

Revisiting the Imagery of [Political] Violence: a philosophical interpretation

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received 21 September 2025
Received in revised form 28 October 2025
Accepted 30 October 2025
Published online 14 February 2026

Keywords:
Normality, Exception, Every day, Community, Vulnerability, Precarious.

Contemporary critical reflections of violence immensely focus on an 'ever war-like condition' that makes the state of exception a permanent possibility. Most popular perspectives of western political philosophy seem to look at a bigger picture; a bird's eye-view of the world – looking at violence as violence of war and genocides. Every reflection is directed toward war, violence, here and there, and its effects on various human societies. Having a bigger picture is imminent. Besides this big picture we cannot overlook several micro-pictures. The bigger picture will lose its moral and political justification, this paper commits to argue, unless the claim of a permanent emergency locates itself in the manifold normalizations of everyday life that not just distort political objectivity, corrupt human nature, and create intolerant *internal* civic culture[s]. These instill in the civil society a dangerous indifference to the pain of the socially/politically vulnerable that greatly threatens the latter's political sense. The single line of argument here is only when the pathologies of everyday lives is grasped only then we can comprehend more deeply the reality of war and/or violence as a permanent condition.

Cite this article: Upendra, C. (2026). Revisiting the Imagery of [Political] Violence: A Philosophical Interpretation. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, *Journal of Philosophical Investigations*, 20(54), 89-106.
<https://doi.org/10.22034/jpiut.2025.69257.4204>



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Publisher: University of Tabriz.

Introduction

Unbearable violence is *ever* haunting us – we can indubitably assert this even keeping the contemporary world in view. Interpreting this violence is a complex exercise, requires a sophisticated treatment of its harmonious relationship with law and politics. It is true with respect to those societies inherent with extreme radical diversity. There is no denial of the fact that the nature of violence is contingent upon times people live through. Yet this contingency is fixed with an element of an all-encompassing critical reflection. That something is wrong with the human condition seems to rely on the measurement of certain specified events overlooking certain others [*elsewhere*]. We begin with the conviction that a stronger philosophical account of the human condition today is possible only when we follow an *expansive* approach to understand [political] violence. Though this is the central thesis of this paper – the discussion that follows does not negate nor undermine profound philosophical reflections that build up the long drawn critical abhorrence of the moral downfall of human beings. The more moral we are the less violent we will be - a brute supposition indeed! The necessity of an expansive approach is justified in the context of an already expanded domain of violence – alongside the systemic violence everyday normalizations worry us even more.

That violence is never gone and is going to stay with us implies that not only our focus should be on specific states of exception [military and civil wars] but also normalizations with which the world functions through the everyday. Benjamin, Schmitt, Agamben and many others deliberated on this issue at greater lengths. The idea of normalization has manifold meanings to it. Two are prominent among them: one, we humans indulging into war all the time. Second, aspects of violence are so integrated into our lives that [treating violence as fundament] it circumvents the three; the political, the legal and the juridical to a greater extent. Arguments of those eminent theorists and philosophers undeniably imply to the everyday – yet this requires some stretching to fit into our reflection of 'how I treat/live with my neighbor with all its dispositions. There is a critical philosophical reflection here even if our reason persuades us to admit that to argue that there is some problem with the human condition itself is different from the claim that a particular society is suffering from endemic violence. We will come back to this point in the course of the paper. This point can be put differently. The differentiation set here faces a dilemma. The dilemma is it creates a great confusion between a genuine emergency and a fake emergency. The latter is an outcome of excessive sovereign power and distortion of the political. Today's violence is mostly politically induced violence, an outcome of politicization of everything. The paradox visible here can be broken by collapsing the distinction drawn between everyday forms of normalized exceptions and labeled real exceptions. They are mutual. This paper further defends the argument that violence of the everyday is 'violence proper.' People's tendency to violence is not being in the state of "stuckedness" in some kind of social strife (Mordon, 2021). It is seen as combinatorial in nature – collapse of law and justice in everyday life, and manifestation of impunity. The latter dangerously fuels

violence in the society. The former is immediate and the latter is not so immediate. The mutuality is not always directly proportional to each other. The point raised here is we need to give up unwarranted complacency toward normalizations of everyday life while spending excessive thought on grave human errors in exceptional violence [*crimes against humanity*]. In other words, the normative condition of emergency gives us the scare of exceptional scenarios.

1. Conception of Violence

Both exceptional and normative elements of violence need to respond to a general reference to fundamental violence. The latter may prevail over the former two if we fail to justify why commodious living cannot be guaranteed even in a political society (MacPherson, 1962/2010). The fear is it may provide infallible justification for possibilities of both kinds of violence. This becomes a perplexing issue whether it is fundamental in the Hobbesian sense or treated as *originary* in the Derridean sense [*founding violence*] (Derrida, 2003; Elmore, 2012, 39; Lai, 2003, 23). These two analogies are defenses to our position here. A response can be speculated to begin with: the stability of social formations can only be bettered in a historical progression. We have seen this in the Marxist revolutionary spirit that was/is unfortunately labeled as Utopian and the dialectical opposite liberal democratic capitalism is labeled as realistic utopia. For instance, we have seen this to the extent that Benjamin draws a strong philosophical justification viewing revolutionary violence as divine violence – complete expiation into a totally new disentangles future (Benjamin 1920-26, Larsen, 2013). The traces these paradigms left behind [specters of violence] in different societies enable us to grasp how power-dynamics and the hunger for it subvert any objectification of law, politics and justice. In this subversion we lost the principle of rule of law. Pursuits of justice and equality ever face negation from our reluctance to these principles. The reluctance is seen in the events of impunity ([Whyte 2014](#)) [referring to the Middle-East and North Africa (MENA) Kalid Ibrahim makes an interesting claim, “Impunity is a bigger crime than the crime itself.”] ([Jacob & Kanth, 2023](#)) and the defeat of the sense of collective life. Two principal aspects of impunity relevant here are ‘no fear of law’ and ‘legalization of lawlessness [colonization of law]’. It is a serious problem in all democratic societies too – there is no punishment for committing vulgar social violence. It is characterized by ‘targeted killings. The contention is the sanity of any civil society is lost with the collapse of political [where the sense of political right itself is abused] and most importantly, the juridical.

Politics operate between pragmatism and perfection. John Rawls have emphasized on a workable democracy in terms of political liberalism. The profundity of his theory of justice as fairness is defeated by his fear of comprehensive doctrines. However, it does not weaken his theory as it has a model of establishing a reasonable social order. The question of “how to live together” is both a procedural and a non-procedural issue causally dependent on each other. Communitarians countered it with an even greater emphasis on the *shared meanings* of life. It is not clear in their philosophy whether social beings share irreducible differences.

The idea of the common good or common morality remains unresolved in either of the cases. The missing element in either of the paradigms is the implicit condition of lust for power. We find a promise in Jean-Luc Nancy's idea of an "inoperative community" with a focus on *being-in-common* [*an open and relational existence* – "Community at Loose Ends"], against the condition of *being-with-common* [*a fixed common substance*]. Commonality is derived not from what one has in common with others, but from that one existence [*Being*] in which everyone is part of (Gavroche 2021). The promise of a community is just an inclination to come together giving [like the Rousseauean gregarious instinct] more importance to communion than the purpose. Further, Nancy opines that the political is the place where community is brought into *radical* play (Odgers 1916; Nancy, 1991, p. xxxvii). It may imply that though the communion is purposeless but politics is not. The danger in this case is politics would become doctrinal in nature.

2. Togetherness Paradox: Irreconcilable Differences

Many gave interesting insights into resolving the togetherness paradox. It is paradoxical because society [and polity] preserves life [the promise of the social contract] as well as undermines it [failure of political will]. The undermining takes place in the states of exception exclusively enjoyed by the sovereign and its excesses of power. This scenario is even worse in the condition of rule-status of the exception. Alongside preservation and undermining are present conditions of fairness and injury to others. The worry is the worst possibility of the latter. Its possibility lies in the simple tautological condition [a kind of essentialism] – one's tendency to dominate other[s] eventually transforming into overt and covert means to injure others is built into the nature of the individual. It would be appropriate to mention Michel Foucault and Judith Butler here. For the former, "We are at war with each other, a battle runs through the whole of society, continuously and permanently." Butler expresses her concern this way: "That we can be injured, that others can be injured, that we are subject to death at the whim of another, are all reasons for both fear and grief." Stating this she expresses her concern for vulnerability and loss (Spiekar, 2011, 187-199; Butler, 2004, xii). War is the fundamental model for understanding society. Foucault's idea enables us to understand both bio-politics and biopower that operate in our everyday life. On the other hand, Butler's idea enables us to identify the precarious life [*universal and shared* vulnerability] as one of the prominent features of social and political life. Butler also mentions that it unequally distributed. The precarious life is not only a reference to death in war and genocidal violence but sufferings of everyday life that politics fails to ensure us. Schmitt, Agamben, and many others make a relevant point here – exception is nothing but the norm. Important questions that arise here are 'what kind of mourning is involved in suffering or servitude to the vulgarity of power? How does it address the issue of rule-status of exception or permanent emergency?'

These irreconcilable differences are even greater than what Nancy, Derrida, Agamben, Ranciere etc., talk about in the larger global context. Differences referred to are even graver and questions human integrity, will and strength. The togetherness paradox is exposed here

– in the form of irreconcilable differences [with its meteoric rise very much complicating the political culture]. It seems “We must accept living in an amputated, damaged state, living in finitude and division” (Francois Furet’s statement mentioned in [Baehr & Garden, 2017, 977; Furet, 2017, 75](#)). adversely affecting social cohesion. These radical differences keep resurfacing through historical times [identity formations] and keep inventing themselves with changing times. Irreconcilability also indicates an identity’s refusal to live alongside another with a sense of equivocation. This reluctance gets worse when it gets into the uncontrolled power struggles. The focus here is on the tenability of irreconcilable differences. Why and where do these differences matter? In a democratic society radical differences matter a great deal as these differences shape the democratic culture. These concerns draw our attention to forces of auto-immunity. One such attempt is the approach of “unity in diversity” violently imposed on to the people in Indian society. We will come back to this point again. It is also clear as to why differences are irreducible among individuals. This irreducibility justifies a deep sense of plurality - understood as incommensurable to each other. Either we are incapable of realizing diversity or it is defeated by its dialectical opponent, the unifying principle of politics. These differences are both irreducible and irreconcilable [*the hammering of the radical other*]. Violence is bound to emerge in order to destroy this asymmetry. Discussion on the success of the political realm and politics as a process lies here.

A mention of these differences as having shaped up as hostilities with further possibilities of physical violence is important here. One approach to this is a never-reconcilability of these differences – the reasons for this are fear and anxiety with a political distortion of social cohesion. Experiences of community and living together always generate radical and infinite interrogations, and resonates a loss ([Weber, E., 2013, 1-17; Kateb, 2011, 50; Guisi, 2017, 22-31; Derrida, 1997, 80](#)). The loss is felt in the rigid processes of social integration that includes some and excludes someone else. Immanent unity, fair distribution of tasks, happy equilibrium of forces and plurality in fact are not historical facts. Integration approaches fail to understand that there is no hard rule of a necessary commonality for social cohesion. More than the loss these resemble the condition of yet-to-arrive and the “‘shipwrecked’ condition of all failed revolutions ([Whyte, 2013, 50; DeCaroli, 2013, 220 - 242](#)). Our understanding may be different if we take both conflict and irreducible difference as immanent conditions of social life. Rather than as an empirical fact immanence is to be treated as a potentiality in which contains both conflict and harmony. We cannot assert that societies are shaped up without being driven by this condition. It has been there all through history as Marx identified. Nancy’s point becomes more important here – fusion is not an immanent motto of the making of the community. It becomes a profound element in grasping the nature of community. The ‘intention’ of coming together is all that matters in our coming together as social beings – where we have to deal with human *qua* human and human *qua* an identity. The possibility of a community lies in-between ‘everything and nothing in common.’ It necessitates politics with the greatest task of tackling whatever that occurs between/among individuals. The nature of politics is contingent upon the nature of

the political system. Here, we are provided with a contrary picture. Both the previous and the present centuries witnessed greater atrocities despite constant re-inventing politics, law and justice.

3. Fragility of the Community

While the social contract philosophy provides the grounds of rules, regulations and laws, it does not explain how we have to tackle emergent irreconcilable differences [reasonable and unreasonable]. Communitarians provide their own answer – shared meanings of life – histories and cultures. Its fragility is exposed when Nancy's community for-its-own-sake proves to be more desirable. Their sense of politics is not very insightful nor they really give a thought to power and domination analysis. The risk here is the unilateral social/civil order while seeking a pure and undivided social identity bereft of 'something else'. This would not fit into the scheme of a radically diverse society. Instead, it would create an impoverished political community. It only focuses on shared principles only. Ranciere famously gives an aesthetic interpretation to this sense of politics calling for a re-distribution [re-partition] of the sensible (Ranciere, 2004, 12-30). His idea is very attractive *prima facie*. Every society has to look into this principle to rejuvenate itself – "to save the heterogeneous sensible" (Ranciere, 2004, 124). The task here is to translate a theoretical possibility into a practical reality. The most suitable idea for our discussion is equality as the basic principle – "redefinition of the distribution of certain shares among certain groups." The interesting element is the equal placing of the dominant and the dominated in the social hierarchy. Political objectivity makes this leveling down of asymmetries that are central to both authoritarian and democratic societies (For an empirical account Toelstede, 2020, 334-366). This objectivity is violated when the positioning of sociopolitical order [not exactly referred as police here] and politics is circumvented. This affects both distribution and redistribution of power [count as Ranciere says] that gives a new meaning to how we value and re-locate the previous hierarchy into a new order. This new order has to deal with how 'I treat my neighbor', consider her as another political animal [keeping in view Agamben's interpretation of Aristotle]. For some Citizenship has a complete answer to many problems of justice and equality. It is only a necessary requirement. Citizenship certainly brings individuals under the protection of law. There is another situation it is granted but, in reality, one is subjected to all covert oppressive conditions. There is a count but it doesn't count in the genuine sense. This is an extension of Ranciere's point of "a count that does not count." On the contrary, there is a count that doesn't count as a count (Ranciere, 1997). All our apprehensions emerge from this scheme of things. 'When can I think that I can take over the other in every respect of social existence?' This is a philosophical-anthropological question. This is the direction in which the argument has to flow. The fearless attitude that one feels while inflicting pain on others comes from two aspects: one, from a civic culture that apparently [in any form] confirms the infliction and second, this emboldened aggression is fueled by a political whipping of the victim. It is also an instance of lawlessness and non-recognition of law that could reclaim just conditions.

This requires a more reflective understanding of the background conditions of violence. To suppress and push the socially downtrodden to the edge of life [a subservient and an obedient life confirming to a particular cultural paradigm] violating all possible forms of existence – many times stated as animal condition [dehumanization] ([Killmister, 2023, 1-16](#); [Smith, 2016](#)). Both impunity and fearlessness of punitive law became the determinant conditions of everyday life. Ranciere's supposition of political equality is not an easy supposition; rather, it is compelling on our sense of public reason to work toward social and political equality ([Janicka, 2023, 168-189](#)). Rawls rightly asks a question though his work does not fall in the domain of conflict resolution of any kind. The question he asks is: "How is it possible that there may exist over time a stable and just society of free and equal citizens profoundly divided by reasonable though incompatible religious, philosophical and moral doctrines?" ([Rawls, 1993, xviii](#)). Rawls definitely was skeptical of a fair and well-ordered society based on comprehensive doctrines that he called "burdens of reasons". It implies that substantive reasonable pluralism is not possible even under liberal-democracy ([Rawls, 1993, xvii-xviii](#)). Rawls is no different from Ranciere in his understanding of the political. In both of them one can see a good amount of faith in the political to create a just order. However, these two do not really offer us enough insights to grasp the today's condition where – "neighbors kill neighbors" Asees Puri uses this phrase to refer to political violence in Rwandan Genocide. Similar situation can be seen in the normalized violence of everyday life and everyday repressions ([Puri, 2020, 1-8](#)). This can be translated as "neighbors annihilate neighbors." This is the order of the world today, between nations and within a society. The latter is as or more important than the former.

4. The Context of Violence

Today's politics is unfortunately distorted. In societies like India the dominant social hierarchy is justified and is also present through historical time latent as cultural truths. This situation takes hold of political, juridical and legal realms. Western political theorists are obligated to take note of different shades of the political across societies to understand the complexity of political violence. May be this would enable them to comprehend the absence of pure public reason in these political orders. This can also be seen in two different ways: understanding the social as a pre-political and the social as simultaneous with the political. The task of the political is to place the law as a shield to protect the vulnerable from succumbing to violence. For this it has to stay independent from the sovereign power that dangerously fancies the political playing with the law itself. The task is never fulfilled without a strong political will. The latter is the grounding element of what is otherwise the "absent foundation of politics." Ranciere rightly states that it lets us structure the society [otherwise terribly fragmented] around an egalitarian or a non-egalitarian [reasonable reason] rule ([Ranciere, 1997, 33](#)). The difference between the two modes is to be understood carefully.

The grounding spirit of a political order greatly determines the nature of the political society. The social always challenges the political and subverts the possibility of politics

[fragmentary scene staying as the continuum of the social]. To reflect on the ground of the world in which we live is different from making sense of specified and overlooked conditions of the world. A nuanced talk always requires specific reflective points. The famous saying of Martin Luther King Jr. is very much relevant here – “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” (Letter from the Birmingham Jail, 1963). Here, “anywhere” is “somewhere” [that is what he had meant]. Arendt and many others ‘may’ be right and their critical reflections of the human condition can be treated as truthful. Nevertheless, they are not reasonable in totality. Sanity and insanity have been with us since the ancient times with continued display of these qualities [though better late than never]. It also implies that there is a simultaneous presence of primordial [originary] violence and a reasonably abundant presence of commodious life. Embrace and annihilation happen together they compete for a stronger determinacy of the world order[s]. Annihilation and its awkward presence tell us about the nature of everyday life. Taking our motivation Martin Luther, we can claim that ‘Annihilation anywhere is a sure possibility of annihilation everywhere.’ We tend to borrow from others ways to annihilate the world. The task at our hand is the specific exaction of facts accounted to explain violence and the human condition. The advantage of such an approach is this: Ranciere, Butler, Agamben and many other thinkers’ primary focus is on the stateless condition of refugees where impunity has its vulgar play. It doesn’t complete the picture of the story. It requires our additional [and much required] focus on how one treats another individual[s] in every day engagements.

Violence exposes our moral apathy toward each other due to certain fears, hatred and anxieties induced into our mind. The idea is there is no disappearance of inequalities, a new manifestation in the social condition. That we have to survive as an individual, group, community, culture, and nation is on a constant rise bringing catastrophic affects. This moral indifference brings forth the brutalities that one commits on the other – [political] annihilation of life. All the doors are closed for any kind of reconciliation. We can measure where we all stand as humanity but still would require the valences of everyday that we tend to take them as very normal. The sovereignty over one’s own existence is lost and has become the subject of great lament. When we claim that ‘neighbor annihilates neighbor’ we mean to pinpoint to the ‘undermining of life’. Violation or annihilation of life results from this undermining of life – dehumanization. Zizek elaborately explains the dehumanization involved in the evil manifestation of Holocaust. The phrase “less than animal” is very important here. Deprived even of animal vitality it gives us a chilling feeling. We can commit violence or humiliate others only when we position them as “unworthy lives”. It becomes bewilderingly shocking when it gets a political space in the game of power and dominance. The biggest culprit here is history replaced again and again (Zizek, 2001/2011, 65-80). The transition from the preservation of life to the ‘undermining of life’ is indicative of loss of sovereignty over one’s own life. It is not just preserving the bios, but to be part of the ‘lives that matter’. Agamben makes an interesting remark in some other context that is being borrowed here: “Like the sovereign decision on the state of exception, the sovereignty of the living being … takes the form of a threshold of indiscernibility between interiority

and exteriority..." (Agamben, 1998, 136-7). Sovereignty over one's own life is lost as individuals profoundly divided by incompatible religious, philosophical and moral doctrines push themselves into irreconcilable differences.

We have been discussing about the commodious life and its challenges. The emphasis is confined to shared meanings of life, not on 'it is needless to share and it is ethical to differ.' Besides, it is sheer failure of a political democracy [here Indian] to establish a sense of political objectivity, and more importantly rule of law. It is also a failure of constitutionalism. The greatest challenge here is the negotiation between idealism and pragmatism. The ground referred here also lies between philosophy and brutal politics.

5. Renewed reflections of political violence

The question that would be addressed in this section is just about "living together" immensely reflected in the everyday. It is appropriate to mention Arendt concern for human plurality before we proceed further. Arendt makes a very pertinent remark here: "The public realm has lost the power of illusion which was originally part of its very nature. – What is lost is the specific and usually irreplaceable in-between which should have formed between this individual and his fellow men" (Arendt, 1955, 4-5). Arendt's idea precedes Nancy and Ranciere. To her, human plurality describes the fundamental condition of human existence – where not just a human but Human Beings constitute the world – that establishes plurality and freedom. It forms the basis of freedom, human action, communication and political life (Canovan, 1983, 286-288). Undermining ontological rootedness of human freedom [creates freedom of human disposition and its engagement with the world and fellow humans] is direct cause of everyday distress taking away the sociology of hope (Gili & Mangone, 7-35). All ideas of emancipation eventually remain as rhetoric too good to realize. All revolutionary movements turned deceptive despite their staggering influence [utopias]. It can be treated as a failure of social dreaming (McKean, 2016; Boucher, 2020). All alternative political ideologies too turned berserk with false claims of a pragmatic approach to instill a 'fair society' [realistic utopia]. Liberal utopias or liberal-capitalism carry a false sense of a workable fair and just world. It means that all historical miserable conditions continue to reincarnate in new avatars letting those struggles to overcome these conditions remain as 'lost causes'. Something of this sort can be firmly mentioned as the continued annihilated condition of socially downtrodden people in India. These have dangerous consequences of forcing the past into the present – even with violence and impunity. This kind of violence is carried out 'in the name of' defending/preserving a tradition, a religion, a culture etc. This is seen in Indian social-political assimilation that claims to recognize diversity but prefers unity [the superficial claim of *unity in diversity*]. Conformity to this principle is sought by all means. Besides one's fear of diversity and equivocation it is more about one's drive for domination over other fellow beings belonging to a particular identity. The fear of diversity also exposes the reluctance of over-privileged part[s] to acknowledge the 'valuable' presence of the other part[s]. It is violation of humanistic principles altogether. The impatience caused is due to the presence of a multifarious dispositions,

beliefs and living forms. The direct consequence is the distortion of the political – in societies driven by hate and antagonism [like India], the new political too is distorted leading to the corruption of the democratic culture itself. We can talk about the possible restoration of the political through radical democracy (Little, 2002, 369-382). Taking into account the normative concerns of exception and experiences of democracy across the world we can boldly assert that even under a democracy diversity and difference are threatened.

The [im]possibility of diversity [radical incommensurability] resonates a ‘fragile’ collective. The fragility lies in the lack of both civic conscience and political will that would contain any attempt to destroy ever exponential rise of antagonisms. Nancy, Rawls, Derrida and Ranciere can be brought here again. Nancy asks the question, “How are we to stand with those who are in space but not of us?” The other is not just *different* but there is/can be an extra-ordinary difference – an irreconcilable other [in the case of India, Hindus and Muslims, and upper castes and lower castes are a few instances of this kind]. Nancy’s inoperative community looks into the possibility of containing one’s temptation to deny or harm or humiliate the other. Potentiality of violence lies here. Besides, individuals do make conscientious judgment of others. Unfortunately, recognition, reconciliation and mutual reciprocity do not end conflict and violence. These have to be accompanied by will of the people [enlargement of sensibilities] to ‘live with’ a neighbor outside of the conditioned worldview of oneself. Admittance and reluctance/abhorrence are equal possibilities here. Violence is the outcome of latter’s domination over the former. Rawls’s political constructivism gives too much value to convergence for an objective political realm guided by the principle of overlapping consensus. More than the concern of rule of law Rawls’s focus was more on the creation of liberal political institutions. His thesis is biased because reasonable pluralism is achieved only this way. There is no enough light here too.

Ranciere’s thesis of “redistribution of the sensible” is a promise, but seems to lie in the realm of the political grounded in the principle of ‘anonymous equality [(anyone with anyone) as an ontological *a priori*]. Here, we need to grasp how this “empty freedom” possesses the content of equality. Yet this idea of “equality of anyone with anyone” stands as an unfettered answer to many worries of radical diversity. Todd May makes a profound remark here: “Politics is not the protection of particular qualities or the expression of particular essences” (May, 2009, 7). The democratic public sphere is supposed to be a market place of ideas with no arbitrary positioning of ideas. Any democracy violating this risks violence, leads to social collapse and civic antagonisms. Besides, Ranciere’s philosophy caters to sophisticated democracies devoid of greater complexities. Equivocation does not rest on the approach of intellectualization of politics. There is no necessity of any parameter to claim equality. We can defend Ranciere despite serious concerns – especially, about its usefulness to comprehend equality as a fundamental problem to Indian civil society. The point of attraction here is “consensus not dissensus”. This is theoretically appealing only. As long as there is a common good and a common morality there is a *violent* threat to dissensus.

The impossibility of dissensus lets the threat of a permanent condition of exception stay with us. Jessica Whyte rightly mentions that “the political order does not save us from the misery of the state of nature, but presupposes it as its own permanent condition of possibility” (Whyte, 2014, 64) There is something more to this. Any form of radical [everyday] violence is pure social injustice indicative of social inequality only. Social inequalities are much more gruesome than natural inequalities. These mainly deny, deprive, and destroy individuals’ place in the scheme of things. Rousseau identifies this as an implicit presence of order [something that we can relate to as defining place, space, rank and value – understood as “... allocation of everything to its right place” [(Viroli, 1988, 53-63)]] and understands this order as hierarchical. This is a very important aspect not just in western philosophical tradition but in other philosophical traditions too. This accompanies the violent restoration of the order imagined as just and harmonious. Such an act of restoration of an order *via* political means is bound to prove contrary to attempts to restore political objectivity.

Derrida’s point is very significant here. His ideas on democracy and justice expose the fragility of the *collective* life and togetherness from the growing adverse events of the world. His critical engagement with democracy, violence and justice also reveals the political cause of this fragility. Elisabeth Weber rightly brings forth the argument of comprehending the world in terms of “living together” with irreconcilable differences. In the post-ideological and post-foundational scenarios [the condition of “Politics without Vision” (politics without banisters)] there is an aversion toward grander revolutionary transformations [with any metaphysical bearings] to bring social emancipation. Three prominent philosophers to use the term are Arendt, Richard Bernstein and Tracy Strong. The question Tracy Strong discusses about Arendt is “How do Humans relate to each other?” To understand this, Arendt asserts, philosophy need not look ‘beyond’ but place ourselves in the field of practical life. She states that Individuals not a single human being inhabits the earth. There is a great deal about this claim (Arendt, 1958, 7). The argument is not just to explain totalitarian systems but even non-totalitarian systems. For Strong, experiencing the vast horizons of human diversity is imperative on us. He speaks through several philosophers the shaping up of social-political life *vis-à-vis* aesthetics. It helps us in grasping the ‘fragility of life’ (Strong, 2011). Bernstein calls for thinking without banisters to understand violence. He raises a very profound question – “How are we to characterize different types of violence, and how do they relate to each other?” He means to say that though physical killing is central to violence – it is not just confined to war but to several other modes of violence (Bernstein, 2013, Preface). Even when realistic utopias push toward pragmatic socio-political arrangements the issue is of a moral justification of pragmatic politics. What is a pragmatist picture of “living together”? It is more or less reflective of Rawlsian over-cautious approach [anti-perfectionism] to his philosophy of a well-ordered society (Marsonet, 2009; Altman, 1983, 8-12). It is here our argument becomes more relevant. Benjamin calls for bringing about a real state of emergency to bring revolutionary change. How does this revolutionary change avoid receding back to old historical-sociological

conditions? One way is conscientiousness of individuals marching ahead to a new epoch, and the other is an extraordinary political realm that prevents any kind of social collapse. It is addressed as social collapse because the political yields to non-political and non-juridical forces.

We understand social collapse only when we define violence in a much broader way than war [Bernstein] – also seen prominently in present in everyday transactions and negotiations. However, this aspect is not always absent from theories of explicit violence. Symbolic, structural and legal forms of violence are linked to the presence of a symbolic order. They also focus on hidden realities of social life that keep growing complex with the progress of time. Theories of power and domination direct our attention to it. It is needless to go into these details here. No definition of violence is oblivious to these symbolic/covert forms of violence. However, perspectives of violence could also take note of the strong potentiality of ‘making-it-explicit’ the symbolic or covert forms of [abusive] exercise of power. This shows the boundless strengths of symbolic forms of power and domination. We need to fear their adverse effects on the vulnerable, not *just* stateless people Butler, Agamben, Ranciere and many others worry about. Social vulnerability of the everyday is caused by political overlook or placing particular groups and identities outside of the vicinity of law [in Agamben’s language “abandoned by law”]. Individuals are exposed to the raw force of the law [seen as *sovereign excess* in the case of India (probably *homo sacer*)] – what is usually referred as biopolitics [also for Foucault] involving production and managing life by over-privileging of some and under-privileging the others[s], even by violent means. Agamben rightly points this situation as blurring the distinction between law and the living body (Agamben, 1998 &2005; Grujic, 2019, 247-270). Agamben also states that – “politics is secretly working on the production of emergencies” (Agamben, 2001) It happens even under the condition of protections laid down by the constitutional law. It means that biopolitics also involves individuals are pushed out of normal legal protection while being under its protection. It is the source of reckless civil violence of impunity. It is like belonging to the law – yet outside of it.

6. The Physicality of Violence

Physical violence is the last resort to control the social dynamics. In the beginning we have mentioned about the possibility of ‘something else’. It emerges from Agamben’s normative condition of exception. The real and fancied kinds of emergency/exception are redefined here. This redefinition takes note of an in-distinction here: the erosion of distinction of political from the non-political and juridical from the non-juridical realms. The situation of exception, the distortion of the political community and vulnerability to violence should be seen in the condition of permanent exception. Here, exception is to be looked at differently – in a metaphorical sense, an outcome of sovereign excesses or colonization of law. It has to be seen in the context of political systems of the world becoming exceptionalist – deceiving its own people. The political deception is legalizing lawlessness undermining social respect and dignity of individuals of certain identities.

All this amounts to mean that we are compelled to relinquish our all-is-well belief in democracy and constitutionalism. This puts an end to the claim that the world became a fairer place to live with the triumph of *liberal* democracy. Violence is central to both democratic and non-democratic cultures today. The “illusion of the end” [the illusion that democracy had redeemed us, and we are under the shadow of democratic redemption itself is a fallacy.] very dangerously takes over as the current day political discourse everywhere. Baudrillard refers to a systemic obliteration of history. This may be happening at a certain level. The point of relevance in his work is “retroaction of events” and *deferment of the end*. Under the normativity of exception there is neither obliteration nor an end in view (Baudrillard, 1994, 10-14). Rather, all historical [mis]representations act as the prime catalyst in galvanizing all sorts of perverse violence everywhere. It is also not ‘living everything through again’ to correct the past in their reproduction, but forcing it to remain as a permanent truth. There are no historical wrongs to be corrected. Allegiance and obedience are sought by force, suppression, subservience and eventual physical termination. Instead, they gain political legitimacy and shape as political truths too. The question is how much egalitarian contemporary societies have become, both in terms of fact and conscience. The intersection of re-location of specific historical accounts into the present and the democratic egalitarian spirit seems to have adverse consequences. It is definitely not communitarianism of the sorts of Taylor, Sandel, Walzer and MacIntyre.

The emphasis here is on the [possible] extension[s] of theories of Agamben, Ranciere, Derrida and many others to redefine specific fields of violent dehumanization and its political sanction [from philosophy to specific politics]. Democracy is questioned here. Democratic politics requires a democratic society in the sense that political democracy requires a substantial sense of social equality. Politics is expected to tackle the rugged terrain of the social constitutive of terrifying unjust overt and covert practices. Politics has no ordinary role even when it is not performing an emancipatory role (Olivier, 2015). Else, the distortion of the political is bound to happen having no control over legal, structural and social discrimination. The political realm also has the obligation to protect itself while safeguarding the social from a total collapse. The greatest task here is not ‘preventing death’ or ‘preservation of life’ from reckless perverse violence. On the contrary, the monumental task for the political realm [from which certain politics emerge] is to prevent political vandalism going out-of-bounds. Social oppression is not always directed to erasure or death. As mentioned earlier, the element of violence is seen in forms of subjection and obedience forcefully sought of communal, cultural and religious dominance.

Violence erupts when one fails or refuses to think and judge in one’s act toward others. This commodious life has to be understood in the context of not just an impossible diversity but what this radical diversity carries within itself. It carries within itself an extreme sense of forbearance of equivocation [*existential angst* and *ontological fear*]. Taking into account such societies where there is greater social fragmentation singularity emerges as an imposed condition. Obedience and subservience are predominant features of these complex fragmented societies. Social fragmentation would mean clash of historical-cultural

differences that form social markers – where there is a moral justification of hierarchy defined in terms of domination and subservience. It is mediated by physical violence via acts of impunity. In this process, inalienability is violated stripped by dignity and self-respect. Two questions are very important here: How do I want to be seen by others? How do I want to see others? To avoid social and political violence mutual reciprocity of a serious kind has to be functional between individuals.

This section discussed about critical aspects of social and political life that largely begets violence, both physical and non-physical. It also made a mention of 'elsewhere' and 'something else' to understand the ever-presence of violence. The discussion also implies that both distinctive and non-distinctive nature of catastrophic and everyday violence should be taken into account. John Schwarzmantel rightly states that the concept of a permanent crisis focuses the problem of democracy and violence. He states, "The concept of permanent crisis focuses the problem of democracy a violence. A state of permanent crisis is one in which executive power is heightened at the expense of the legislative organs of the state." ([Schwarzmantel, 2011 51-2](#)) However, it is only a partial treatment of the issue. Only when it is looked from the point of sovereign excess [not even law's excess] the argument is complete. A focus on certain strictly hierarchical social structure with a strong political will to its sustenance will enable us to grasp the direction in which the focus has to be expanded. The idea of a new community and the accompaniment of false promises are so important to reflect upon. How can one escape the fears and anxieties of divided social anxieties? How do we tackle forced assimilations of everyday life in a political community? Answer to these questions lies in our reasonable resolution of the rift between biological life and political life. The resolution is taking control of civic life – immunizing all the three zones; the political, the juridical and the legal from confiscation of *contra* elements. Extra-political, extra-juridical and extra-legal forms taking control will further register the normative status of emergency. This is not just symptomatic of western politics. Its existence is visible in many other forms of violence besides war. In that condition the truncated condition of social life with a lack of civic consciousness [public reason] further strengthens the already-discovered and prevalent differences.

Conclusion

Arguments in this paper highlight a single point – that there is a causal relation between systemic violence and everyday violence [non-physical violence too]. Occurrence of the former fully depends on the conditions immanent to the normal modes of social life accumulated over a period of time. To reiterate the argument again – control and domination, and obedience and subservience are integrated into everyday forms of existence. Immature politics act as the breeding grounds of these normalizations where we overlook them to be treated as emergencies. If we understand this, we will not fail to grasp the possibility of annihilation, dehumanization and oppression. Besides, our substantial focus is to be directed to the conditions of normalization of the exception. These concerns direct us to ideas of the philosophers referred in the above sections. They have put forth

profound ideas of reasonable pluralism, deconstructive justice and the political realm of dissensus. Political orders denying these features not only are incapable of radical democracy but democracy itself. Both kinds of violence are outcome of non-admittance of indispensability of grounding the idea of “freedom and equality of anyone with anyone” or ontological condition of existence. This is no metaphysical truth but the only mantra to take care of growing complexities of the world.

The ‘elsewhere’ pointed in the beginning of the paper is that of the everyday where ‘I hold you, even in my unconscious self, so low in the ebb of humanity.’ Inflicting violence or injuring others become easy in this scenario. The same metaphor can be used here that was referred to describe the Holocaust – “Lives Unworthy of Lives.” The worst part of it is the contributive nature of both historical and political factors. It is quite alarming to witness such violence resulting out of such continued outmoded socio-cultural forms despite the presence of a constitution, a judiciary and a republican form of government. People to mourn of are not always the lost or the dead ones. Mourning’s focus also has to be of the suffering of the people everywhere not just somewhere. It can be sadly inferred from all the above discussions that democracy is another dystopia where “the *modus operandi* of the ‘Government’ is the operationalization of social unrest/coercion. It is not the fault of philosophical paradigms but of practical politics. However, philosophers’ focus should also be on ‘what if every reason fails?’ Events in every corner of the world and in every society alarm us about all possibility of Hobbesian specter of “war of all against all.” The frightening element here is, as mentioned in the previous section, the inventive and regenerative forms of social inequalities in a more puzzling manner. The significant transition required is from dying to suffering where the *telos* of the latter is the former only. The point of very serious concern above is not to get overlooked in the *modus operandi* of the world’s attention. The leftovers [not just refugees/stateless people] are dangerously prone to annihilation, humiliation and dehumanization. The arguments made in the previous section imply that physical and mental control of human beings of certain groups and identities is the first motto. Subservience, animalization and subjection to vulgar social and political violence occupy the everyday lives of social beings. Vulnerability of social and political life has been bothering us greatly. The extra-ordinary difference between philosophical reflection and sheer practical politics throws us in front of a dead end. There is no way to proceed forward without sophistication of the intersubjective space. The situation is more hopeless as attempts to restoration of the political realm are unable to resolve disputes of vulgar power politics.

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