction, the second section entails a general conceptual analysis of the notion of violence, drawing, amongst other, on the work of Johan Degenaar. This is followed by an analysis of the notion of structural violence, drawing, in particular, on the insights of Johan Galtung who played a prominent role in elevating structural violence to a position of prominence in philosophical literature. In the following section, attention is paid to an impressive critique in recent literature of the metaphorical use of the notion of violence, drawing on the contribution of Vasti Roodt. This is a critique of the idea that a metaphorical notion of violence which renders most uses of the word violence as something unjustified, reveals significant shortcomings. It entails a conception of violence which, by definition, renders all notions of violence pejorative. This represents a meaning of violence that is often ascribed to the notion of (structural) violence in literature.

In the penultimate section it is shown that, in spite of the latter criticism, the phenomenon of structural violence (correctly named or identified as such or not) pervades the (particularly South African) social order. The final section then discusses the meaning and pessimistic prospects for emancipation from structural violence in the theoretical context in which the idea was originally conceived, namely critical social theory (with special reference to the work of Herbert Marcuse).

In chapter fourteen, Dave Pepler unpacks the important issue regarding the ecology of planet earth that has now been fundamentally and permanently changed by man's destructive and targeted actions. In recent times, this abuse of finite and non-renewable resources has been designated as the latest epoch of ecological time, and is known as the Anthropocene. In this chapter, he argues that this abuse can be ascribed to man's negative influence, especially since 1950, and to world religions remaining silent on these matters. Known as "slow violence", this lack of appropriate corrective action has plunged mankind into its deepest crisis. It is remarkable that Africa, as a continent, has suffered few extinction cascades, but it is imminent. Only through advocacy and training a new generation of environmental engineers, can this attrition be checked. Taking *personal* responsibility is the evident solution to this global ecological bankruptcy.

In the last chapter of this book (15), Vasti Roodt shows why an expanded concept of violence is either meaningless or redundant, and considers what this implies for our normative theorising. She begins by considering an example of just such an expanded concept: Galtung's notion of "structural violence". She then explains the role of metaphorisation in conceptual stretching, before showing that any expanded

concept of violence relies on unconscious analogy which, were it to be made explicit, its proponents would not endorse. The result is a concept of violence which we take to convey some knowledge about the world, but which falls apart under scrutiny. She concludes by considering the implications of this epistemic failure and proposes some minimal criteria for conceptual adequacy when reasoning about the social world.

With this brief overview of the various chapters in mind, it must be stated that the limitations of a preface such as this make it impossible to do justice to the full richness of the content of each of these chapters. We would also like to point out that the focus of this book is not primarily on religion or theology in relation to violence. Although some of the authors are theologians, and a number of chapters refer to the church, faith communities, holy texts, and/or theology, most of the chapters are approached from a more social scientific point of view.

The authors were allowed to follow their own research methodology. They mostly did a literature review of academic resources, however, there are exceptions. In some cases, the academic literature on the relevant themes are limited, and some of the authors had to use more popular sources, but each author aimed at providing a thorough overview of the latest research efforts on their topics. Each chapter comes as a separate contribution complete in itself but directly related to the book's topic and objectives, namely to address the different manifestations of violence in South Africa.

In wrestling with some challenges regarding violence faced by society, the book shows that a study on violence requires analytical thinking and critical reflection in order to (help) make the world a more just and decent place in which to live. It points out that people position themselves in an ongoing process of trying to become more human – allowing themselves and fellow human beings to flourish and to reach their full potential through reflection and action.

REFERENCE

Villa-Vicencio, C. & De Gruchy, J. 1994. *Doing Ethics in Context. South African Perspectives. Theology and Praxis*, Volume 2. David Philip: Cape Town & Johannesburg.