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## From Moral Annihilation to Luciferism: Aspects of a Phenomenology of Violence

### Abstract:

Do the various ascriptions of “violence,” e.g., to rape, logical reasoning, racist legislation, unqualified statements, institutions of class and/or gender inequity, etc., mean something identically the same, something analogous, or equivocal and context-bound? This paper argues for both an analogous sense as well as an exemplary essence and finds support in Aristotle’s theory of anger as, as Sokolowski has put it, a form of moral annihilation, culminating in a level of rage that crosses a threshold. Here we adopt Sartre’s analysis of the “threshold of violence” as indicating a basic “existential” possibility wherein persons may and do adopt a posture of anti-god. This has considerable symmetry with the mythic and theological figure in the Abrahamic religions who is called “Lucifer.” This personage, at a unique timeless moment, found himself empowered to assume the right to exercise an infinite will-act which tolerated no superior normative perspective. I argue that this mythic stance is a live option for persons. Further, modern day nation-state military preparedness, where nuclear weaponry is a major tool of foreign policy, is a way of putting on ice and holding in reserve, but button ready, the ontological madness of the Luciferian moment.

### Keywords:

violence, moral and ontological annihilation, luciferism, Other, Aristotle, Sartre, Sokolowski

## 1. Introduction: Analogy of “Violence”

“Violence” is a word that, like healthy/healthful, lends itself to a wide range of applications. Because it is justifiably charged with emotional-ethical meaning, one finds this ambiguity useful for a wide-range of contexts of discourse. We thus hear of violent speech, the violence of reason, violent sports, violent cultures, structural violence, violent storms, violent music, etc. Given this ambiguity, one may want to deconstruct the use of the word—perhaps the very concept—and propose that a study of violence can only be relativized into a context. The task of understanding is thus *ad hoc*, i.e., it lets its meaning surface out of the variety of contexts in which it may have found a place. This way of researching into the meaning of violence might prove fruitful for some contexts of analysis, but such a project ultimately faces the challenges of surmounting the extant moral aversion of violence, showing why the term itself is not meaningless, and thus demonstrating why one must reject the view that there is no essence, or *eidos*, of violence.

In what follows, I propose that there is such an essence, and, perhaps most of all, that the other extended senses of “violence” may be explained by analogies where we find similarities in differences.<sup>1</sup> If we appropriate Aristotelian-Scholastic terms, we may say that there is both an analogy of attribution and an analogy of proportionality. In an analogy of attribution, “violent,” like “healthy,” applies to a variety of contexts, e.g., persons, actions, climate or weather, laws, institutional practices, art forms, etc. Yet, violence similarly moves into an exemplary proper sense if we take account of its genesis in a teleology of anger, where, as Jean-Paul Sartre says, the “universe of violence” is opened up.<sup>2</sup> This sense of violence may be in play in many other contexts in which an extended sense of someone, or something, is said to be “violent,” or when an event of “violence” is said to occur. These instances may be shown to share in common that they relate to, aim at, or adumbrate this teleological sense, in a way similar to how food, exercise, complexion, life-style, etc. relate to “healthful,” and “healthy.” Here, our proposal is that the exemplary sense is “extreme” in a sense similar to healthy, for which we would need to have presenced the ideal form of perfect healthiness. Similarly, with “violence” we must presence the telos of what culminates when one has crossed the threshold of anger-becoming-violent. In the full exemplary *eidos* of violence, as in the telos of anger, we have a case of an end-in-itself which is capable of turning the means into the end, and the end itself into the means to itself. Subtler instances of violence are not “ends in themselves,” or means become ends and ends become the means. (See below.) But even in these other analogous non-extreme instantiations, one may still, during such an act of non-extreme violence, “catch sight of the universe of violence for an instant” (Sartre), and it is on the basis of such a glimpse that each of us is able to offer, or follow, the “transcendental-eidetic narrative” of the teleological sense of violence, without ourselves necessarily having participated in the universe of violence.

In the case of violence, it is useful to notice an analogy of proportionality where we have less to do with a similarity, or identity, of essences, concepts, or properties, than with the identity, or likeness, of proportions, or ratios: A is to B, as parents are to children, as teachers are to their students, as guardians are to orphans, pet owners to pets, etc. This analogy of relations is important because violence is a type of relation between *ipseities*, wherein one person’s anger at the other aims at the destruction of that other. As we may give an essence-analysis of a kind of relation, or transaction, like a promise, so we may also see analogous promisso-

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1) Michael Staudigl’s *Phänomenologie der Gewalt* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2015) inspired and moved me to many reflections in this essay.

2) Jean-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 178. Sartre’s analyses will guide us for the remainder of this paper. We find his discussion of violence to be a brilliant and fundamental analytic of Existenz and intersubjectivity, and a major contribution to Peace Studies. Page references in parentheses in the text will be to this work.

rial relations, and so we may find that “violence” may be displayed as a kind of relationship. To ascribe violence to, or within, nature requires we think of natural objects, or forces, as quasi-*ipseities*, or persons. To think of practices, institutions, or forms of culture and art as violent is to ascribe to them the status of quasi-persons, or “objective spirit,” effecting a kind of actual or potential violent relationship to, or causality on, *ipseities*. And because of this analogy of proportionality, or ratios, we may use “violent” more extensively, and speak of movies, music, language, lightning strikes, and earthquakes as violent.

Our proposal of an exemplary telic form of violence resembles how we use “belief.” Its teleological exemplary form is not found in the array of instances of “believing that...” which may encompass a field of cognitive terms. Such terms would include “know,” “think,” and “feel,” which roughly mean the same thing, though, in the “extreme” proper telos that involves a robust sense of “know” as involving conviction, evidence, and certainty regarding truth. Another exemplary teleological sense is the cognitive-axiological-voluntary use of “belief” that we single out by the prepositional form of “belief-in.” This sense provides a strong conviction based on trusting what often is most important to “know,” and yet must be “believed,” and, in some cases, it is a necessary condition for other more robust senses of both believing-that and knowing. Perhaps we need a similar special linguistic form that indicates the family resemblance and adumbration of the analogy of proportionality that is still distinct: as in “being-violent.” Then “being-violent” would stand to the diffuse sense of “violent/violence,” as both “belief-in” and the proper sense of “know” stand to the diffuse cognitive terms for “believe.”<sup>3</sup> In what follows, we hope to make evident this claim for the essence of violence in relation to its analogues.

## 2. The Genesis of Violence

Aristotle, followed by St. Thomas, saw much of what we *loosely* call violence as constitutive of our being in the world. For example, Aristotle asserts that courage is exemplified in how we face those evils that we have reason to fear.<sup>4</sup> The one whom we call “courageous” does not appear to be concerned with disrepute, poverty, disease, friendlessness, and death. Death, which is “the end,” after which there no longer seems to be anything good or evil for the person, is the most fearful thing of all. To this day, states and monarchs continue to bestow the highest honor to manifestations of courage that grapple with, or end in, death. Here we have evidence of a general opinion that suggests that dying courageously in war is an indication of having achieved the pinnacle of glory and nobility, assuming, of course, that the motive as well as the cause of the battle are noble. (One might be a warrior for the wrong reason and/or for an ignoble cause.) As is well known, Aristotle also cautioned that there is an excess of courage, a recklessness where one fears nothing, including those things that healthy reason would warrant. Those with a “spirited temper”<sup>5</sup> may have the appearance of courage because they have an unswerving readiness to encounter dangers, while, in truth, they are merely roused by excessive temper to rush into peril without foreseeing any of the dangers that await them. It is when proper purpose and choice come to guide such a spirited temper that it may become true courage.

As incarnate beings with sensible-sensual natures we have drives, propensities, desires, etc. These sensitive appetites are not merely directed toward attractive and pleasurable goods that are suitable and fitting to our “concupiscible appetites.” We also have, say the Aristotelians, a further aspect of our more sensitive appetitive powers. Our sensuous nature is drawn toward good, but we also have an “irascible appetite,” by which we are

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3) Max Scheler early on introduced these distinctions. Other fine discussions are to be found, e.g., in the writings of Josef Pieper, H.H. Price, Gabriel Marcel, and August Brunner.

4) Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1115a6 ff

5) *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1116b24 ff.

drawn, or inclined, toward “the arduous good.” We are not merely inclined to what is agreeable according to our sensuous perceptions, neither are we ready to flee from what is harmful, or painful, but we are also drawn to resist what threatens and stands in the way of what is agreeable: even destroy it. This means we are inherently drawn to undertake the arduous good, and we have a tendency to overcome and rise above the obstacles it poses. Here, the theme of an added forceful enactment of our desire comes into play. (See below, especially Sect. 6.) In this sense, the “irascible appetite,” says Aquinas, “is the champion and defender of the concupiscible, when it rises up against what hinders the acquisition of suitable things which the concupiscible desires, or against what inflicts harm, from which the concupiscible flies.”<sup>6</sup>

To the extent that this account of the conative and appetitive aspects of being human is acceptable, we can see a certain kind of irascibility as intrinsic to living where—assuming that what we desire will often meet with obstacles—anger and force burgeon just below the surface of seemingly pacific undertakings. In this paper, we will pursue the ancient tradition’s view that violence has beginnings, at least partially, in anger and the exemplary form of violence has to do with killing another person. Paul Ricoeur once observed that, “The intention of violence, the end which it pursues implicitly or explicitly, directly or indirectly, is the death of the other – at least his death or something worse than his death.” What may serve as “worse than death” is what Michel Henry named “fascist metaphysical torture,” where one submits, through advanced technology, a captive to horrendous pain from which he cannot withdraw.<sup>7</sup> In the portrayal of violence one may be tempted to focus on the act of torture, or murder. But the advantage of the hermeneutical understanding is that one may see a motivational context rooted in events and experiences that preceded those that follow. After all, most societies distinguish between the termination of an early pregnancy, an abortion in the last trimester, the deliberate killing of a child by a parent, and a child’s death because of parental neglect, or by the parent’s accident. Similarly, societies distinguish between manslaughter, self-defense, and murder; between the gun-violence of a police officer, a soldier, and a citizen; the killing committed by a drunk driver, a person in jealous rage, a doctor presiding over an assisted suicide, and a perpetrator of a “cold-blooded” hate-crime.

If we accept the hypothesis that violence involves the will, or desire, to destroy someone else, we must nevertheless acknowledge that much of what we call violence is harming, not destroying, someone else. The key consideration is that the Other angers me by being an obstacle to my will, and, after a certain phase of anger, the destruction of the Other becomes the telos. The forms of harm are “violent” within an analogy of proportionality, to the extent they fit into the teleology of violence emerging out of anger. In normal life, we take for granted that we do not live in a state of war of all against all but rather in a landscape of pacific relationships where most of our being with one another involves acts of mutual trust and honest communication.

However, this amicable scene often finds interruptions of anger and rage. After such an outburst, one may say that he doesn’t know why he did what he did, or acted like he did, in the midst of his anger. Yet, the experience of anger is a felt-meaning capable of becoming explicit. Thus, Aristotle’s analysis can be appropriated as an explication of the beginnings of anger, i.e., one can see that one is pained at being thwarted in one’s desires and plans. In this respect, reference to anger is not like referring to a sharp physical pain, where there is no theme to be unpacked, but only the same dull throbbing, such as in a toothache. Rather, anger is like the empty intention found in the silence prior to speaking in which one is wanting to say something: there is an empty intention of a “dark something” (Husserl), a “felt meaning” (Gendlin), of wanting to say, meaning to say, from out of which at least one sentence, or perhaps a volume, might flow; but what I will say and want to

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6) St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 81, a.2, c.

7) Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth*, trans. Charles Kelbley (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 227; Michel Henry, *From Communism to Capitalism* (trans. Scott Davidson (London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2014), 46–50.

say will not be known by me (or you) until I say it. Similarly, with anger there is a projective empty intention of getting something done, a “wanting to do,” the explication of which might startle us, but at the start the details are missing. Retrospectively, not only might another preferable course of action become evident, but, prior to crossing that threshold, I might not have been able to predict what ensued as a possibility, depending how familiar I am with my angry outbursts, and especially after the anger has tipped into a rage. Nevertheless, I will recognize the explication as an instantiation of that which pre-thematically engaged me.

As a result of said recognition, one might be able to admit with Sartre, that anger is a way of sliding into foolishness, especially by “simplifying too difficult tasks” (Sartre, 322–323). Part of this simplification is that we self-induce foolishness by way of silencing a more voluminous sense of ourselves, and our capacities, by suppressing alternatives that might surface in imagination and reflection. Most egregiously of all, this suppression enables us to feed a desire to destroy the pre-existing ontological, natural, and social order that presents itself as an obstacle. (See Sartre, 322–323 and 398–399.) With Sartre’s help, I will attempt to show how it is possible to explicate a thematic-eidetic narrative that itself explicates what the angry and violent person experiences in his (merely) apparent state of incomprehension.

We have said that everyday life typically involves a smooth network of pacific reciprocity and good will. Consider how, in driving cars, people keep the rules of the road, and are honest in their use of directional signals. Now consider “road rage.” Here, the common order may break down when someone suddenly becomes furious with another driver, as when a driver perceives another as having inappropriately arrogated rights and privileges, i.e., where I as the offended driver feel that another has assumed that he or she may simply disregard me and my right to go first. In this instance, I perceive that the other has regarded me, and my rights, as of little or no account; I might even perceive that the other is the sort of person for whom the rights of others may be trampled on. As Sartre said: “There has never been any violence on earth that did not correspond to the affirmation of some right.” (See Sartre, 177.)

We may note that a normal everyday situation is one of *ipseities* interacting in an interbodily way, and within a network of interactions based on perceptions of Others perceiving us. As Lévinas has taught us, even the presence of the Other, her very face, awakens expectations and a sense of one’s own being as being for one another, a dative of responsibility. In modern liberal societies, this is often formulated in terms of a sense of “rights.” Rights in this context are tied to a sense (immediate intuition) of oneself as being in the world with Others. Following Husserl, we hold that Others are present to me through an empathic perception. This is a transcending self-displacement of oneself such that I-here-now am analogously “there” in the presenced Other: I experience there an I-here-now analogous to myself who, however, is transcendent to me and for whom the world, and perhaps I myself within the world, am present. Thus, there is an essential normativity, an oughtness, in the very presencing of the Other, and a certain corresponding behavior is called for. As I expect Others to presence me as I presence them, so they are apperceived as presencing me, for whom I am Other. We recognize one another as like unto one another, and in this likeness, there emerges a burgeoning sense of each being equal in this regard to each, because each is someone who experiences the world and can say “I-here-now.” Each is expected to acknowledge that one’s bodily being in the world is a vulnerable existence because, as suffused with “me myself,” it renders one present in the world in fairly precise physical-spatial dimensions susceptible to the impacting of surrounding bodies. For each, the other’s bodiliness is inseparable from, and mediates what is, another I-here-now whose being is not exhausted by these bodily dimensions, and yet affected by what happens to this body. Giving one another space, making room, and deferring to one another is the appropriate response to the ontological presence of another because such deference, restraint, etc. is inseparable from the very sense of the presence of the other embodied in the world. In this sense, “respect” is an axiological dimension inherent in the epistemic presencing of Others.

“Rights,” as ways of articulating the parameters of respectful presencing and behavior, always have to do with the “*proprium*,” i.e., the “proper(ty)” one is, and has, in being and having a body. Each has expectations of others, and each anticipates that certain expectations will be recognized, thus exercising these claims on others in some degree: usually through established customary rituals and courtesies. One expects not to be confused with, and treated as, a spatial-temporal thing existing in the world. Of course, each cultural-social context has its own system and network of expectations and claims. A certain stress enters into everydayness, when one believes that an Other disregards one’s own basic expectation of being minimally acknowledged, recognized, and respected in terms of one’s life-space, or realm of bodily movement and action. Similarly, there can emerge an expectation that life together in terms of everyday interactions in common spaces may be a way in which one’s own stream of consciousness may flow in harmony with that of one’s neighbors. Ideally, life together may be a kind of tacit, or deliberate, “making music together,” where the streams of consciousness are joined. But this harmony and freedom in the flow of distinct streams of consciousness may be thwarted, invaded, or appropriated by an Other in his or her intruding on one’s own space and temporal stream, e.g., via noise. The relationship with the Other may be that of an employer and employee: my stream of consciousness, as the employee, has been transferred to that of the employer who “owns” said time stream by “owning” my will on the basis an agreement for a specified, or unspecified, period time. As a slave, of course, there would be no such “contract.”

In contrast, when a person says, in anger, or dispassion: “I will not recognize the other’s claims, but only my own desires and impulses,” there is typically an anger effected in the disdained other, who, as Aristotle noted, seeks to right a wrong. As we shall see, if the one who seeks revenge in anger crosses a threshold and enters the “universe of violence,” a personal transformation is brought about.

### 3. Anger and the Beginning of Violence

The horrible exemplary forms of violence are often presented as thoughtless, careless, and even stupid, mindless acts. Other times, they are presented as free, clear-headed, and coldly calculated acts of destruction. In such calculated presentations, it seems that, if anger is present, it is not the form of anger that most of us encounter. We will have to distinguish between the state of mind of the violent first-person executioner in the act, and this same person’s state of mind prior to said act, or from the state of mind of other members of the culture and the agencies behind the executioner’s own agency. But apart from the apparently anger-less, cold, and rational cases of violence to which we will not do justice here, each of us may, when finding ourselves in the eye of the storm of a furious anger, recognize the initial stages of a distinctive novel self-understanding and mode of being in the world. Indeed, we may even begin to recognize the beginnings of a magical crypto-theological transformation of the world.

Consider how when one feels himself wronged for whatever reason, it is evident that, as Plato noted, “one senses his spirit seething and growing fierce.” Anger at this point is lived as an engrossing empty intention. Initially I have the tremors of a powerful passionate act, but eventually, I don’t have this passion but exist it. In “noble souls it endures and wins the victory and will not let go until either it achieves its purpose, or death ends all, or... it is called back by reason within and calmed.”<sup>8</sup> Here Plato suggests that anger has an essential teleology. Even more, he seems to suggest that it is a natural conclusion of anger in the noble soul to enact those acts that destroy the person who caused the anger, or who have frustrated the noble soul’s will, unless “called back by reason within and calmed.”

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8) Plato, *Republic* 440b-d.

In the course of anger's unfolding, most of us can testify that we ourselves, even as reasonable agents who control, and direct, ourselves by way of reason, experience ourselves as possibly, or actually, swallowed up by the force of anger. After a certain point, this force can dominate reason (our better judgment), and one undergoes a transformation wherein there emerges a new, remarkable, and hyperbolic sense of oneself. One of the features of this new sense of oneself is the nullification of the basic moral imperative to judge both the appropriateness (commensurability, proportionality, consistency, etc.) of where one's fury is heading. Here one capitulates to the occlusion of the admonitions of one's past customary identity as well as to the unknown future consequences of relenting to the fury. Indeed, one enters into an anomalous and delusional *nunc stans*. Retentions and protentions, no longer and not yet, are subsumed into the abiding exalted, exalting, and self-legitimizing present that, in retrospect, is incommensurate and heterogeneous to what preceded: even though it is lived as a kind of natural completion of the earlier preceding anger. When one crosses into this realm of what Sartre has called "the universe of violence," one's everyday temporality wherein one lives life as taking time passes away. In the universe of violence, one's life is congealed to the present moment (*nunc stans*), and everything is collapsed into one's wanting everything now and immediately: life coalesces into this outrage. Thus, there is a delusional sense in which this is the very telos and consummation of one's life, and it may not be judged from any other perspective. The only relevant framework is one's present rage and the direction in which it leads. Later we will flesh out the telos of anger in terms of a transcendental-phenomenological narrative.

Yet, Plato also suggests that rational noble souls may call the fire-storm of anger back and calm it. Presumably, this is not true of those who are ignoble. Today the therapeutic practices of anger management suggest techniques in which one may get hold of oneself in the unfolding of anger, e.g., by distracting, or postponing, it.

The theme of the teleology of anger is reflected in the *New Testament* (*Matthew* 5:21ff.), where Jesus supersedes the Commandment not to kill with, "but I say to you," warning of anger towards one's brother, especially insulting the brother: calling him a "fool." For, even here, the judgment that holds against murder is said to be in play. Prior to murder, there is in anger a passion which can impel one to murder if allowed to flower. If it is not contained at its incipency, it will run its murderous course, and in its unchecked beginnings, this anger is assigned a kind of equivalence with murder. Aristotle explicates the intricacy of this theme. He shows anger to be a result of a perceived injustice, and gives a third-person account of what can only be lived in the first-person. In the *Rhetoric*,<sup>9</sup> the perceived injustice is described as an unjustified slight, or perhaps, a belittling, or contempt, of another person and, possibly, that which said person loves, or identifies with. The belittler perceives others, even those persons or things one holds dear, as having no importance. This may be through one's being regarded with contempt, or through the Other's acting spitefully by thwarting one's wishes, or by being insolent, as when he acts as if he were greatly superior.

The offended person responds with anger which Aristotle defines as "a desire accompanied by pain," and this desire mixed with pain is meant for a retribution which is manifested to the offender for his or her having manifestly belittled oneself, or one's own. He adds that this belittling is done by someone who has no business belittling me, or my own.<sup>10</sup> Commenting on Aristotle Robert Sokolowski, notes that here, "anger is not due to the hurt but to being belittled..., to the implication that you are insignificant... It is a response to something like a moral annihilation." The abyssal hidden opinion you have of me is not kept to yourself but "bursts into

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9) Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1378 a31ff.,

10) *Rhetoric* 1378 b ff. It is noteworthy that Aristotle was not against belittling if it were done by the superior person; and the superior person deserved belittling if he was indifferent to being belittled.

an existential actuality.” “What had been latent in *dynamis* now exists in *energeia*.” The one belittling “shows me up as being worth nothing to him,” and I experience my own (moral) annihilation.<sup>11</sup>

The angry response which aims at righting this belittling wrong has some pleasure attached to it, because one expects to right the slight by revenging it. Furthermore, the pained anger in pursuit of revenge seems to have inherent in it an adumbration of the notorious sweetness expected in revenge. In this vein, Aristotle quotes Homer, who affirms that, “Sweeter it is by far than the honeycomb dripping with sweetness and spreads through the hearts of men.”

Anger is an impulse that is accompanied by pain, and this pain is directed toward a single person in order to revenge a perceived slight, e.g., Cleon, not to “man” in general.<sup>12</sup> The slight is perceived as a form of injustice and the response is thus seen as right and just. We may also assume what is merely implicit in the text, that the belittling or the slight, not merely the anger in response, must also be directed at a single person: even if subsumed under a general disdain, and not just anyone, or man in general. For example, today we might say in American English: “He dis’d (disrespected) *me*.” This contempt may not only be directed to me but also to mine, i.e., to those whom I love or with what/whom I identify.

The slight is greatest, Aristotle insists, in so far as contempt is shown for those things we hold most dear, and this dearness has degrees. For example, an academic philosopher will get angry with those who show contempt for his particular philosophical positions. But Aristotle states clearly that the target of contempt may be who somebody is as a single person. If this is so, and if it is indeed “moral annihilation,” it is directed not merely at distinguishing, individuating, and acquired properties, but at the person him- or herself as the one having the properties. It is directed at what, i.e., who, is the non-ascriptive referent of “I” rather than merely an ascribed property I have, e.g., my height, physique, status, gait, hair style, laugh, facial expressions, status, abilities, etc.

It is not clear that this is a permissible distinction for Aristotle. For him, it seems that whom one appreciates can be grasped only in terms of properties. Furthermore, it is not clear that there is a non-sortal referent of “one” or “I,” instead of the unique constellation or bundle of these properties. For example, it is not clear what one’s intentions are in befriending the friend for his own sake.<sup>13</sup> Is it directed to the person himself, or the excellent quality, or the friend on condition of his having the property? It appears to be this latter case. The one whom one befriends, or is disdainful towards, is for Aristotle the person as distinguished and constituted by, and identified with, an admirable property, e.g., virtue, or character. In this case, one is befriended because “who one is,” and has to do solely with the excellence of virtue that he, or she, has: albeit, acquired through the practice of virtue and found at the core of his, or her, moral personal identity. One ought to befriend someone, if and only if that someone has certain features, properties, stations, etc. Thus, one can thus say that one is loved, or befriended, not for who one is—perhaps not even for what one is—but for what one has. Callias is admired and befriended as having excellence, and this excellence is the necessary condition for this friendship. (Clearly Aristotle’s description of friendship is not of Christian “unconditional love,” or *agape*, but of a way of being with one another that is less rare, and more familiar.)

Yet the issue of who/what is morally annihilated becomes tangled. Consider Aristotle’s observation regarding the substantial core of Callias.<sup>14</sup> Here he uses the second-person reference. But when I refer to you,

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11) See Robert Sokolowski, “Honor, Anger, and Belittlement in Aristotle’s Ethics,” *Studia Gilsonia* 3(2014), 221–240, especially 231–240.

12) *Rhetoric* 1371a 31ff.

13) *Nicomachean Ethics* 1164a10–13.

14) See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1029 b 15 and the discussion in my *Who One Is*, Book 1 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009), Ch. V, Sect. 3, especially 305–306.

I refer to what you refer to when you say “I,” and that is a non-sortal, non-ascriptive reference. Thus, Aristotle says: “The being of Callias is not the being of ‘musical,’ for being you, Callias, is not the being of ‘musical,’ since you are not musical by your own proper nature.” One may therefore conclude that for Aristotle, Callias is Callias *per se* and the “I” (“you”) of Callias, is what one refers to with his proper name and what Callias refers to non-ascriptively with “I” and not any of his distinguishing properties, or essential-ontological properties – which he shares with all other rational beings.

If the belittling effects a “moral annihilation,” we seem to have a gesture aimed at the *moral*, not actual, “physical,” or ontological destruction of the one who has the properties. Thus, the contempt is not the same as murder and does not annihilate the one having the properties, but aspires to draw as near as possible to this by annihilating what is most dear. In this, there is a gesture of the annihilation of the person as a “moral person-ality,” who identifies him-/herself with certain features and ways of being in the world. Ontologically, who one is, is always transcendent to such properties. But to say this is not to say that *eo ipso*, one may not be “devastated,” or “shattered,” by being treated contemptuously. It is “I myself” who am slighted, or treated as nothing, and my anger aims to right the wrong. And, to the extent that there is perceived a “total moral annihilation,” i.e., where there is no limit to belittling, the “just measure” of the angry response may be limitless revenge. This response may transform the angered person to reciprocate with a form of annihilation, possibly one that exceeds the original moral annihilation.

Aristotle held that anger could be rational and appropriate, and only a stupid person would not be angry (or at least tempted to be angry) when insulted by someone who has no business being disdainful, or supercilious. Yet he also held that anyone can be excessively angry. Yet, does he mean we should always avoid the greatest point of intensity of this emotion, e.g., responding to a moral annihilation with an ontological, or physical one? “Is there an extreme of anger that is always wrong, no matter what the provocation?”<sup>15</sup> May one “lose one’s temper” in a noble rational fashion? Might this extreme itself sometimes be appropriate? Whether or not it is rational and appropriate, one who seeks the actual destruction of one who is being contemptuous reaches the familiar threshold of a point of no return, or a “going berserk.” We will pursue this later, in connection with the proper eidetic sense of violence, which is the destruction already adumbrated in one’s anger.

#### 4. Moral and Ontological Annihilation

Anger’s progression into rage may be accounted for by the beginnings of anger in the experience of being “morally annihilated.” Here we find a beginning of some forms of violence. There is another consideration brought forward by James Gilligan,<sup>16</sup> a Harvard professor and psychiatrist who has worked with mentally ill prison inmates in Massachusetts. He suggests that the analyses of Aristotle (and Aquinas) show that it is not really anger that is at the root of some forms of the exemplary (extreme) forms of violence. Being “dis’d” (belittled, disrespected, disdained, etc.) keeps anger within the *moral context*, i.e., of righting the wrong, securing justice in the face of injustice, of being so belittled, one is deprived of his, or her, due. But Gilligan points to a kind of “annihilation” that inaugurates a violence that is perhaps even more destructive than the gesture aimed at letting the other know that for me he is nothing. For Gilligan, these extreme “pathological” forms of violence seem to have less to do

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15) *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106b18-20, See Richard Kraut, *Aristotle on the Human Good* (Princeton University Press, 1989), 338–339.

16) James Gilligan, M.D., *Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic* (New York: Random House, Vintage, 1996), 110. See also his *Preventing Violence* (London: Thames & Hudson: 2001), especially Ch. 1. The author is former director of the Center for the Study of Violence at Harvard Medical School, the former medical director of the Bridgewater State Hospital for the criminally insane, and former director of mental health for the Massachusetts prison system.

with the revenge for assault on one's moral personhood, and more to do with the survival of one's already devastated selfhood. He has in mind foremost cases of someone who, as a young child, suffers an attack of violence, such as rape, by an adult. This traumatic event, rather than becoming simply homogeneous with former presents, becomes a traumatic past from an immemorial time. This past does not pass away, and there is no question of an act of revenge directed at the original perpetrator. The victim is not seeking a "just revenge" for being "morally annihilated." Rather, due to a perceived recurrence in the present of something analogous to the original traumatic aggression, the adult is transformed by rage and engages in a violent act of survival, or defense.

Perhaps we can say that the difference between the aggression aiming at revenge and the criminal pathological aggression tends to be blurred precisely because, after the point where rage surfaces, where each has "lost one's temper," a self-transformation occurs where the possibility of an appropriate perspective is lost. Despite this blurring, we nevertheless wish to suggest that the originating (Aristotelian) moral annihilation robs the recipient of what he is perceived to treasure most; but, to the extent the person lives the distinction between herself and this lost or endangered "treasure," the assault and ensuing damage is not as massive as in the pathological cases discussed by Gilligan.

A clear abiding distinction here is that in Gilligan's pathological case the perceived threat may well be of an event, or action, which is not only unintended but which is an utterly false construction of the actual existing event; the threat exists only because of the distorting hypersensitivity of the traumatized person making the association. Still, in both cases the threshold of violence is crossed when one is prepared to risk everything he holds to be important. In the pathological cases, however, the person's sense of himself, the thin membrane of dignity that his present adult personality and characteristic way of being in the world have constructed in the wake of the trauma to maintain his self intact, there is no possible listening to reason, and there is nothing at all to lose since absolutely everything is at stake.

The important implication here is that in both cases of rage, each "person" has a basic dignity (*dignitas*, *Würde*, see below), and is "indignant," and outraged, when it is assaulted or denied. In the moral annihilation, the denial itself is an indignity that denies the ontological dignity, or acquired dignity (e.g., one's having been elected "chairman"), that demotes the victim to public disgrace, unworthiness (*indignus*), and, consequently, indignance. But in the pathological case, the experience is not merely of a dignity denied, but the threat of an existential annihilation, because the thin frail membrane of self-protection which sustains the sense of one's ontological dignity is perceived to be assaulted by one against whom there is/was no protection. The *present* perceived threat occasions the re-presencing of the immemorial traumatic violation. Once again, the fear and the shame of being so vulnerable and exposed are now present: one's having been so vulnerable and exposed fuses with now, and there is no secure place to which one might retreat, or withdraw.

Thus, this being exposed is not the shame of being exposed to Others, but of being open and exposed to the violent will of the aggressor against whom there are/were no defenses. Here is something approaching an ontological shame: I am one who has been deprived of my selfness, one for whom there is no place for me to be me. Louis Lavelle has observed that, "Every man instinctively resists the influence which another attempts to wield over him, and he covers himself from eyes which would pierce and violate his inner being."<sup>17</sup> Eric Erickson notes that, "he who is ashamed would like to force the world not to look at him, to notice his exposure. He would like to destroy the eyes of the world."<sup>18</sup> One's "inner being" (self-ness) has the feature of aloneness, ownness, privacy, incommunicability, and mineness. Invasion of this cuts deeper than moral annihilation, for this goes only as deep as the esteem for the Other's judgments, and the dearness of that which he disdains.

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17) Louis Lavelle, *Dilemma of Narcissus*, trans. William Gairdner (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973), 141.

18) Gilligan, *Violence*, 64.

In the cases Gilligan is familiar with—from his psychiatric work with persons who have a history of horrible crimes of violence— a simple innocent deed, e.g., someone looking askance at them, can set off monstrous reactions, such as gouging out the eyes of the onlooker who are interpreted as assaulting his “inner being.” Gilligan cautions that we misunderstand these men, and at our peril, if we do not realize that they are quite literal when they say that they would rather kill or mutilate others, that they would rather be killed or mutilated themselves, than to live without pride, dignity, and self-respect.

What is at stake in proper forms of violence is the ontological issue of persons that is inseparable from a moral perception of oneself, and by others. Therefore, for the “pathologically violent” person there is, of necessity, a close connection between moral and ontological annihilation. But the monstrousness of the initial trauma-causing assault occasions, not an act of violent aggression in response to a remembered assault, but rather something more akin to a desperate violent act of self-defense: possibly one in response to a wholly innocent gesture. If there is a threat of the destruction of one’s own feeble defense of one’s self-respect then one faces not existing, not being someone while still existing. The sheer non-ascriptive non-sortal sense of oneself may be a sense of strength and even religious comfort for the person blessed with a more robust moral-psychological personality. But when those adults who were violated as children, perceive that they are in danger of being robbed of the fragile sanctuary of themselves, and their thin membrane of defense is in danger, then they will risk everything to protect it.

Especially when one perceives himself threatened, and anger crosses a certain but invisible threshold, there is a transformation of the person’s world and her being in the world: she puts everything at stake. In prisons, jails, homeless shelters, and the streets of poor neighborhoods one may frequently observe (especially) young men, displaying “thin skins” and “short fuses” when they perceive themselves to be slighted. When this happens, they enter into a deadly combat mode where there is no tomorrow; they risk everything to destroy the source of their shame, their sense of being “dis’d,” their perceived humiliation, and their being disrespected. In most of these cases, we do not have criminal pathological forms of behavior, but responses, often posturings, to real or perceived acts of moral annihilation. But the differences in the middle of the brawl are not easily discerned.

We may distinguish both the Aristotelian cases of moral annihilation, and the pathological cases to which Gilligan has called our attention, from the forms of behavior which are characterized by extraordinary insensitivity to others. Such behavior, while not necessarily violent, or contemptuous, may be the cause of tensions and irritation that lead to anger, and even violence. The subjectivity of infancy may be reconstructed as a narcissistic exuberance by which the baby her-/himself exists instinctually in pursuit of union with what she or he desires.<sup>19</sup> The Others in her surrounding and indeed everything else is pervaded by the experienced sense of being inseparable from the needs of the nascent infant. For that reason, Heinz Kohut calls them “self-objects.” The development of this original self-love into proper proportions, including the infant’s own capacity to have empathy, has for its necessary condition an appropriate nurturing empathic reception from, mirroring, and guidance by the infant’s adult significant Others. With a deficiency of proper and sufficient empathic mirroring, the subsequent life of this person will be one in which he will live obsessively desirous of being mirrored by Others’ empathic presencing, and live more or less impervious to the needs of those around him, because his environment is comprised of self-objects, and he lives intent on living in a world of self-objects filling only his

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19) Cf. the account of this “likely story” of the originating gracious presence of Others in my *The Person and the Common Life* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1992), 198–205, which is indebted to, among others, Heinz Kohut who argued that the deepest level to which psychoanalysis can penetrate is the threat to the organization of the self... the experience of the absence of the life-sustaining matrix of the empathic response of the self-object.” See his *The Restoration of the Self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1977), 123.

own desires. The theory is that his life has a narcissistic bent because he has not had the grace of appresenting a fulfilling appresentation. Thus, he is not capable of receiving and welcoming others, or perceiving his having been received and welcomed by others.

In contrast, the more fortunate infant awakens, and is ushered into life through the gracious presencing of significant adult Others. These, one may presume, have not been generationally burdened by an incapacity to appropriately mirror to their children the children's desire for empathy. Such a child is able eventually, assuming further moments of gracious presences of Others, to experience the Other as the Other, and experience objects as transcendent to the self, i.e., to be liberated from experiencing them as "self-objects." Eventually the child is able to experience itself as Other to the Other, and to love itself and the Other as radically free and intrinsically loveable independent selves. The proper gracious empathic mirroring of the infant empowers the child's reception of meaning, and meaning-giving powers. This eventually ushers the child into responsible human agency.

In the absence of this original gracious presence, the child develops into an adult whose life is burdened by a debilitating narcissism. If, as we have seen, an original presence of the Other is not only improperly mirrored, but violent, and there is inaugurated the life of a person compelled to protect the fragile citadel of herself, whose walls of defense are but thin membranes reverberating with constant slights. This person has been launched on the trajectory of habitual imminent "moral and existential annihilation" (bearing a "huge chip on her shoulder") where the only defense is a ready offense, usually incommensurate with the perceived belittling.

One of the senses of virtue is that we, with luck, and with the grace of Others, may proceed through life with ever stronger enlightened self-constituting position-takings which both enable us to flourish with others in our life in the world, as well as protect us from the various assaults from Others and the world. Aristotle emphasized the importance of good, nurturing beginnings as the beginnings of character; but he also noted that we have to control over these beginnings. In this sense, we do not begin the beginnings of our freedom with Others in the world, but it is begun for us by the luck of the good graces of Others.<sup>20</sup>

But even for those of us whose intersubjective beginnings have been gracious, and who have been blessed with a less fragile sense of ourselves, there are still well-known mine-fields to traverse. For example, if someone has been repeatedly disregarded and frequently humiliated from youth, say, because of gender identity, disability, or race, her sense of self-respect is dependent less, if at all, on the self-witness of herself in her conscientious thinking and acting. Rather, there is the overwhelming need to identify oneself with characteristics esteemed by one's peers, and not a sense oneself as transcendent to these and any such characteristics. Thus, there is the diminution of the force, or compelling nature, of the witness of one's conscience and one's more, or less, objective self-appraisal of oneself. The decisive self-respect must come, perhaps totally, from elsewhere. In the brawls, and near brawls, which one may witness daily, e.g., in our homeless shelters and jails, when the protagonists are often seem to be those for whom self-respect has been deprived since youth, and constantly reinforced by structures of class, poverty, and racism, self-respect comes from two sources. It is tied to "standing up for oneself" in an altercation before others, thus gaining respect from the persons in one's immediate audience, or community. Often blended with the previous scenario, self-respect it is derived from making others afraid, especially those who has been perceived as disrespectful. Fear becomes the substitute for respect: I am somebody, i.e., the one who is feared by X, or the one whom X, who is now dead, should have feared.

It may be that I, as an adult, may reach a state of fearlessness and/or courage, whereby I believe that I, although present in the world by being for others, am not vulnerable to them. That is, by trusting in my capacity to transcend the other's determination of me, I may believe I can nullify the other's ability to harm me. But, as we have indicated, how such a fortified self would develop a resemblance to the *megalopsychia*, or great-souled

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20) Cf. *Nichomachean Ethics*, Bk. X, ch. 9.

individual of Aristotle, requires an especially unusual story. Such a self-trust is an extraordinary virtue, and presumably owes its early stages to the gracious originating presence of Others. And, perhaps, it is most often accompanied by a trust in something believed to be more basic than my I-can, e.g., my belonging inalienably to a community that will always be at my side, or by belief in a Power that grounds and fortifies whatever capacity of self-relation/self-reference I have.<sup>21</sup>

## 5. Ontological Respect and Dignity

The study of violence is both theoretical and practical. A practical interest is peace, which here may be considered as the social order wherein fellowship and community reign, as well as the absence of those forces, personal and structural, which occasion the robbing of an individual's self-respect, self-esteem, and whatever else they hold dear. Self-esteem and self-respect refer to an original affectivity in which one pre-reflectively affirms and finds joy in oneself. This is an accompanying tonality to life (*Befindlichkeit*), in so far as it is pervaded by a kind of satisfaction in the successful filling of life's basic empty intentions, affection for others, and affection received from others.<sup>22</sup> But prior to such "success," one is an individual whose uniqueness goes in advance of one's identifiable identity stemming from enworldment and insertion in the intersubjective indexical network. This lived transcendental individuality, or ipseity, is a secret invisible to all the others, and manifests only to oneself in the first-person as a non-sortal referent. My use of "you" refers to what you refer to when you say "I," and this is always an inerrant non-ascriptive self-referring to the non-sortal, transcendent ipseity: and similarly, when I use the third-person demonstrative pronouns ("he," "she," etc.). Thus each experiences himself as an individual whose uniqueness as an individual is more fundamental than his distinguishing factual contingent circumstances, as well as all the particular and universal definite descriptions and self-ascriptions.<sup>23</sup> This lived individuality is inseparable from the consideration that as a transcendental I, each person experiences herself as a dative of manifestation, i.e., one to whom the whole world shows itself in a unique way, and without whom the world would never have this look. Each is a *Bewusst-sein*, a displaying There or *Da*, of Being (*Da-Sein*) as the encompassing infinite horizon, and thus each consciousness (*Bewusstsein*) is not only a unique self-presencing, but a unique presencing of Being, a *Seins-Bewusst-sein*, and, in this respect, "world" and/or "Being" are first of all always "mine" and my horizon.

The embodied, countenanced presence of the uniquely unique Other, not in the world, but one for whom the infinity of the world is, and for whom only proper names and demonstrative pronouns, and no amount of definite descriptions, can properly grasp, is present, necessarily, as a kind of infinity. Yet this radical transcendental dimension of unique self-awareness is always already enworlded, and, therefore, essentially vulnerable to a distorting objectification. If the original sin of philosophy is objectivism, there is an original fall from the grace of original secret non-reflexive self-affection to the ineluctable condition of vulnerability through being for others, wherein the hidden sense of one's ipseity is anyone's target for negation, or distortion: in the form of reduction, shaming, or ridicule.

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21) See of course Kierkegaard, *Sickness Unto Death*, Part I, A; and Michel Henry, *C'est moi, la vérité* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1996).

22) See Husserl's discussions of the truth of one's life, of will, of one's heart, and of one's calling. One may consult *Husserliana* XI, *passim* for the foundations of these themes in Husserl's theory of passive synthesis that enables a *Gesamtintention* of one's life-world. For the more explicit ethical development of these themes, especially the truth of will and one's calling, see Edmund Husserl, *Grenzprobleme der Phänomenologie*, *Husserliana* XLII (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), especially Part IV; cf. my *Who One Is*, Book 2, *Existenz and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009), Ch. IV-V for an attempt at a synthesis

23) The nature of the individuality, which is independent of, and in some sense prior to, enworldment, is a fundamental issue: see my *Who One Is*, Books 1–2.

Each's apperception of this vulnerability in herself and others, in so far as the sense of equality and burgeoning expectations of justice play a role, is an ontological state of affairs, an "is." But at the same time, it mandates an incessant deference, and even reverence. It is an "is" upon which rides an "ought." As what mandates deference always serves as an obstacle, or resistance, to one's inevitable sliding into thingly categoriality, and modes of comportment. Although, strictly speaking, one's ipseity, as original non-reflexive self-awareness founded in the unbegun and unending flow of the primal presencing of internal time-consciousness, is never eliminable or destroyed from without, i.e., I cannot presence my destruction by something in the world. Even so, the temple of alterity in which the lived ipseity is essentially embedded in the Other through its embodiment, enworldment, and personal identity, is clearly vulnerable to violation.

A basic sense of violence, which has kinship with "moral annihilation," is when the other *Leib* is reduced to a body-thing (*Koerper*), and the agent appears to think of the other exclusively in terms of efficient causality. But if this were so, i.e., if the agent did conceive of the other exclusively in terms of thingly-efficient causality, there would seem to be a mistake, rather than violence. Violence always requires the actual appresentation of the Other as such, even if the agent would suppress it; thus, it is always a *violatio*, a profanation of the temple of spirit, or transcendental subjectivity. That is, the apperception of the other is not eliminated but part of the sense of acts of killing, maiming, torturing, sadism, brutalizing, etc. is the "bad faith," whereby the appresented transcendent Other is reified and absolutely enworlded, i.e., denied while preserved.

Each is non-reflexively and non-sortally self-aware as a unique ipseity whose sense is not exhausted by her being in the world, or by the ongoing acquisition of an identity through intersubjectivity and enworldment.<sup>24</sup> In the third-person, we may say with Aquinas that the presencing of a person is the presencing of an ontological dignity, or (with Dietrich von Hildebrand) an "ontological value," i.e., not a value-quality as a property of something, but a non-defeasible, or ineliminable value, actualized in the sheer existence of a person. Kant's view that persons are not means but ends claims something similar. Indeed, the empathic presencing of another person is not merely a value-appreciation of what is, but, as we noted, this "is" is inseparably an "ought." The other makes claims on me to sustain a basic attitude of ontological respect as the condition for my appropriate presencing of the person. The epistemic act of presencing the Other is an act which presences the greatest abyss of transcendence in the world, and at the same time, this awakens the axiological feeling-act toward this one who/which is not commensurate with all that is in the world. Thus, this epistemic act essentially verges on being a fundamental ontological-axiological act.

Thus this epistemic act is not merely the presencing of a thing of a certain kind, a What, but rather it presences a Who, and this is possible because the ontological attitude, or position-taking, *Einstellung und Stellungnahme*, shifts from an apperception to an appresentation, from a perspectival thing-presentation to an act of respect, or deference, where, of necessity, the appresented transcendent abyss essentially eludes a filled perceptual intention and where proper presencing has a teleology headed toward a celebratory love and affirmation.<sup>25</sup> Such are necessary conditions for properly presencing the Other as an Other. I am here presenting what is the "originating source of moral claims," and making present this source displays an ontological shift from a thing to an axiological act to be fulfilled in love. We will call this initial presencing respect. This ontological-epistemic-axiological sense of respect is the basis for all senses of rights and duties, and it is not to be confused with derived, and more conventional senses of respect which another may "merit" because of, e.g., her display of certain admirable properties, such as character. This foundational sense of respect similarly is

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24) See for this and what follows my *Who One Is*, Book 1, Chapters IV and VI.

25) See my *Who One Is*, especially Book 2, Ch. IV.

the epistemic-ontological basis of all the negations of respect in disrespect, disdain, contempt, censure, etc.<sup>26</sup> In short, all the evaluative-qualitative presencings of Others presupposes the ontological-epistemic appresencing which is also ontological respect.

Here we may note that there is in play an original analogous self-valuing which, when assaulted leads to the “ontological shame of moral annihilation.” We incessantly bear witness to ourselves in our non-reflective self-presence, and this is the secret of our ipseity; and it is here that an analogous self-love, self-esteem, and affection are in play: a “value that is absolutely rooted in the I and original in the I out of its love [as absolute love].” This absolute love for one’s true calling and self which begins in an absolute affection, is also an unconditioned absolute ought, the neglect of which would mean that one could no longer live with oneself.<sup>27</sup> This is a transcendental “absolute love,” in the sense that the absolute monadic dimension itself is ineluctably pre-reflectively, self-affecting, and esteemed. We apperceive ourselves not only as the transcendence-in-immanence of our agency of manifestation and evaluation, as necessarily non- or trans-sortal and transcendent in immanence to all that is manifested and esteemed; we also apperceive ourselves as the source of our own witness to the value of the world as well as of ourselves in our fidelity and honesty to ourselves. Lavelle has proposed that this is a basic sense of “humility” wherein there is, “a constant presence [of the soul] to itself with the strong self-respect and vitality” found in being, conscious of one’s own destiny. Therein, one may rest quietly assured that her “thoughts are her own affair and that she alone is responsible for them, and therein lies her strength.”<sup>28</sup> This is a first step toward something like the classical virtue of *magnanimitas* as the virtue by which the soul stretches toward greatness. Throughout our lives we have an ineluctable “appreciation” of ourselves that, although hardly a proper evaluation, still may be considered an analogous self-love, and a sense of “dignity” which is analogous to that found in the presencing of Others. We see here the importance of the original mirroring (empathy) for awakening and nurturing the original self-love and sense of dignity. This is part and parcel of what is implicitly and analogously self-displaced in the presencing of another I “there/here/now.”

In so far as this self-presence is *consciousness*, or non-reflective self-awareness, it is the ineluctable appreciation of one’s ineliminable dignity. To the extent that it is *conscience*, one’s sense of oneself may be filled with regret and shame, along with senses of accomplishment and a reasonable pride.<sup>29</sup> But if the person’s consciousness has been crippled through something like a violent assault in his childhood, or the original empathic mirroring is denied, the nuance of a transcendental consciousness, the sense of an essential transcendence in immanence, and the transcendental ineluctable sense of his ineliminable dignity may not surface. Having undergone the ontological shame of having been raped, or of having experienced an assault on one’s interiority and essential me-ness and mineness, may leave irreparable damages in terms of a developed self-awareness, such as an inability to trust that such traumatic occurrences won’t happen again.

## 6. Force and Violence

Ultimately, we all succumb to forces of destruction, e.g., we die through “natural causes,” old age, accidents, diseases, war, etc., and, in this sense, violence is the destiny of us all. But, violence is not simply to be equated with

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26) See the discussion in my *Who One Is*, Book 2, Ch. V, especially Sect. 9. I was helped by Stephen Darwall’s work in *The Second-Person Standpoint* (London: Oxford University Press: 1968).

27) See Edmund Husserl, *Grenzprobleme der Phänomenologie*, *Husserliana*, 357, 391–392; see, e.g., also all of Nr. 27 and its *Beilagen*. Cf. Aristotle’s discussions (1166a-1166b29) of one’s being friendly and at variance with oneself.

28) Lavelle, *Dilemma of Narcissus*, 140.

29) For a Husserlian theory of conscience, see my *Who One Is*, Book 2, Ch. III.

force. The forces of nature are analogously violent, but only for forms of hyperbolic panpsychism is something the lightning strike of a tree, a proper form of violence. Even so, such natural events do not violate the ipseity of another by a willed disrespect. We may say that force is a way of disregarding the proper ontological, or even the merely artificial/artifactual natures of things. Force may occur in a situation where patience and reason are called for, e.g., in attending to the limits of the proper nature of material receiving my agency, bearing anticipated pain, or evil, or not letting the emergent desire to act out in anger at the obstacle to my will prevail, by forcing my will on the means of realizing my will, and by compelling it to be absolutely transparent to my will.

Consider how I might look forward to a meeting that I plan to attend: I find myself in a hurry because someone has made me late for this meeting where my being late will become an embarrassment. The straightforward, desired (“concupiscible”) good becomes difficult (the desire changes into a pursuit of an arduous good and the emotion now has a forcefulness), because I must face the danger, or pain, of making an unfavorable impression. Aquinas called the irascible appetite “the champion and defender of the concupiscible” when our desires face what hinders the acquisition of attractive and suitable things. Pained by this prospect of embarrassment, I am quickly moved to jam the car key: an artefact in the world precisely designed to fit gently into its receptacle, i.e., the ignition slot on the dashboard. The surfacing of the unpleasant prospect of embarrassment injects my desire with a forcefulness, which may have an initial tinge of impatience and burgeoning anger. My impatience and forcefulness thus risks damaging the key as well as the ignition mechanism. In which case, there is doubtless a lack of “respect” for the integrity of the key and its receptacle, as there is a lack of foresight regarding the consequences of jamming the key, and failing to appreciate the disproportion of the considerable expense of the damaging the whole ignition system. There is also the occlusion of the future consequence, i.e., if the key gets stuck, or I render it dysfunctional by my forcefulness; I might even be further delayed and miss the meeting altogether.

There is another feature that may be teased out here. Supposing I hurriedly forced the key in the ignition slot, but the car seemed to be resisting ignition. In my impatience, I yank it out and then slam it forcefully back in. Initially, the force may be reasonable, I am composed, and I use the key as a key forcefully while respecting its “nature.” When the forceful initiatives and my imagination fail, I might well begin to feel the frustration of my powerlessness and the power of the obstacles. This may lead me to a kind of rage at my powerlessness before the pain of the embarrassment of being late, and when this forcefulness, or resourcefulness, fails, a change sets in. As Sartre, whom we depend on for this analysis, put it: “I affirm the inessentialness of everything that exists in relation to me and my goal.” Furthermore, I, and my action lose composure, or become “decomposed,” and “I do not count on what is known,” i.e. the nature of the key, the function of the key lock, etc. Instead, I apply even greater force, further misuse the key, and place an increasing trust in my forcefulness now transformed into violence: I enter into a world of violence. I leave the ordered world of forms and enter a realm of chance and magic (See Sartre, 171–172). In raging against my powerlessness, I may through rage magically transform myself into a power able to overcome these obstacles, as if my wanting something to be so, or not to be so, were an ought to be, so or not be so.

This inflation of oneself is a simultaneous loss of personal composure, and a de-creation of the world’s necessities and thus nature’s laws. The world is now so manifested that the necessities and forms are magically transformed to appear to the agent as malleable, or even destructible, by reason of one’s wanting it, or willing it thus. This is connected to the transformation of means and ends. Typically ends determine means and means ends: I can’t get the key to turn on the ignition if I treat the key-ignition relation as chisel-stone relation. But in my anger, the forceful willing is to effect its starting. The maxim of violence, as Sartre has shown, is “the end justifies the means,” because in violence the relation of means and ends is transformed: It is a matter of attaining the end “by whatever means whatsoever.” If one’s will confers on the end my realized will and absolute value,

one sacrifices the world as a realm of structured ends and means with ontological forms to this absolute value; one sacrifices the whole world for this end, and one has created a world in which violence reigns supreme. In this, there is no *logos*, no realm of natural kinds, or even forms of causality, that must be respected. Rather, because the law of violence is universal with regard to the world and its contents, one has a universe of violence. (See Sartre, 172–173.)

In such an instance, it is not impossible for me to take advantage of a familiar (if not crypto-theological-magical) ritual whose sole purpose is to annihilate an obstacle to my will, and bring it about that the world conforms perfectly to my will: I let loose of a stream of prescribed formulae which my culture has put at my disposal. These “four letter expletives” have a proper context in matters having to do with bodily functions, such as sexual love and procreation, or with theology. These ritual forms are as “efficacious” as clearly as “Oh excrement!” “Oh sexual intercourse!” or “Eternal Perdition!” are adequate expletives. In the speech-act, or “performative,” of cursing, my saying/yelling is a doing, i.e., I am not describing a state of affairs: I am consigning something, at the very moment of the saying, to annihilation, or “eternal perdition,” as those expletives caused by the car’s faulty ignition, or even what/whom occasioned my being late. While this, of course, absurd, it goes to show how in a moment of angry impatience—as in the example of “you fool!” from the Gospels—there is not only an adumbration, but also a kind of presencing of the *telos* of the anger. There is in it a forcefulness that ignores the ontological constitution of the sorts of things in my life-world, and it verges on the decisive destruction, and “final solution.” Of course, “mistreating” the car key is not really a disrespect of an ipseity, or a violation of an ontological dignity, but we see in the impatience, forcefulness, and initial anger, that if one is not able to “let reason prevail,” one will risk entering onto a new terrain in which both the landscape and the agent undergo a remarkable metamorphosis. As the evangelical counsel against anger functioned like a warning against a catastrophic future event, so in the impatient jamming of the key there is (if only in a muted way) a foreshadowing of a dark conclusion latent in anger’s lure. Our proposal is that the *eidos* of violence is manifest in such moments, where reason and/or love do not contravene, and where one rides the undertow of the fury to the magical universe of violence.

## 7. The Crypto-Theological Universe of Violence

Let us hypothesize that violence in its essence is connected to an anger towards the Other as an obstacle to my desire, an anger transformed into the contempt and/or hatred of the Other, even to the explicit, or implicit, desire to obliterate the Other, or to bring about his death or something worse than death, e.g., an unremitting and undying unbearable torture. Often times, this extreme case is emptily referred to as “he went berserk,” “she lost it,” etc., which might imply that it is ineffable, as if there were not a felt-meaning of our situation awaiting an explication. In fact, Sartre’s explication of this lived experience brings to light that there is a remarkable metaphysical self- and world- transformation in play here.

Let us attempt to portray in the first-personal perspective what happens when the threshold of the universe of violence is crossed, in order to highlight this world- and self-transformation: I desire to be in a certain way, but the Other, who is essentially present to me as a unique display of the world and myself, is an obstacle to my desire. My anger is expressed in my self-transformation that empowers me to assume my right to prevail over this unique presencing of being, this transcendent inaccessible freedom, for whom I am not in the right. My self-transformation empowers me to realize my will by any means necessary, including the refusal to accept the ontological order before me. Further, this new and magical order permits me to pursue this with the sense of having a right to do this. If moral categoriality is founded in the taking up the good of the Other as my

own good, or her good as my evil, or her evil as my good,<sup>30</sup> then the universe of violence is, in a perverse way, *beyond good and evil*. It is based on the nihilism of affirming only one's own freedom, to annihilate the other and her free position-taking. The obstacle *as* an obstacle to my hyperbolic will enables me to invest myself with a right, indeed a delusional *absolute ought*, against any claims of necessity made by essences, forms, or organizations in the world. Foremost I, as the agent of violence, am not deterred by the absolute ought of the Other's claim of inviolability.

Yet, I am never sheer will, and remain an agent of the manifestation of the truth of being. Thus, my transformed desire is laced with a desire for the Other's acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the violence as its condition. My killing you because of your refusal is, at once, an affirmation of your freedom, its transcendence, and of the unsurpassable value of your existence as the presence of the truth of being. At the same time, my killing is the denial of these, because I reduce you to nothing but a determined thing in the causal network of the world, and thus as not essential: as inconsequential. (Cf. Sartre, 178.) In destroying the Other I extinguish his unique presence as a free responsible witness of the arrogance and illegitimacy of my consuming desire to be in the world in this way, thereby I give witness to the essential importance of his being and witness. Through my delusions of might I would secure a non-being that would obliterate his absence and silence, and thereby any trace manifesting my willful transgression.

Thus, one's hyperbolic self and will to overcome what stands in the way, effect a magical transformation of the world into the universe of violence. There arises here, through a transformation of oneself as an agent in the world, a metamorphosis of the appearance of the world of natural orders and kinds of necessities. This metamorphosis resembles a regression to the infantile self-object. The world becomes the spectacle of a pure obstacle that I, the agent of violence, can surmount, undo, and destroy. The power of one's desire, now informing an anger-become-rage, inflates oneself, in a way that seems almost ontological, to demand to have now, actually, and immediately all of life and the whole world in this concentrated form subordinate to one's present, delusional, would-be omnipotent will.

## 8. Luciferism, the Nation State, and Modern Warfare

Given the ontological order that "normally" stands in my way— e.g., given the essential transcendence of the Other—my effective desire to annihilate the Other is an implicit affirmation of my right to instantiate nothingness over being and occlude being's manifestness. With the act of violence, as a hateful willing of the other's annihilation, I magically undo and desecrate the ontological status of the essentially non-objectifiable transcendent subjectivity of the Other. I de-create through reducing him to nothing but an immanent and destructible inner-worldly obstacle. That which is transcendent to the world and cannot be swallowed up or reduced to, or objectified in the world, is deconstructed, and, ultimately, decreed. This perversely absurd metaphysical metamorphosis in the world and oneself is the condition for the violent one to be able to realize the desire and right to exist with no limitations or overriding obligations. Thus, in achieving this phantasized, hyperbolic, self-infatuated, and trans-human kind of being, the agent identifies himself as an anti-creator, annihilating the necessities of the world, and reducing the other to one of the things one can destroy. Here, in so decreasing the world and the Other, and in spite of the presupposition of the existing world and transcendent Other, one, by further implication, assumes to ascend to be the creator of the world who has the right to destroy its forms. Thereby the agent affirms himself as coeval with the world prior to creation, i.e., at the nothingness prior, and preferred, to the origin of beings other than himself. (See Sartre, 174–176.) One ex-sists and tacitly affirms

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30) See Robert Sokolowski, *Moral Action* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), especially Ch. 3.

oneself as not existing in time where the past memories and future anticipations of one's own and others may inform and critique the sense of the present agency. Thus, one may presume to claim that this action affirms my will as preferable to all others, and achieves the tacit proposition that the better ontological order is that there is nothing other than me, rather than that there are other beings equal to me who may stand in my way. This is the pure *eidōs* of the violent act as such.

The transcendental phenomenological-*eidetic*-ontological narrative of exemplary violence here has drawn on Sartre (especially 170–183), but, perhaps, it is evident that his own explication of what we are naming the *eidōs of violence* in the exemplary instance of a murder either echoes, or draws on, ancient sources. Perhaps the perfect instantiation of this *eidōs* is to be found in an obscure, but ever active, stratum of the ancient Jewish, Muslim (“Iblis” and “Shaytan”), and especially the Christian tradition. A central text for Judaism and Christianity is a reference to a mythological divinity in ancient Canaanite religion (*Isaiah* 14: 12–15; cf. *Revelations* 12–13) named Morning Star and Son of the Dawn (*Lucifer*, light bearer, in the Vulgate translation). Here is a reference to what/whom the later tradition was to describe as the most excellent of God's creation, “the Day Star, son of Dawn.” (See Sartre, 401, where the slave's revolutionary discovery of his subjectivity for himself and to the Master is the emergence of “Lucifer.”)

Lucifer becomes a theme in the Abrahamic traditions, through the rabbinic and patristic wrestling with how there could be a tempter, and thus evil, at the beginning of the creation narrative. In Christianity's patristic and medieval tradition, Morning Star, like the agent of violence in the exemplification of its pure *eidōs*, achieves an unintelligible metaphysical metamorphosis, i.e., Satan presences God—who is the infinitely good, gracious creator of all that Satan is and has— as unjust, and resents that God is God, i.e., that Satan is limited. Satan must ultimately do what God wills and not what Satan wills. Thus, Lucifer, through a blinding self-inflation, presences God as an unacceptable superior being: a thief who robs Lucifer of his freedom, i.e., of being God. (In Sartre, God is the thief of Lucifer's [the slave's] freedom.)

Lucifer plays a significant role in traditional Christian theology of sin, but his metaphysical status is murky. As a preternatural agency which blinds, deceives, and distorts creatures into thinking that they, like Lucifer, are the absolute measure of the truth of existence, Lucifer, or Satan, appears as a fallen angel, who is “the Father of lies” in history. Satan is behind the ills of creation, in so far as Satan has duped humankind. However, for traditional theology Satan is not an anti-God, a divine personal principle of darkness equal with God, but an evil force kept on a leash. The tradition generally has been reluctant to totally demythologize Satan. It still affirms that moral evil is due not solely to individual agency but due also to forces external to one's will, e.g., to collective and institutional forces (as in “objective spirit and/or New Testament references to “Principalities and Powers”). The “staying power” of the figure of Satan, or Lucifer, is in part due to the phenomenon and doctrine of individual and collective sin, wherein one finds evidence in oneself and in historical Others of a rejection of what one ought to do, and what is good in favor of a blindness for which one is responsible (cf. “bad faith”). There is also a strong impersonal and non-intentional perpetration of evil through institutions that shape ways of seeing and acting.

This paper's thesis further states that the ancient myth, or theology, of Lucifer is also an explication of the curious way of being in the world that is opened up in connection to the teleology of anger and exemplary “extreme” instances of violence as the *telos* of anger, especially as captured by the Sartrean narrative. In such moments, each of us can at least catch a glimpse of this magical hyperbolic self-awareness where one assumes the guise of the destroyer of worlds and an anti-God. In these exemplary moments of violence, the agent achieves not only homicide but a form of deicide, and, because of the self-imposed delusion (“bad faith”) there is a metaphysical renunciation of one's true personal finite being in the world. Finally, there is also a form of self-destruction.

Another form in which exemplary violence occurs is when one arrogates to oneself a status of divine representative, and identifies himself as an angel of death on behalf of “God.” In which case, instead of the anti-god, Lucifer, we have the angel of God destroying the Luciferian, demonic, diabolical forces in creation; indeed, in the name of God searching out the Great Satan with the triple assurance that: a) the end justifies the means, b) the reduction of the transcendence of the Other to inner-worldly determinations is mandated, and c) that the fate of the slain transcendent ipseities, the innocent and the guilty, is, if considered at all, entrusted to God whose representative the destroying angel is.

This assurance of faith in one’s mission seems analogously in play in the case of being a member of a modern statist war machine that serves as a surrogate for God’s will. But the evidence for the intense emotion of the Luciferian narrative is hardly palpable. This is not because of the quaintness of the charge of blasphemy at the presumption to be part of God’s death squad, or to be privy to God’s counsels on who shall die. Rather, it is because this exalted self-positioning is the basic premise of any nation-state. The view that the will of God lies in the will of the people is a communitarian ideal where “we,” as an analogous “I,” arise through empathic perception from below. Here we have the mutuality of will, common goods, and interests. Here, for someone to say “we” with authority, she must, on the basis of an empathic perceptual apperception, represent “all of us” whose tacit act of consent to this representation has been given. This contrasts with the state agency that is, as Husserl says, an *imperium* “from above,” and which is, at best, always a matter of doubtful representation. The military and police, however, found their agency in the belief in the legitimacy of this will from above as expressing a divine wisdom and mandate, even though today it is well-known that this is often decided in representative neo-liberal democracies by the sway of an economic elite for whom the government pursues policies that serves this elite. (We have attempted to lay this out within a Husserlian context elsewhere.<sup>31</sup> Cf. Sartre on auto-da-fe, 180–185.)

The nation state’s destructive power is not carried out in connection with the teleology of anger crossing the threshold of violence where natural necessities and forms are subject to one’s will. Yet there is institutionalized a world in which the end justifies the means and the end becomes the will of the sovereign state. The nation state extracts from the citizenry a right to act rationally and “Satanically” without the rage of anger, should the situation demand it. It has this power to act by being in possession of the actualizable potentiality of a Satanic decreation of the world through, e.g., the United State’s standing army of hundreds of thousands of highly trained soldiers ready to go into action, storages at home and over 700 bases abroad, as well as at sea, and of arsenals with ready-to-launch missiles carrying nuclear weapons. Besides, there is the ongoing imperial admonition throughout the world that “might makes right” through dark sites of torture and terrorist drone assaults on suspected enemy terrorist strongholds. All of this is the Satanic *eidos* of violence embedded in the “objective spirit” of the state institutions, whereby it holds in cool, rational reserve the capacity to release the ritual pseudo rage of “shock and awe.” This readiness of military might as the offspring of this calculated rationality abstracted from empathic perception adumbrates, and virtually represents, the re-enactment of the crossing of the threshold of violence and the Satanic de-creation of the world.

Due to citizens’ participation in the mechanisms of representation and taxation within a framework of economic oligarchy, the statist agents of violence are enabled to do legally what most citizens would never do individually. And unless the citizenry believed themselves to be ordered to act as such by the state’s sacred mandate, they would not even want to know of this violence as having been done in their individual names.

The “Luciferism” of the nation statism is “secularized” and rendered routine by being an integral, familiar, obvious, and in many cases an unquestionable aspect of the business of nation-statism. The elevated ontological

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31) See my *The Person and the Common Life*, especially Chapters III–VI

status of the state (“Leviathan”) and its sacred authority forms the grand presupposition about which one does not have to think, and this tacit premise, along with the increasing materialism and reductionist *ethos*, is what legitimates the nation-state’s violent *modus operandi*. In our day, foreign persons—vis-à-vis the state’s interests—are continually denied their status as transcendent inviolable ipseities whose dignity is also inviolable. Rather, they are increasingly calculable quantifiable reducible functions within the forces of nature that have no intrinsic value (e.g., enemy deaths are not even tallied). They are objects of attention only if they obstruct, or serve, the aims of the state.

## 9. Conclusion: Persistence of Luciferism

Our claim that there is an *eidos* of violence in acts of annihilation of the Other seems clearly to be undermined when we note that in the classical Luciferian narrative, the agency is of a pure intellectual spirit “blinded by pride,” not rage. Just how the crossing of the threshold into the universe of violence is a form going berserk,” which morphs into a blinding, prideful, icy cold-bloodedness, merits a special study to which we cannot do justice here. However, we may note that the corporate media’s patriotic incantations facilitate war preparations, as do the military’s indoctrinations of soldiers. They both involve repeated ritual resuscitation of the hate of the enemy abroad, or within. In the case of the military, these are accompanied by a periodic training for, and eventual routinization of, murderous deeds, aided by both virtual rehearsals (e.g., through violent video games) and real-world maneuvers.

This routinization and detached, abstracted rationality are especially evident in modern technological warfare during “times of peace,” in which the one’s killing is often in a relation with Satanic violence through some “cool medium,” e.g., of a radar screen. Due to the fact that mediums are “virtual” and symbolic, they hardly reflect violence in its essential-eidetic form. In these modern cases, the killer obeys the command to attend to a computer screen where coordinates are presented and the target for a rocket strike is indicated. As the target site comes into view—perhaps several thousand miles from the missile operator’s control panel—the operator presses the kill, or payload delivery button. This operator might even see something blurry that he takes as an explosion, but he will not experience its true consequences in a filled intention of empathic presencing; indeed, he probably will never know what really happened.

In these cases, the crypto-theological, metaphysical drama sketched earlier—that which displayed the essence of violence—is hardly, if at all, evident. Even so, the capacity to blind oneself and suppress the monstrosity of destruction is in classical theology a hidden reference to the theme of the fallen angel: “Lucifer, the Father of Lies.” That is, as in many other forms of modern statist progress, there emerges the “megamachine” (Lewis Mumford), where representative and scarcely participatory government, along with the technological organization of society, economics, manufacturing and politics, reign. There is thereby created a capacity to presence the world in ways that hide and even render inaccessible its core truths: foremost of which is the transcendent value of the Other. The prejudice against violence has been so eroded that the claim that it ever existed seems naïve, and this erosion stimulates the proliferation of loosely analogous forms of violence that, in turn, break down the prejudice against the exemplary form.

Nevertheless, the *eidos* of violence whose description involves a narrative of the achievement of willful category confusion and metaphysical impossibility—i.e., a denial of what must be ineluctably affirmed—is validated, if we find in Sartre’s narrative an explication of the vectors of our own first-personal moments of impatience, anger, and rage.

This narrative clearly involves the bizarre, but necessary, interrelationship of homicide, suicide, and deicide as the condition for the achievement of the seeming metaphysical impossibility. I degrade the Other to

what she cannot be, while elevating myself infinitely beyond my own metaphysical possibilities. Further, in as much as I regard the Other as, like myself, abysmally transcendent and incommensurate to the things in the world, and in as much as I always of necessity regard myself as Other to the Other, I both deny myself while preferring myself to everything and everyone else. I thereby effect the legitimacy of my own destruction, and my implicit legitimation of murder is also an implicit affirmation of the rightness of my own annihilation by another, should I be an obstacle to her desires.<sup>32</sup>

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32) See Maurice Blondel, *Philosophie et l'Esprit Chrétienne*, Vol. I (Paris: PUF, 1946), 69–81, 176 ff., where deicide, homicide, and suicide are shown to be integrally related in the phenomenology of what Catholic Christians call “mortal sin.”