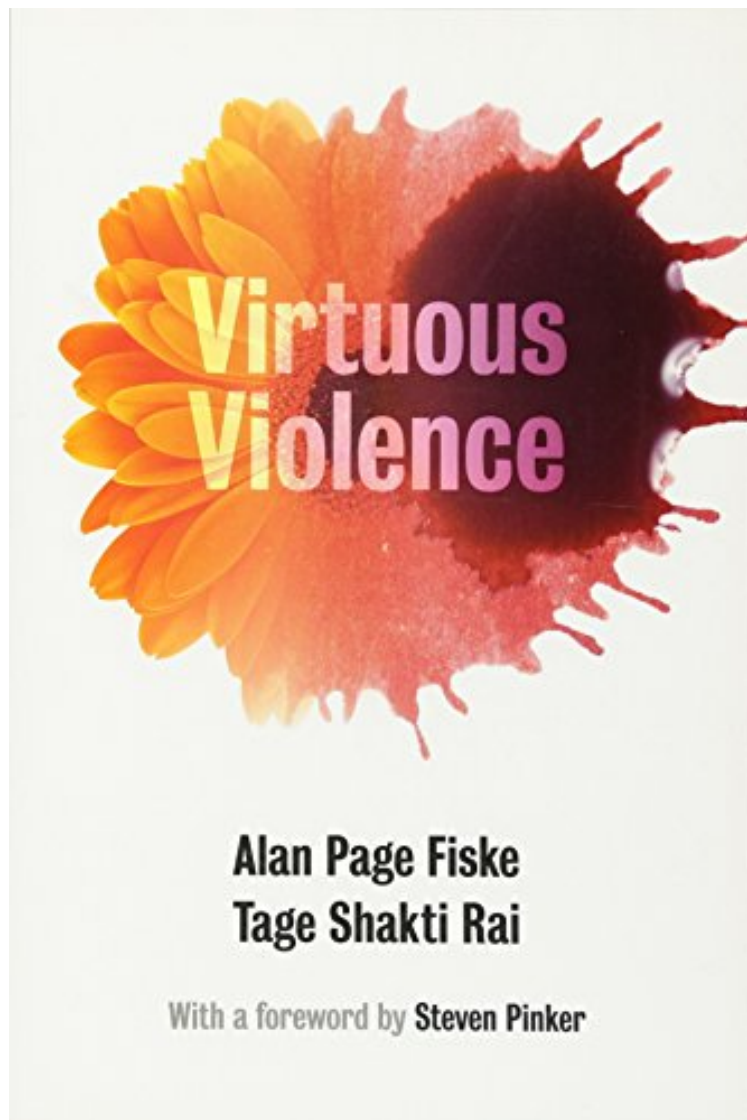


(Library ebook) Virtuous Violence: Hurting and Killing to Create, Sustain, End, and Honor Social Relationships

## **Virtuous Violence: Hurting and Killing to Create, Sustain, End, and Honor Social Relationships**

*Alan Page Fiske, Tage Shakti Rai*

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**Alan Page Fiske, Tage Shakti Rai : Virtuous Violence: Hurting and Killing to Create, Sustain, End, and Honor Social Relationships** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Virtuous Violence: Hurting and Killing to Create, Sustain, End, and Honor Social Relationships:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The authors have done a great job in laying out some of the causes with ...By Oakton\_ValIt's extremely important to understand the causes of violence. It's one of the most important things we can do next to actually reducing violence in this world. The authors have done a great job in laying out some of the causes with case studies in many different regions of the world. I hope I can apply what I've learned to make the world a more peaceful place.6 of 8 people found the following review helpful. they sometimes push their theory a bit too hard and it was irksome that they used acronyms for technical terms which made it lessBy Edward GallagherOften fascinating subject matter and an interesting theory. However, they sometimes push their theory a bit too hard and it was irksome that they used acronyms for technical terms which made it less easy to read. Their coverage of Intimate Partner Violence was weak and superficial (relying on questionably valid survey data). I was very surprised they did not discuss one of the most common form of socially sanctioned violence in Western society, corporal punishment of children. This fits with their theory very well. I wonder if they were avoiding controversy? But their overall approach is pretty controversial.They use the word 'moral' in a way that is quite different to every-day usage and I think it would make more sense to use some other term.They are sometimes a bit inconsistent in what they call 'violence'. For instance they claim that male circumcision in Western society is not violence "as we define it in this book, insofar as inflicting pain or suffering as such is not the intent" (page 184). But this seems to go against their central thesis and they include female circumcision and scarification rituals as violence.Another minor criticism is that they didn't link their theory to how people make excuses for violence that isn't clearly 'virtuous', but perhaps this would be another book.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. brilliant and profound analysisBy Frederick M. ToatesIf ever an academic book needed to come with an XXX-rated certificate and Government Health Warning it must surely be this one, for the unspeakable violence that it describes is profoundly disturbing. Therefore, its title might seem strange indeed. For example, can flogging a school-boy for failing to translate Latin correctly be described as virtuous? Is it morally right to whip a sailor for minor transgressions, as happened in past centuries in the Royal Navy? Can rape ever be described as a moral act? Can female genital mutilation? Surely, to every reader of this review, such things are the epitome of extreme immorality.But wait. If this is your reaction, you are probably looking at things from a contemporary egalitarian Western perspective, shared by the authors of the book and by me. The virtuous morality of violence strictly applies to the emotional and motivational processes underlying the perpetrator, not to us. In his own mind, the Victorian school teacher hitting the back-side of a boy is acting virtuously, since thereby the boy will succeed at Latin, rather than fail in life.Rapists commonly justify their behaviour in terms of putting right an injustice that has been done to them. Even if their victim is a complete stranger, then she holds collective guilt since all women are said to be the same. If she didnt want this to happen, why was she behaving in that provocative way? The person performing female genital mutilation sees this as virtuous since the girl is spared the problems that later arise from excessive female desire.The book documents the morality involved in mass (spree) killing, as in bullied school pupils turning up at school with an automatic weapon in order to get even. Although not discussed in the book, serial killers tell a similar story. Ted Kaczynski (the unabomber) targeted various prominent people as a protest against industrial society and had a moral justification for doing so in terms of putting right societys wrongs. There was sometimes a very tenuous link between victim and industrial society, one victim being a professor of biological psychology. The Washington Sniper might well have had moral motives too. Gary Ridgeway, the so-called Green River Killer of Seattle, and probably Americas most prolific serial killer, perfectly articulated that morality can blend with other motivations. He claimed to have right on his side by killing sex workers while he had sex with them, since thereby he was preventing other men from suffering at the hands of women in the way that he had suffered.This book, with an excellent foreword by Steven Pinker, represents a monumental and broad piece of scholarship and is very well written. It has several profoundly important and radical take-home messages for psychology. For example, it argues that so much of behaviour can only be understood in terms of the particular nature of the relationship between at least two people. What does this say about attempts to study personality as some intrinsic property of the individual? Someone might be a tyrant at home but delightful at work. In the terms of this study, it depends upon the nature of the relationship that is being regulated.Violence is not necessarily the product of a reflexive automatic process though it can be this. In other cases, it is the product of extensive conscious deliberation. For example, revenge sometimes happens years after the offence and the victim has only an indirect link to the offender, as in the case of the vendettas practiced in parts of Albania.The book neatly shows the futility of dividing things into biology versus social or essentialist versus social construction. The authors present a strong case for universal processes in the human brain/mind, which they term relational models. They note that some species of non-human primates show behaviour similar to humans in complex processes of administering punishment. My own reading of their argument is in the terms of control theory. These relational models specify the ideal values of interaction of the individual with others. Where reality departs from the ideal, action is taken to bring actual into alignment with the ideal. If the culture, as interpreted by the individual, specifies violence as the means to achieve this, so be it; the individual feels morally obliged to resort to violence. Mercifully today we no longer flog school boys for academic failure since the cultural prescriptions have changed.There is a neat dovetailing between this book and Steven Pinkers The Better Angels of our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined. We have discovered new ways of regulating relationships in society. Instead of

killing those who harm us, we call the police or a lawyer. Fiske and Rai conclude with a section describing how our social relationships might be more effectively regulated without resorting to violence. I was surprised to read in the review posted here by Edward Gallagher that the authors do not discuss corporal punishment of children, since I found several references to this. Finally, I was left with a feeling that, in some sense, it is absolutely morally right not to flog school children, whatever the particular society has as a convention. I guess most readers feel this but I cannot justify it. It is a (God given?) belief, a gut feeling. B.F. Skinner confronted this issue in designing his utopian society. In his terms, quite apart from its relative inefficiency, what moral code specifies that punishment is to be avoided and in its place positive reinforcement employed? But this takes us beyond our brief here. Frederick Toates (author of 'How Sexual Desire Works: The Enigmatic Urge')

What motivates violence? How can good and compassionate people hurt and kill others or themselves? Why are people much more likely to kill or assault people they know well, rather than strangers? This provocative and radical book shows that people mostly commit violence because they genuinely feel that it is the morally right thing to do. In perpetrators' minds, violence may be the morally necessary and proper way to regulate social relationships according to cultural precepts, precedents, and prototypes. These moral motivations apply equally to the violence of the heroes of the Iliad, to parents smacking their child, and to many modern murders and everyday acts of violence. *Virtuous Violence* presents a wide-ranging exploration of violence across different cultures and historical eras, demonstrating how people feel obligated to violently create, sustain, end, and honor social relationships in order to make them right, according to morally motivated cultural ideals.

"With its wealth of eye-opening ethnographic and historical comparisons and its contrarian but well-argued analyses, this book is a fascinating exploration of violence and a major contribution to our understanding of the human condition." Steven Pinker  
"Through compelling analyses ranging from primeval forms of human sacrifice to contemporary torture, ancient wars to medieval jousts, contact sports to gang fights, violent revolutions to suicide terrorism and mass murder, *Virtuous Violence* lays bare the moral motives for murderous passions, as a sort of evolutionary impetus to manage the interpersonal and intergroup interactions upon which societies depend, often aided by gods, spirits and abstract causes to which no creature but man is subject." Scott Atran, Directeur de Recherche, Anthropologie, CNRS/Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris and author of *In Gods We Trust* and *Talking to the Enemy*  
"A provocative tour through the (long) world history of violence. You won't think about violence and its many manifestations - or read a newspaper - the same way again." Dov Cohen, University of Illinois  
"It's so hard for us to think clearly about violence because acts of violence trigger such strong moral condemnation. Fiske and Rai strip the moralism out of our own minds and put it where it belongs - in the minds of the perpetrators, who usually think their acts are justified. This astonishing book offers a unified approach to understanding the most ghastly events, from street crime and honor killings through war crimes and genocide. This book is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand and ultimately reduce violence." Jonathan Haidt, New York University Stern School of Business, and author of *The Righteous Mind*  
"It's not possible to have a clear understanding of the past, present or future of war, terrorism and torture without knowing the basic message of *Virtuous Violence*." Richard E. Nisbett, Distinguished University Professor, University of Michigan  
"We have all watched movies where violent actions occur as part and consequence of social relations, and where the art of the movie consists of letting the audience share exactly the same emotions and motives that make that violence inevitable and feel right. At the same time, the mainstream social psychological arguments rarely pick up on these motives. This book provides a powerful argument in favor of scientifically considering these causes of violence. It is a scientifically important book, which touches on many issues we are concerned about as citizens, and will surely attract much attention and discussion as well as hopefully influencing future work in the social and behavioural sciences on this topic." Thomas Schubert, University of Oslo  
"The authors of this exciting book convincingly show that most individuals and groups engage in violence believing that what they do is right, moral and even obligatory. This well-written book shows the great challenge of preventing such righteous violence, and provides the knowledge base to engage with this challenge." Ervin Staub, author of *The Roots of Evil; The Psychology of Good and Evil and Overcoming Evil*  
"*Virtuous Violence* settles the question of whether violence is a rational act or an expressive gesture triggered by the emotions. Morally motivated violence, the authors explain, is based on emotional experience. But while emotions may be acted on impulsively, there is no reason why a moral stance cannot be arrived at logically and pursued with careful planning. This solution is much more intellectually satisfying than the binary division of one versus the other, and means that the message of the book may be reconciled with the work of diverse theorists." David Mansley, Theoretical Criminology  
About the Author  
Alan Page Fiske is Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he has also served as Director of the Behavior Evolution and Culture Center, and Director of the Culture, Brain, and Development Center. He has worked abroad for eight years as a Peace Corps Volunteer, WHO consultant and Peace Corps Country Director as well as conducting ethnographic fieldwork. He is widely known for his Relational Models Theory, the only comprehensive, integrated theory of human sociality, which has been tested and applied in

numerous studies by hundreds of researchers. Tase Shakti Rai is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow with the Ford Center for Global Citizenship in the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. He is known for developing Relationship Regulation Theory, which argues that morality cannot be understood independent of sociality, and that diversity in moral judgments and behaviors are driven by patterns in the social relationships within which they occur.