UNFOLDING THE POTENTIALITY OF VIOLENCE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ENQUIRY

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ABSTRACT: The constitutive ambiguities and paradoxical consequences that violent experiences impose on our attempt to understand violence and cope with violence proclaim that it has not been a bed of roses for man. His rare moments of peace and tranquillity have often been shattered by deadly strokes of violence. In order to approach an integrative potentiality of violence, this paper deems it necessary to first investigate phenomenologically the meaning and conceptions of violence as a point of departure. It will concentrate on recovering the subjective motives for violent actions and on understanding the perpetrator's deviant point of view. It seeks further to investigate and question the justification therein the potentiality or rather the psychological insight into the causes of violence. The possibility of capturing other's experience to oneself via phenomenological context shall be critically verified. Finally, the conclusion will be drawn by proffering some solutions to the problem in question.
Keywords: Violence, Phenomenology, Rationality, Understanding, Potentiality

INTRODUCTION

The world is said to be riddle but the most riddle so far is man. The nature of man is difficult to comprehend especially when it comes to the knowledge of his conscience, behavior, mind, etc. His life is more of contradictions .He loves and hates, he builds and destroys and so on. The whole of his existence is made up of contradictory action which has made him a big puzzle. Violence, one aspect of his behaviors is the focus of this work. Man wherever he finds himself unfolds the

potentiality of violence in him either overtly or covertly in word or actions. The major task here is not how to handle an exploded violence but the phenomenological investigation of the subject and object of violence –the human person (the rationale) as well as an eventual conclusion. Thus, it enduring presence within the fabric of our human conscience needs to be understood and addressed. Considering the lived experience of both individual and group's action, action never take place from a position outside the mode of rationality (thought) how one reasons determines his reaction to every situation especially on violent issues. The rationality behind every violent action remained the basic issue that needs to be tackled as it is the root that sets the fire of violence burning. Prevention they say is better than cure.

The rationality here is not the already established rationality of the liberal tradition, but is rationality in the making. It is a rationality that must prove itself to each of those involved, that must be worked out in actual events, and that must prove itself to each generation. Violence does not occur in a straight forward means without a cause and when the cause could not be handled judiciously, it   will brake to violence. Besides, the most common motivations for violence can be viewed as inappropriate attempts to handle emotions. Often, violence becomes the medium used by an individual to openly express their feelings such as anger frustration, or sadness. Where as in some cases, violence is considered as a form of manipulation for individuals to try and get what they want or need. It is common for those who act violently to have difficulty controlling their emotions. For some, behavior can be attributed to past abuse or neglect, false beliefs that intimidating others will gain them respect, or a belief that

using violent will solve his or her problems. However violent actions often work against the individual and they often lose respect or become increasingly isolated because others view them as dangerous. Yet, no one will ever pose or determine others behavior or mode of thought to a straight jacketed condition as it is not easy but by behaving non-violently with a rational mind towards every projected violence in accordance with the changing situation at the particular point in time. This paper is therefore calling for a revitalization of handling cases that might result to violence by the application of rational mind; listening to one another even among the ones we may disagree; shearing of ideas with others as these would help in understanding and recovering the subjective motive of others that could cause violence. When one is able to read another person's mind, one has the advantage of running out of violence. Even though that a certain postulate of the rationality of violence is something that we cannot avoid, for it belongs to the nature of our life, and if we do not formulate it in words, we nonetheless express it in action. Therefore, violence (of any kind) needs to be tackled from the offshoot that is, by understanding, rationalization, psychological motives, dialogue, capturing the subject and object of violence, picturing other's experience to oneself and so on. For where violence has no structure and no major trends, it is no longer possible to say or do anything.

However, the course of this study is not whether violence is good or bad, justified or not, but whether the remote and/or the immediate cause that led to violence should be justified or be accredited to violence? Are there conditions that merit the use of violence in bringing peace to human life? What is the possibility of understanding objects or others in

reference to the dichotomy of presence or absence, similarity or difference, self and others? What is the phenomenological clarity of capturing others experience to self? Does sharing a world with others equals being exactly as they are as well as understanding them fully? In attempt to answer the above questions, this paper adopted analytic and phenomenological method in investigating the factors and opinions of self and other that led to violence itself.

Phenomenological Analysis of Violence

The constitutive ambiguities and paradoxical consequences that violent experiences impose on our attempt to understand violence and cope with violence proclaim that it has not been a bed of roses for man. His rare moments of peace and tranquility have often been shattered by deadly strokes of violence. In order to approach an integrative phenomenological analysis of violence, one has to concentrate on recovering the subjective motives for violent actions and on understanding the perpetrator's deviant point of view. Thus, there should be some phenomenological insights to investigate the meaning and conceptions of violence as a point of departure. This can be preceded by first of all reading the meaning of the two concepts – *phenomenology and violence*. However, the term "phenomenology" has two constitutive etymological elements. The word "phenomenon" has a Greek root *phainomenon*, derived from the Greek verb *phainesthai* which means "that which shows itself or that which reveals itself". The original Greek meaning of "Logos" is discourse, which "opens to sight" or "lets something be seen" thus, phenomenology, properly understood as the logo of the phenomenon is the disciplined attempt to open to sight that which shows itself and let it be seen as it is[1]. However, phenomenology does not simply mean

the study of phenomenon as the etymological signification above could lead one to infer. It is only a procedure, but a crucial and significant one, of inquiry and of discovery of reality. It is the philosophical study of the structures of experience and consciousness; descriptive of the givens of immediate experience. By extension, it is an attempt to capture the individual's understanding, experience and conception of violence in process as lived, through descriptive analysis. Ever since phenomenology studies how things appear to consciousness or are given in experience, and not how they are in themselves, even if it is known that the given contains more than or is different from what is presented. In effect, the method henceforth should be of learning about another person by listening to their descriptions of what their subjective world about violence is like for them, together with an attempt to understand this in their own terms as fully as possible free of our preconceptions and interference.

Violence on the other hand is derived from another term "violate" which is its verb form. To violate means among other things: to injure, break, disobey, infringe, hurt, damage, etc. Each of these synonyms of "to violate" brings out the meaning of violence. It is therefore, the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation"[2]. Violence is used as a tool of manipulation and also is an area of concern for law and culture which take attempts to appress and stop it. The term violence encompasses a broad spectrum covering a wide variety of illegal or unusual actions against human beings, even animals and living species or their natural

environment. This can be as a result of interpersonal conflicts, international wars, aggression, genocide or deliberate alteration and demolition of the environment. For more emphasis, Robert McAFee Brown, an American human right activist put violence to mean:

> *Whatever violates another, in the sense of infringing upon or disregarding or abusing or denying that other, whether physical harm is involved or not, can be understood as an act of violence to the broadest sense then, an act that depersonalizes would be an act of violence, since it transforms a person into a thing[3].*

Thus, violence is a frequently recurring element in many types of horror, and may be a common aspect of our everyday lives, depending on what one believes constitutes violence. For Girard, "There is a common denominator that determines the efficacy of all sacrifices ---. This common denominator is internal violence – all the dissensions, rivalries, jealousies, and quarrels within the community that the sacrifices are designed to suppress"[4]. Girard casts a broad net in defining violence to "dissentions, rivalries, jealousies, and quarrels," and he is not alone in the world of French critical thinkers. Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida, in other words, famously argue about the omnipresence of violence within the meaning – making process itself. Derrida in many ways agrees with Levinas's beliefs about the inherent violence of attempting to know or understand something. For Derrida, violence is "the necessity from which no discourse can escape, from its earliest origin – these necessities are violence itself, or rather the transcendental origin of an irreducible

violence"[5]. For Levinas, and to some extent for Derrida, there is no meaning without violence.

Meanwhile, violence could be physical or non-physical but it involves damage of what the victim holds dear and thus reduces him or her to a level of what Helder Camara describes as sub-human being. In his own explanation of violence, Helder Camara, the archbishop of Recife, Brazil writes:

> No one is born to be a slave. No one seeks to suffer injustice, humiliations and restrictions. A human being condemned to a sub-human situation is like an animal – an ox or a donkey – wallowing in the mud. Now the egoism of some privileged groups drives countless human beings into this sub-human condition, where they suffer restrictions, injustices, without prospects, without hope their condition which is that of slaves[6].

He classifies violence into three: first, the violence of injustice – this he describes as the mother of violence in human society; second, violence of revolt which he says to be a direct consequence of the former and third, the violence of repression – which he says to be a direct result of the latter and the deadliest form of violence because it is seized by those in power to suppress upheaval of the repressed people. The powerful do not hesitate to use any means considered effective no matter how outrageous it is to achieve their aim. So, violence in human society progresses from injustice to revolt and from revolt to repression.

Furthermore, violence can as well be viewed and defined from various angles like law, politics, sociology, psychology,

philosophy, etc. According to Max Weber, States and governments have the "monopoly of violence" because they possess all the means and instruments of inflicting injuries to people and depriving them of their freedom and ordinary lives. Use of violence through legal system by police forces and military is solely within the competence of legal authority of governments for establishing the peace and order. This is a legitimate notion of violence. The legitimist would define violence as the illegitimate use of force. This, of course, is why John Locke would say, a murderer,

> --- by unjust violence and slaughter he hath committed upon one, declared war against all mankind, and therefore may be destroyed as a Lyon or a Tiger, one of those wild savage beasts, with whom man can have no society no security[7].

This school of thought conceives violence as essentially evil (considering the above quotation). Though, they agreed that violence can be used legitimately when it is authorized – just violence. Thus, law enforcement agents can use violence. The legitimate use of force is as well justifiable when it is at the event of a war between two states. Each state would naturally legitimize its use of violence against its opponent. Such use of force by warring states would not be termed violence at all, since it has been legitimized by them for their purposes. Another is the structural notion of violence which refers to a form of violence based on the systematic ways in which a given social structure or social institution harms people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs. Structural violence inevitably produces conflict and often direct violence, including family violence, racial violence etc. This tries to

bring violence in a very wide range of things, like social injustice by institutions or individuals, whether by deliberate act or by physical or psychological force. This goes beyond mere personal and physical infliction of violence. It would indeed seem too wide, in such a way that all evil imaginable would come under the umbrella of violence. And it would seem that all evil has one single solution. This structural view, just as the legitimist, also assumes that all violence is essentially wrong, and that social reform would eliminate all forms of violence. Yet some would argue that violence can sometimes be something good, and so it can be legitimized, as we have already mentioned in the case of law enforcement agencies and in that event of a war.

In the history of philosophical conceptions of violence, Hegel's dialectic of the master and slave makes explicit the interpersonal violence which he explains that cause and effect occur in an anthropological context in which individuals struggle for recognition and to dominate others. Thus, Hegel conceives violence in terms of a human conflict rather than epistemological in commensurability. Hegel's description of violence is however, a latent idealism as it lies in its relation to beings. According to Hegel, human beings are communal beings, first and foremost, but they discover their essence only by achieving freedom from their distinctive nature as communal beings. He argues that individuals rise to the level of being-for-self only by denying their communal nature in act of violence against other human beings. By defining violence as the destruction of the social realm by social beings, Hegel shows both his romantic heritage and the fundamental insight of romanticism, namely that violence is only and always a form of human conflict. Nevertheless, his desire to trace the

purely logical development of Being-for-itself transforms violence into a logical device, an idealism, serving his definition of being. Indeed, violence is the primary educator of being-for-itself: in the life and death struggle of violence, the self discovers a violence (the violence of the other) that escapes its violence and that threatens its entire existence, thus recognizing the reality of other individuals. Through violence, the self attains a universal point of view in which the dynamic of self and other may be conceptualized.

However, the problem is that Hegel's definition of violence is not compatible with his theory of desire. If desire is the desire for recognition, the self-endangers its desire by acting to destroy other by whom it needs to be recognized, one cannot be recognized by a corpse. This contradiction points to the irrational nature of violence, despite Hegel's efforts to give it a logical role in the emergence of being. It also seems to dispute that violence might serve education. Hegel never reconciles the desire for recognition and the violent impulse to destroy other people. He simply refers to this violence as evil but as an evil needed to ensure the freedom of Beings-for-self. In short, Hegel puts violence, despite its irrationality, in a service of the idea of being, and it becomes impossible in his philosophy to understand it outside this orbit.

Rowland Stout takes the original step of looking at violence through the lenses of Aristotelian virtue ethics. In a move that may seem counter-intuitive, stout makes a strong argument why (in certain cases) we should consider violence to be a virtue rather than a vice. Stout's issue is not whether violence may be rational to the extent it leads to a good end,

instead, it is whether violence may be rational to the extent that what has happened demands it. Stout's claim in that if one is in a fight one may be justified in fighting back and that this way of behaving is an aspect of virtue in the sense explored by Aristotle in the *Nicomachaen Ethics*. The practice of fighting has various features characteristic of a virtuous practice. It is rooted in our nature, developed by culture and habit and further developed and moderated by rational self-reflection. There might be conditions in which, due to the failure of the State to protect you, it is a good thing to be disposed to commit to this practice. For this reason such a disposition is a virtue in the same way that the disposition to be angry to, frightened of, or proud of the right people in the right circumstances and to be right extent are virtues. The virtuous person has the capacity for being violent when something has happened that merits it, and at least one thing that might merit it is someone attacking them. But whether by merits or demands that violence should be executed, what is the possibility that every violence of such will bring solution to the problem generated? How sure it is that violence of any kind may not worsen the situation? Beside what is the appropriate degree of defensive violence? Is violence morally justified?

Jason Whyckoff defends the thesis that violence is neither wrong nor bad by definition. Whyckoff makes a strong case for a non-normative definition of the concept of violence, based on the view that notions like "violation" are not part of the concept of violence. He offers three sets of arguments for the rejection of legitimist conceptions of violence, according to which the concept of violence is normative. According to the first argument, legitimism should be

rejected because it reduces the doctrine of nonviolence to a trivial truth, when in fact the doctrine is best interpreted as a substantive thesis. The second argument is comprised of a series of intuition pumps to motivate the conclusion that violence need not be (though it usually is) harmful or wrong/bad, though legitimism entails that this is always the case. The third argument is an open question/argument against the view that violence is by definition wrong; the question" Is violence wrong?" Is an open question, but legitimism entails that the question is closed? Wyckoff's non-normative account of the concept of violence has implications for both the doctrine of non-violence and legitimist definitions of violence. However, the analytical account of the concept of violence has been given by different individuals and schools of thought. This process of capturing individuals understanding and conceptions of violence has been phenomenologically articulated – knowing how this concept appears to individual\s consciousness. In effect, the above overview of the concept has revealed obviously that *violence* is philosophically ambiguous ever since how one experiences violence is (or might be) different from the other. But how can we understand the experiential lives of those involved in violence? How could phenomenology contribute to this understanding? These questions about the understanding of "the other" as an experiencing individual may impose a longstanding debate. Nevertheless, by stressing everyday experiences, these questions contend that peoples' lived realities contain more than what the statistical or textual data used in most violent researches convey. Although statistics and texts are important means individuals employ to represent and guide some actions, many violent acts remain beyond linguistic and numerical transcription. Of all the

philosophical perspectives, phenomenology most explicitly claims to tap this broader experiential realm. Thus, a certain phenomenological conclusions with central themes in Merleau-Ponty's ideals will help to sketch a research program and ethical practice that can aid in understanding others' experience as both similar and different.

Violence and Phenomenological Accountability of 'Self' and 'Others'

How phenomenology accounts or does not account, for the experiences of one and others may seem (or, is admittedly) abstract. But to clarify and to demonstrate the seeming difficulties of applying phenomenology to intersubjective violent problems, a summary of some of the literature that claims to approach violence from a phenomenological perspective is to be offered. This will help to reflect on what these applications of phenomenology demonstrate about phenomenology's ability to explain other's experiences. This reflection is centered on three general themes: violence as interaction, violence as an emotional existential project, and violence as an embodiment. Looking at the interactive meaning of violence, that is, constitution of violent experience as a rationally calculated performance, Norman Denzin (1984) and Curtis Jackson-Jacobs (2004) view violence as "situated, interpersonal, emotional, and cognitive activity"[8]. Although both are looking at violence in radically different settings. Norman Denzin on his work, *Toward a Phenomenology of Domestic, Family violence* marks an early attempt to apply phenomenology to interpersonal violence while Jackson-Jacobs provides a more recent effort at a "dramaturgical phenomenology of street brawling as collective action"[9].

Denzin describes his method as "phenomenological, dialectical, interpretive, and interactionist"[10]. He primarily uses previous literature "to examine the phenomenon of domestic violence from within as lived experience"[11]. His main argument is that domestic violence unfolds according to a process of self-destructing "negative symbolic interaction". He argues that domestic violence erupts when a family member disappoints the cultural expectation that men are the dominant household figures. He comments though that economic, legal, and cultural processes structure violence, what is important is that violence's meaning is "filtered and woven through the lives of interacting individuals"[12]. Meanwhile, the meaning of violence, in this case, unfolds as an intentional project between parties. Denzin argues that for the perpetrator of domestic violence, violence is an attempt to use physical or emotional force to regain hegemonic status and the respect of other family members. The perpetrator interprets the actions of the victim as an attack to his identity and thus as a cause of his violence. In turn the violent actor is overcome with emotional rage and suspends the moral value of the victim. This justifies the intent to harm and narrows any alternative views of the situation[13]. Violence therefore imposes one interpretive framework and destroys the victim's interpretive framework. In so doing it can temporarily achieve its desired end of control over the other. Denzin however, suggests that this rupture leads victims to view the act and the perpetrator negatively, the violent act cannot permanently impart the interpretation of control and respect that the perpetrator aims at. As a result of this, therefore, violence destroys the very respect and control it seeks to attain and leads to a self-perpetuating violent spiral. According to Denzin:

> *He has the flesh of the other in his grip, while the other's will and freedom slips from his grasp. The goal of the violent act eludes the man of violence. He is drawn over and over again into the cycle of violence. He can never succeed in establishing his dominance and will over the will of the other[14].*

He argues further that household members experience the cycle of violence along the following pathway:

> *denial of the violence; (2) pleasure derived from violence; (3) the building of mutual hostility between spouses and other family members; (4) the development of misunderstandings; (5) jealousy, especially sexual; (6) increased violence; and either (7) eventual collapse of the system or (8) resolution of violence into an unsteady, yet somewhat stable state of recurring violence[15].*

Denzin concludes from his phenomenology of violence, that violent interaction necessarily sets this cyclical pattern in motion and that the only means of breaking free from domestic violence is to remove oneself from the situation and begin a process of self-restructuring. In the same vein, Jackson-Jacobs presents his own account of violence as an intentional pragmatic act. Jackson-Jacob describes his approach as inspired by symbolic interactionism and phenomenological sociologies which aim to give situated and descriptive explanations of why people do things. He describes his overall project as relying on observations and interviews to "trace the experience of participation in brawl as it progresses"[16]. As a matter of fact, Jackson-Jacobs took

one of the participants back to the site of the brawl four years later to tape-record the fighter's recollection of the event. In analyzing the experiences of three individuals who fought and lost in the encounter, his central argument is that brawlers fight in order to illicit dramatic and entertaining narrative accounts that allow them to build reputations as charismatic, exciting, and tough fighters. In his words, "fighters intend their brawls to make good stories that reveal themselves as charismatic. And so they enact storylines that they expect will both test their character and be applauded by audiences"[17].

Like Denzin, Jackson-Jacobs uses his participants' stories to document the typical stages a fight passes through: entering a public space, staging a character context, fighting, and telling the story of the fight. Among these stages, the most important for fighters' intentional projects are the character contest and the narrative reconstruction. Jackson-Jacobs; "dramaturgical phenomenology" focuses on these two stages and the importance of the presentation of self in the character contest. The character contest is, according to him, an effort to construct a favourable narrative of the fight irrespective of what may be the result in future. Jackson-Jacobs assert also that "shit talking" is an important element of the interactive character contest. To this end, actors verbally attempt to provoke another person to fight while simultaneously attempting to present themselves as charismatic and tough men to the audience watching the interaction. The interaction is the process whereby participants constitute the experience as violent by: signaling the potentiality of violence; enticing the object of verbal aggression to strike, removing the body into the emotions

needed to erupt violently; and providing a memorable narrative that participants can reconstruct more easily than the physical altercation itself. Once this character contest becomes physical, Jackson-Jacobs argues that the men involved escalate the level of violence in an attempt to save face and appear as the more hegemonic figure. Others' experience of street fighting is, for Jackson-Jacobs, thus phenomenologically understood as an intentional action aimed at building a masculine reputation.

In contrast to Denzin and Jackson-Jacobs, Staudigl deals explicitly with the theme of violence in his attempt to build a phenomenological theory. He sees "the methodological center of phenomenology as the attempt to purely describe our experiences of objective givens in terms of the ways we make sense of them"[18]. He does not refer any data from persons who have experienced violence; rather this argument involves self-reflections even though he is not clear on the extent to which he has experienced violence. Staudigl's theorization adopts elements of both Merleau-Ponty and Schutz. Staudigl draws on Merleau-Ponty to argue that our embodiment structures our understanding of the world and leads us to form pre-reflexive habits. He conceives of our relation to the world as one of "I can" which according to Merleau-Ponty simply means that we relate to the world through what our bodies can do with objects in the world and through the sensory data those objects impart on our bodies[19]. Thus, our relation to the world as "I can" entails that we intend certain physical actions and decide among particular pragmatic projects. Staudigl, however, argues that our embodied selves have an inherent vulnerability that we must negotiate in determining our intentional projects. According to Staudigl,

violence destroys our "bodily 'I can', its collective forms, and the sense structures founded upon them"[20]. It is a restriction of the "I can" because, using the terminology of Schutz, it limits the "relevancies" that persons can consider in creating intentional pragmatic projects[21]. Further reflecting Schutz, Staudigl utilizes conceptions of cognitive intentional and motive to argue that violent actors consciously aim to destroy intersubjectivity by inflicting pain on the body of the other. Violence closes victims' intentional openness to the world and forces them to consider a body typically taken for granted in immersed activity. Violence demands that the victim intentionally orient him or herself toward only one course of action: that which ends the violence and guarantees their continued bodily existence[22].

The loss of the body's "I can" is not simply a reduction in one's physical function, but also a loss of one's ability to make sense of the world since the body is central to sense-making. That is, like Denzin, Staudigl concludes that violence ruptures our existing interpretive frameworks. With this conception of violence as a restriction of intentional projects, Staudigl argues that all victims experience violence as a social "contraction of the basic reciprocity of perspectives which reduces interaction to an asymmetrically determined relation"[23].

From the foregoing, these scholars take other's experience as their primary data and do not operate within the strict confines of a *phenomenological epoche* (as Husserl envisaged) that focuses on self-reflection. At this point in time, these are to be taken as a clue to the tension between the philosophical phenomenological project and social science's aim

to describe and analyze the lived world of others. None of these studies attempts to bracket consideration of all other factors and consider what, if anything, violence is in and of itself. Scholars like Denzin are correct to assume that violence occurs in cultural contexts that influence how, where, and between whom these actions unfold. It is not like the Husserlian Phenomenological epoche that cannot consider these external factors of experience. For them not to fully employ the phenomenological epoche confirms the general phenomenological conclusion that self-conscious reflection cannot directly access other's experience.

It is obvious that inter-subjectivity remains a central theme in these analyses of violence. Merleau-Ponty's idea of inter-subjectivity holds that we are aware of ourselves only through our awareness of others' behaviour and speech. We do not fully perceive ourselves, and so it is through the other that we obtain self-awareness. Moreover, our bodies respond to the world and in responding to others we constitute our individual selves[24]. In this process of mutual constitution, self and other intertwine. Within this intertwining both parties learn the specific cultural patterns, bodily habits and common language required to continue for interaction. Just as each scholar above holds the phenomenological conclusion that the shared or subjective-existential meaning of violence is co-created internationally. Theoretically and by implication Staudigl upholds that individuals complete their violent projects by using the other as the foil for their attempts to engage in pre-reflexive embodied action. Denzin on the other hand affirms that individuals complete their violent projects by responding to victims' apparent challenges to their desired identities. While Jackson-Jacobs asserts that individuals

complete their violent projects by imagining audiences' interpretation of their actions. Uniquely, we find that although violence is inter-subjectively constituted and enacted, its meaning is frequently conceptualized as an activity that restricts inter-subjective meaning and imposes the violent actors' unilateral interpretation. It should be noted as well, in the same basic phenomenological conclusion that the world is experienced and made meaningful from a particular perspective that is shaped by its relations with others. Of course, this is not to say that seeing the other and sharing a world with them equals being exactly as they are as well and understanding them fully. Our embodiment and perceptual ambiguity preclude such certainty. Merleau-Pounty has pointed out that the other is not inaccessible, but is part of the self and the world the body-subject moves within. As Merleau-Ponty succinctly summarizes, "the Alter and the Ego are one and the same in the true world which is the unifier of minds"[25]. He further says that:

> In reality, the other is not shut up inside my perspective of the world, because this perspective itself has no definite limits, because it slips spontaneously into the other's, and because both are brought together in the one single world in which we all participate as anonymous subjects of perception[26].

Hence, in an effort to posit a stable understanding of how others experience violence, one would simply summarize that these phenomenological applications do not sufficiently account for differences in the experience of violence. In many cases it appears as though it is the researcher's interpretation that prevails over that of the other. Perhaps

the greatest irony in this is that since these studies restrict the possible experiences of others by reducing them to a particular coherent account develop mainly by the author, they are, according to Staudigl's and Denzin's vision of violence as restricting an intending person, themselves violent. No wonder, Emmanuel Levinas proclaims that the process of attempting to understand the meaning of another is itself subject to a degree of violence. Understanding entails approximating an "other's" meaning to ourselves, and for Levinas, this is an act of violence. Thus, he explains: "knowledge is always an ad equation between thought and what it thinks. There is in knowledge, in the final account, an impossibility of escaping the self"[27]. He further explains that "knowledge is a re-presentation; a return to presence and nothing may remain other to it"[28]. By implication, there is disrespect and violence in the ego's attempt to know something about the other because knowing makes what was the other's mine. Yet, it is impossible to understand spoken or written discourse without an act of violent egotism that takes away the other's distinctiveness. Nevertheless, this summation should not lead us to reject all phenomenological insights. Nor should it cause us, like Levinas, to assert that the only proper task is to venerate other's complete alterity. Problems definitely arise when phenomenologists claim to capture others' experiences based on solitary reflection without demonstrating the inter-subjective nature of this reflection. Beside, for Jack Reynolds, to assert that the other cannot be known "verges on becoming "agnosticism" in regard to the other"[29]. Such agnosticism does not assist us in our quest to determine how we can understand other's experiences. In fact, it asserts that this quest is impossible. The problem remains as Reynolds points out that if we cannot

know the other in any fashion, then the solipsism that critics (inaccurately) attribute to phenomenology actually "seems to have returned through the back door"[30].

Above all, the fact remains, phenomenologically, that insofar as one experiences and shares a world with others, it does not necessarily mean that one must, or can know those others in their entirety without any remaining difference. The core features of a phenomenology are not just the demonstration of eidetic analysis and reliance on ideal-types and typologies which might post an essential coherent understanding of other. Its analytical tools is arguably reflecting on Husserl's efforts to find secure foundations for science more than they reflect necessary elements of phenomenological analysis[31]. Phenomenology often demonstrates the partiality of knowledge and so leaves space for difference without assuming an unbridgeable gap between self and other. In particular, Merleau-Ponty's ideas of ambiguity and intertwining rail account for the other as completely the same or as wholly-other. Merleau-Ponty argues that one cannot know the other, amounts to a negative positivism that ignores the complexity of human experience.

> A negative thought is identical to a positivist thought, and in this reversal remains the same in that, whether considering the void of nothingness or the absolute fullness of being, in every case, it ignores density, depth, the plurality of planes, the background worlds[32].

Understanding other's experiences, then, requires that we should rather use some phenomenological insights, particularly

Merleau-Ponty's, to sketch a research program of how to understand others without reducing the other's experience to our own, as some of the above phenomenologies of violence seem to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy allows us to escape any "agnosticism to the other" (Reynolds, 2004) that stems from assuming that the other's experiences are completely different, as Levinas's (1969, 1985) position seem to do. The phenomenological conclusion above all is that conscious reflection demonstrates we share a world with other beings. This is because, when we share a world with others we can, on the basis of this sharing, make efforts to understand them. It is therefore, worthy of note, that we summarize this position on sharing, and of course, with Merleau-Ponty's conclusions about intertwining and ambiguity. These concepts demonstrate that we are never fully aware of our selves or others. Expecting to have absolute clarity in our experience of "the other" is absurd; there are degrees of understanding such that some components of the other are accessible to us and others are not. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy demonstrates that our bodily experience rejects understanding objects or others according to a dichotomy of presence or absence, similarity or difference, self or other. But from the position that when we share a world and experience others as both similar and different, it will make us work towards transformation and understanding with others. It is only in participating in the worlds of others that we might ourselves experience the feelings and positions of others (people) and things that are far less pleasant like violence.

CONCLUSION

The rudiments of violence have simply revealed that why there are violence here and there is not just because we wish

to have it. But because of our inability to control our emotions, to coordinate and harmonize our personal or group challenges with the other. Our inability to perpetrate others experience to oneself from the onset; lack of understanding and appreciation of the essential nature of the human person as a rational unique, unrepeatable, and incommunicable being invested with absolute value. Having seen the potentiality which is the bases at which violence emanate, this study submits that fighting the root cause of violence by sharing a world and experiencing others as both similar and difference, it will help and transform our society from violent to non-violent world.

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