

## Chapter 3

# The Complexity of Non-Violence Action

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter claims that non-violent action corresponds to a political dimension in which society has become a magnificent complex organism. Moreover, non-violent action corresponds to the phase of highest complexity in a social organization. Examples are provided ranging from ecology to population biology, from ethology to swarm intelligence. At the end, several conclusions are drawn that shed new lights on the social, cultural, and political understanding of our world and to the foreseeable future. The study of non-violent action provides sufficient arguments that allow the distinction between “politics” and “policy”, i.e. “policies”, so much so that politics is highlighted as a highest and most significant dimension of the human experience, and policies are then considered as secondary or lower. The human rights provide the ground for the understanding and comprehension of non-violent actions. In the core of the text a topology of non-violent actions is provided along with its explanation.*

*To the memory of my friend Kamel Shiyaa Abdullah.*

### INTRODUCTION

Non-violent action is – and has been throughout history, a non-evident social and political move of societies. For, the rule has been violence in its manifold forms, layers and expressions. Violence has been served in history as sort of gratis principle. Henceforth, it has had a scandalous value. This paper argues that non-violent action is worthy in a variety of modes precisely because of its com-

plexity. Arguments about such a complexity are provided that, at the same time, shed light on the linearity of violence. This paper claims that non-violent action corresponds to a political dimension in which society has become a magnificent complex organism. Moreover, non-violent action corresponds to the phase of highest complexity in a social organization. Examples are provided ranging from ecology to population biology, from ethology to swarm intelligence. At the end, several conclusions are drawn that shed new lights on the social, cultural, and political understanding of our world and to the foreseeable future.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-9675-4.ch003

## **A PRIMARY DISTINCTION: VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION**

It will never be too much working, once and again, on a basic distinction, namely between violence and aggression. Behind such a differentiation lies in fact the difference between nature and society or also between nature and culture – an epistemological issue that entails, however, far serious consequences.

The Marxist tradition believes that violence is the midwife of history, an idea that really sends us back to the archaic Greece. It was, indeed, Heraclitus who used to say that it is *pollemos* what begets nearly almost everything:

*One should be aware that pollemos pervades, with discord, and that things are naturally born by discord (frag. 80), and*

*Pollemos our genesis, governing us all to bring forth some gods, some mortal beings with some unfettered yet others kept bound (frag. 53).*

However, as we know, violence does not exist in nature, at all. Nature is not violent and does not know about violence. When people speak of the violence of an earthquake or a tornado, a typhoon or a hurricane, for example, they just mean how struck they are, period. They speak their own suffering and passiveness, rather than about mother nature as being violent. Not vis-à-vis physical forces, but neither in the relationship between pray and predator, for instance, does violence take place.

Instead, violence is particularly a human feature - hence, precisely its scandalous character. Whether we speak of physical or emotional, open or psychological, military or subtle forms of violence – whichever its character or nature, violence is to be blame because it bears, so to speak, its own justification. I shall come back later on this point.

I would like to stress that violence is opprobrious because it is free and it adds no evolutionary advantage on the wellbeing of humans. Violence,

as it happens, has been used in many ways and justified in a variety of ways that range from religion to politics, from philosophy to metaphysics, for instance (Walzer, 2006). Yet, nearly all those justifications rely on cultural arguments – in the largest and deepest sense of the word, even if some times (as it was the case with nazism<sup>1</sup>) some of the arguments are drawn from science or philosophy, as it happens.

Indeed, properly speaking in the sphere of human culture, we can rather speak of aggression as having a valuable worth for survival, learning and adaptation. A single example can illustrate this:

Suppose there is gentleman crossing the street with his pregnant wife, a couple of little kids that hold their parents hands, and with his own mother who is already aged enough. As he crosses the street, say, through the zebra-pad, suddenly a car driven at a high speed comes by and almost hit the family. Luckily the driver could deviate the car and stop some meters ahead.

Well, the man with the family loses control and goes screaming, yelling and showing his hands closed as fist to the driver, while he complains about the mad way of driving the car.

Well, the father and husband's reaction cannot be judged as violent. Instead it is an *aggressive* reaction against the driver by which ultimately what comes at stake is the biological survival of the family group. The reaction of the man is fully justified from the point of view of both culture and evolution. That act of aggression is biologically justified, for it aims at enhancing life and survival. As for the reaction of the driver, it is something that can be left here aside out of focus.

Nature is not driven, in any sense by violence – a notoriously cultural concept. Even in the pray-predator relationship it has been shown that, on the one hand, the predator does never mean to eliminate a population, or a group of possible prays. She just wants to satisfy her immediate needs in due time. Correspondingly, the pray is not afraid of disappearing as group or species, for she knows that the predator will only catch one single pray

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