

## CREACTIVE, EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE AND PREDATORY, COLD, INSTRUMENTAL VIOLENCE

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**Abstract:** Violence, for some, a behavior different from aggression or aggressive behavior, constitutes one of the leading social, human, and public health problems. Aggression, understood as an innate behavior that leads an organism to cause harm to another, can occur intraspecifically (towards individuals of the same species or group) and interspecifically. It is also important to clarify that violence can occur reactively as a response to an internal or external stimulus or as the result of a cold, premeditated plan. The former is associated with neuropsychological deficits, and the latter may be associated, on the contrary, with good cortical functioning that controls subcortical impulses, ensuring that the violent action occurs in a controlled and regulated manner by the individual, notwithstanding the levels of cruelty that it may entail, as in the case of armed actors in wars, as in the Colombian conflict, in which there have been many psychopathic crimes, which however seem to be mainly due to processes of moral disconnection and not to neuropsychological or psychopathological problems.

**Keywords:** violence, type of violence, origins, moral disconnection

### Aggression and Violence

Violence in its different expressions; violence against women, bullying of some children against others at school, cyber violence so common today, violence in sports, violence between gangs, and even organized violence and wars themselves are perhaps the biggest problems that humanity has experienced throughout its existence until today.

Violence has been one of the main objects of research in psychology from the Greeks to the present day. However, the definition of violence and its differentiation with aggression and aggressive behaviors has not been an easy task. Despite the

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significant advances in behavioral sciences and neurosciences, there still needs to be a consensus on this conceptualization.

That man is an aggressive creature is an issue hardly disputed by anyone. No other animal enjoys practicing cruelty on another of its kind. We generally describe the most repulsive examples of man's cruelty as brutal or bestial. By these adjectives, we imply that such behavior is characteristic of animals less developed than ourselves. In truth, however, the extreme cases of brutal behavior are limited to man, and our savage treatment of each other has no parallel in nature". (Storr, 1991).

From the ethological point of view, Lorenz (1980) attributes aggression in the animal kingdom to a utilitarian character that favors the life of the subject and the group. This author highlights two primary purposes of intraspecific aggression: the regular and orderly distribution of animals in a given territory by mutual repulsion effects and the establishment of minimum distances between individuals and groups; also, the establishment of social order in more or less complex collectives. The consequences of these behaviors are offset by other behaviors that protect the species from destruction. However, intraspecific aggression among humans has had severe consequences that have led to the extinction of entire groups through various violent acts. This can be explained fundamentally by an acute imbalance between the poor development of instinctive behaviors – the source of natural inhibitions that prevent species annihilation. On the contrary, Lorenz sees interspecific aggression as occurring between subjects of different species. It is motivated by the attainment of resources and the maintenance of territory.

Aggression is an innate behavior that leads an organism, regardless of its species, to cause harm or injury to another.

Aggression also allows the organism to protect itself from threats and aggression from other organisms or individuals and to overcome them, thus demonstrating its biological fitness. Aggression is thus a strategy for the achievement of objectives, as well as rivalry.

Aggression between human beings has been linked to man since his appearance and has been one of the significant concerns of humanity itself. Consequently, in this area of knowledge, as in all other social and human sciences areas, environmentalist and biologist currents have tried to mortgage these areas, obviously without success (Ramirez, 1994).

## **Environmentalists, Geneticists, and Interactionists**

In the human species, aggressiveness is transformed into frontal harmful actions against other human beings both physically and psychologically, causing them death in different ways or generating incapacitating psychopathological traumas.

Neither environmentalist nor biologist conceptions have been able to explain separately the different manifestations of violence, especially human violence.

Any manifestation of human violence is worth being redundant, independent of the environmental factors that stimulate it. It arises from the natural, neurophysiological structures of aggressiveness, certainly hypertrophying the natural patterns of expression of the same and thus configuring violent behavior itself.

Consequently, natural aggressiveness, typical of the species, in the human species, due to the emergence of the human psyche, is transformed into violent or pathologized aggressive acts precisely due to the action of mental processes such as abstract intelligence and evocative memory, among others, and of cultural and ideological aspects that can give rise to phenomena such as revenge, hatred or infinite persecution against individuals of the same species. Here, natural aggressiveness goes far beyond motivations linked to survival alone.

To reduce violence exclusively to environmental or biological factors is nothing less than an entelechy.

Following Ramirez (2000): "it is important to distinguish between animal and human aggression, because in many cases, under the same term, concepts are included that, far from being homologous, are not even analogous; for example, the offensive and defensive behavior described in animals does not necessarily coincide with that shown in certain forms of human violence, such as crimes, revolutions or wars. It is true that men sometimes shout, gesticulate, and fight, as do other mammals. However, they also show many other manifestations of aggression that are not obvious in the animal world's behavior: they insult, humiliate, torture, press buttons to launch missiles from a distance, disdain or ignore others, seek revenge" (Ramirez, 2000, 62).

For biologists, the lack of control over aggressiveness is due to an individual's natural determination to perpetuate his genes and heredity. On the other hand, environmentalists attribute it to social and cultural factors (including upbringing) that generate these behaviors. Interactionists recognize the role both variables play, i.e., biological and sociocultural.

Thus, violence is understood from a biopsychosociological perspective, in which natural aggressiveness has been altered by both genetic and environmental factors-social, familial, political, economic, and congenital, including psychological, emotional, and personality components.

The transformation of natural aggressiveness is then produced by the interaction of genetic and environmental factors that combine throughout life, configuring personality traits and a behavioral profile in which forms of natural aggressiveness may or may not prevail and become typologies of violent behavior. According to Gil-Verona (2002), destructive violence or annihilating aggression, a manifestation of human behavior, can be understood as the commission of acts that threaten the integrity of a person or a group of persons – causing physical or psychological damage that can lead to death – or that cause destruction to symbols or property. For its part, aggressiveness, a concept that refers to an „intervening variable“, denotes the

attitude or potential inclination experienced by a person or group to carry out violent actions. This same author refers to a typology based on its psychobiological roots, according to the nature of the aggression. Two types of violence are distinguished. Direct or personal violence is carried out by a subject or group. According to the perpetrator and the victim, five classes can be established: suicide (by one person against himself), crime of passion (by one person against another), crimes against society (by one person against a collective), death penalty (by a collective against an individual) and war/terrorism (by a collective against another). According to other criteria, one can speak of the organized violence of wars – spontaneously generated by an individual or group – and, according to the trigger, of everyday violence and pathological violence – attributed to psychic and cerebral factors. There are very diverse theoretical explanatory approaches to the origin of violence. These models can be divided into three groups according to the emphasis placed on the generating factor (Gil-Verona et al., 2002): psychological, sociocultural, and neurobiological, the latter in turn comprising four subgroups: genetic-neurochemical, endocrinological, ethological, and neurobiological.

Numerous investigations have established that child abuse is one of the leading causes of violent behavior in adulthood, whether the abuse is psychological or physical.

In general, violent patterns of behavior are usually reinforced by a culture or environment prone to exalt violence as a method for resolving conflicts. Under these circumstances and with an upbringing in which one has been abused, an individual grows up expressing himself in an aggressive, unempathetic way and with little capacity to recognize the signals of inhibition of violence emitted by the victims, or what is worse, it seems, these signals become an enhancer of violent behavior until acquiring very high levels of cruelty.

Being in situations previously related to violence seems to be an important trigger for acts of violence, likewise when there are personality characteristics such as low tolerance to frustration, impulsivity, some prejudices, and the consumption and/or abuse of psychoactive substances.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), violence is „the intentional use of physical force or power, whether actual or threatened, against oneself, another individual or a group or community, that results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death or psychological harm, impaired development or deprivation“.

In violence, the intentionality of wanting to harm emerges as a clear and distinct category from other behaviors that, although similar, cannot be called violent because they do not involve such premeditation or intentionality. It is then that intentionality that fundamentally defines an act as violent.

However, it is necessary to consider that in the human species, a variety of violent behaviors are not carried out with the intention of causing harm and yet become as or more injurious as those carried out with such premeditation. Even though in smaller

dimensions, some of them also occur among animals. It is about all those negligent, abandoning behaviors that do not provide protection or care to children, older adults, and others who require and expect that care from others.

In the case of animals, there is more or less consensus in denominating acts against other animals as aggressive rather than violent behavior. Aggression in animals is always aimed at obtaining clear objectives such as food, obtaining mates or partners for reproduction, or achieving or maintaining territories. The term violence is, therefore, how we, the members of the human species, agree. Violence concerning aggression constitutes a pathologized aggression, overflowed, out of limits. However, it is true that in the animal world, we find behaviors that shock us and are cruel in the extreme.

Unlike animals, it is evident that physical violence in the human species includes a wide variety of forms: shoving, slapping, scratching, stabbing, shooting, and other much crueller forms such as torture. However, also in the human species, psychological violence is the form most commonly used by people and includes sophisticated forms of expression that can vary between cultures, so it is necessary to go through a learning process to understand and perform them; among them are, humiliating attitudes made with the face, or with body movements, foul language, high-flown expressions, among many others.

In the human species, neither physical nor psychological violence is intended to ensure and seek the species' survival or to protect or gain territory. However, purely human and cultural motivations lead us to the most abominable and ruthless acts.

Many forms of physical and psychological violence in the human species were not understood as violence for centuries and, on the contrary, were forms of behavior ultimately admitted and encouraged. Pedagogical treatises were even written to make these violent acts towards children, for example, effective and guarantee a good formative process.

## **Reactive, Hot Violence and Cold, Psychopathic Violence**

A significant number of investigations have been able to establish that predatory, cold, instrumental, or psychopathic violence is not necessarily associated with neurological deficits, specifically corticofrontal, unlike what has been discovered that usually happens with reactive, emotional, or hot violence. Bettin (2010), Brent (2002), Raine (2002), Ostrosky-Solís (2009), Raine et al. (1994).

Violence known as cold, predatory, or instrumental, that is, That type of violence that does not arise in an immediate reaction to a situation, is found to be associated with psychopathy, as well as with psychopathological disorders and conventional forms of moral reasoning, that is; oriented by immediate consequences.

Raine (1993), through the use of neuroimaging techniques, concluded that poor functioning of the prefrontal cortex is associated with the violent behavior of

emotional murderers (hot and impulsive) and not with the behaviors of psychopathic murderers (cold and predatory).

Prefrontal deficits are characteristic of impulsive and emotional murderers. Cold killers differ from emotional, hot-blooded killers, who kill in a moment of emotional loss of control.

Predatory killers function cerebrally in a more regulated and controlled manner, unlike emotional killers who kill without cerebral regulation and control.

The neural pathways underlying predatory or instrumental aggression are different from those underlying emotional and hot violence.

In cold, predatory, or instrumental killers – unlike impulsive murderers – there seems to be good functioning of the prefrontal cortex, especially the orbitofrontal area. Paradoxically, this appears to favor the construction and execution of violent plans stimulated by subcortical structures that are overactive for aggression, especially the amygdala (Raine, 2002).

Individuals who commit cold crimes generally score high on the Hare Psychopathy Scale. Therefore, it is assumed that the good functioning of the orbitofrontal cortex in predatory and psychopathic murderers acts in favor of criminal effectiveness in these individuals.

Predatory violence is closely related to psychopathy. Indeed, factors such as egocentrism, self-justification, impulsivity, and deficiency of violence inhibitors—such as empathy and the construction of affective and emotional bonds—have been found to promote antisocial behavior in psychopaths (Hare, 2002), (Ostrosky-Solís et al., 2009).

Bandura (1994) calls moral disconnection the process of cognitive reconstruction, through which the act and value of acting criminally and killing are reinterpreted so that it can be carried out coldly and without self-censorship (cf. Knoth, Javidan, 2024; Bandura, 2019). Thus, the individual constructs images of himself, perceiving himself as a great fighter who defends himself against ruthless oppressors. In this way, violence is a justifiable fact (cf. Tillman et al., 2018).

### **The process of moral disconnection occurs gradually through specialized training**

In our research, with guerrillas and paramilitaries in the Colombian armed conflict in which forms of predatory, cold, instrumental, psychopathic violence have occurred, we have managed to establish that they are not carried out by psychopathic individuals in the strict sense. However, the crimes have all the characteristics typical of this type of violence. In fact, the subjects involved in the atrocious crimes of the Colombian war have been, for the most part, peasant men and women who are empathetic, who have warm relationships with family and friends, who feel fear, sadness, and guilt, and hardly show some other trait that characterizes the constituent factors of psychopathic personalities.

In the same order of ideas, it has been shown that the majority of warriors in this conflict did not present significant neuropsychological deficits; however, they did present low levels of development of moral reasoning and psychopathological disorders.

It has become evident that the process of Moral Disconnection has been the primary variable involved in the cold, predatory criminal typology, determined by solid levels of ideologization.

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