

The History of Violence on Pain vs. Pleasure: A Functionalistic and Dramatisation Concept of Social Phenomenon

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Abstract: Theorising the law of confidence in a heuristic method clearly indicates that the violence is based on immediate pleasure for misdemeanour and results in severe pain for the victim. Historically speaking, pain and pleasure are the two sides of a single coin. Design of criminality, as proved in the writing of Jeremy Bentham, a philosopher of legal history, that morality plays a tremendous role, in which detachment of morality from the individual encourages harm to others, and vice versa, attachment of morality moulds the individual to encourage pleasure. The functionalistic approach of crime is argued for societal necessity. According to E. Durkheim, crime or violence is the social fact by which a society is functional and also proves its existence. Other socio-legal processing institutions, such as the court, police, prison, and prosecution, have historically interlinked and co-exist as a functional unit of the whole society. Enemies of social coherence represent themselves in a dramatised way and try to improve their existence by inflicting pain on others through their violent modus operandi. The present research paper provides multiple theoretical explanations with regard to the historical writing about violence. The paper also talks about the guilty mind of offenders and justice delivery services in the past. The future perspective of violence and how to practice the penalty for changing the pace of violence.

Keywords: History, Violence, Functionalism, Dramatisation, Justice.

INTRODUCTION

The development of phenomenon of violence affects consciousness of the society. Acting influences, emotions and a mind of spectator also effect of subconsciousness. Dramatisation of individuals, positive or negative created have an impact on society. In a negative sense, it is also called tools or techniques of act of violence and transferring to the others in an opportunistic method (Sutherland, 1947). Now, the history will observe it as a 'super objective' which is the world of view of a particular act. This super objective have greater purpose, might be economic, political or strategic. In the history of theatre, super objective explained as a tool for power gain or power retain.

Violence is considered to have a regulative function from a functionalistic view. It delineates what is acceptable and unacceptable, who can wield authority and who can't, who belongs and who doesn't. But this is not itself a purely coercive regulation. It works through affect. Pain disciplines bodies; the pleasure of power, domination spectacle, or revenge stabilises the motives and motivations of those who perpetrate or support violence (Foucault, 1977). Hence, violence functions as a two-currency system that both visits misery on (some) others and creates pleasure in its infliction for some enabling hierarchical arrangements to spread themselves across time. The sensationalisation of violence serves to accelerate

such developments. Human societies don't just suffer from violence, they stage it, using media, ritual, law and religion and propaganda — the everyday stories we tell each other (Burke, 1969). Every act of violence is a narrative event that generates heroes, villains, logics and moral frames (Raine, 2024). These dramatised forms produce what can be termed a social script. They teach us how violence should appear: what it should like/feel/mean. Whether valorised or denigrated, they implant models of affect into the unconscious mind of those that gaze, rendering violence emotionally accessible as an option.

Dramatisation then enters the picture. Dramaturgical production in society, where the use of violence as a symbolic performance is influenced by audience perception, cultural narratives, and political framing. According to Erving Goffman's theory of frame analysis, violence is given social importance by interpretative frames that indicate whether an act is perceived as crime, nationalism, terrorism, courage, justice, or sacrifice. Therefore, rather than the act itself, violence is given meaning by the social, political, and media-driven narratives that frame and legitimise it in the public consciousness. Furthermore, according to Kenneth Burke's theory of dramatisation, violence is employed as a theatrical device to project authority and arouse emotions on a stage composed of artists, motivations, audiences, performances, and symbolic gestures. Within this dramaturgical framework, pain is transformed into spectacle, fear into political communication, and suffering into symbolic performance that may compel obedience, outrage,

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community pleasure, or ideological unification. As organisations, states, communities, and media systems dramatise power, morality, terror, and emotional control, violence is a performative social phenomena that is always evolving. From ancient public executions and ceremonial sacrifices to contemporary media trials, terrorism, war propaganda, and online hate campaigns, this is clear. In this dramaturgical context, Edwin H. Sutherland's concept of opportunistic transfer is particularly relevant, wherein technologies of violence — including methods, means, alibis, and symbols — do not remain confined to their place of origin but instead move across social spaces. A political crackdown, a criminal execution, or a militarised spectacle yields an archive of behaviour from which the rest can freely borrow. This is not straightforward imitation; it is a matter of functional borrowing, in which violent practices are adapted for new ends and settings, and along with them their affective and symbolic resonance. The idea of the super-objective provides a more penetrating analytical tool. In theatre theory the super-objective is the expectation that underlies all actions in a performance. When it comes to violence, this means that acts of harm are seldom arbitrary; they fall along the curve of a structured expression of a total worldview. The latter may be economic (managing over resources), political (staying in power), cultural (maintaining dominance) or strategic (deterrence and submission). single violent actions are shots of a larger project in which everything serves it or defends it.

History of Violence

The history of violence may be viewed as a dynamic social process that cultures used to negotiate the limits of power, pleasure, pain, and communal meaning rather than as a static chronicle of brutality. Violence was often ceremonial and public in pre-modern civilisations. It was ingrained in religious symbolism, imperial warfare, sacrifice customs, and spectacles of punishment where suffering served as both social education and group amusement (Girard, 1977). Violence has changed from a communal activity focused on survival to a complex institutional, political, and psychological social phenomena influenced by shifting civilisational systems. Violence served mainly as a means of survival, territorial defence, and tribal cohesiveness in prehistoric cultures, where force was intimately associated with ritual, collective identity, and protection (The Smithsonian's Human Origins Program, 2026). Then, as more organised civilisations such as Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Vedic

societies emerged so violence was institutionalised by kingship and warfare, slavery and economic exploitation, religious authority and sacrificial systems transforming pain into a badge of honour, sovereignty over the world and an expression of divine legitimacy (Schwartzberg *et al.*, 2026). With monarchical, feudalistic, religious, military, and judicial power structures well-established during a classical and mediaeval time frame that may have endured from the second millennium BCE until the early modern era in Europe, violence was normalised as a state and public social obedience made possible by spectacles of suffering that carried out caste-based oppression through invasions, crusades, and judicial executions (Antony and others, 2020). During the colonial and early modern eras, violence underwent additional reform, shifting from visual spectacle to institutional and bureaucratic control as a structured instrument of economic exploitation, racial supremacy, surveillance, imperial power, and mechanised warfare (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2006). In the contemporary and digital age, violence has evolved beyond physical coercion into psychological, symbolic, structural, and digitally mediated forms. Through media sensationalism, cyber aggression, terrorism, algorithmic hate mobilisation, and digital representation, pain is converted into ideological performance, emotional consumption, and mass social dramatisation. Because of this, violence has continuously evolved throughout history to reflect changing political, cultural, economic, and technological circumstances as well as the dynamic linkages between pain, pleasure, authority, and collective human behaviour. (WHO, 2022) World Health Organisation (WHO) has defined 'Violence' as 'The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation' (Drug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002). Robin Jenkins in his work with men who have abused women sees violence as any attempt to influence, coerce or control another person where there is potential to violate the integrity of the other or disrespect their difference. He says that violence can be seen as an attempt to correct wrong-doing, a reaction to unfairness or provocation, a means of getting even, or a way of becoming somebody (Delaney *et al.*, 2013). Hannah Arendt says that violence is political not psychological. We use violence to maintain control over someone who has not given up this control freely (Overton, 2025).

What is Pain vs. Pleasure

In criminological terms, not as a good-bad and pain-pleasure dichotomy but as an exchange of energy condition where the violence becomes meaningful, usable and repeatable. So every crime or punishment either overt lawlessness or maltreatment is the transfer of sensation. It is either pain felt in somebody who feels it or pain which pleasure-control-relief-power-sought validity security spring else where. Violence, as it survives historically, is not the product of men who participate with joy in being violent, but people have discovered that suffering has a function. Within unequal social structures, suffering is disproportionately borne by marginalised populations, while systems of privilege often convert the suffering of others into forms of security, control, profit, or symbolic power (Foucault, 2020). When an attack occurs, the pain of a victim results in psychological gratification for the criminal dominance, release, recognition or revenge. What is gained, he wrote, is the pleasure of pain social order and a feeling of safety induced by symbolic reassurances that authority is still functioning. So, crime and control are the two hemispheres of the same sensory economy: one produces disorder for its pleasures, and the other pain with which to restore order. What is criminologically significant here, is pain goes never wasted. It is converted into messages. A beating communicates fear. A prison sentence communicates authority. A public lynching, encounter killing or viral crime video is the language of power. Pain becomes a language that writes social hierarchies onto bodies (Foucault, 1977). Pleasure, however, is not always joy; it passes off and leaves you where you were. It can take the form of thrills, security, revenge, moral satisfaction or mere disinterested spectatorship. Even nonviolent people ingest violence emotionally from the news, cinema and courtroom narratives — they get a feeling that chaos is being held at bay or that evil is getting its comeuppance. So pain vs. pleasure is the secret engine of violence. It is why there is endless reproduction of violence: Because every wound makes a winner somewhere (Galtung, 1969). From this circulation of suffering and pleasure, crime and punishment, war and spectacle all feed through to turn human bodies into agents of social control within the economies of order and disorder.

Individual or Society: Historical Concept

"History does not begin with crowds — it begins the moment one person learns how to turn another person's fear into a source of meaning." This tension

between the individual and society has always been more than an opposition: It is a forever negotiation as to who gets to define pain, as to whom pleasure is permitted and whose suffering becomes acceptable. 'There has always been an endless loop, where people torture and desire one another.' In every historical era, it seemed to me, the emphasis veered between personal agency and collective order; but underneath that surface were deeper truths: societies are made by individuals who learn how to turn private wants into public force; individuals are shaped by social forms that teach them where they can cause harm and where they can suffer it (Bourdieu, 1989). Violence in the earliest human communities did not exist as chaos, but as an instrument of belonging. To protect the group, in other words, individuals were called on to inflict injury on outsiders; to remain at the top of hierarchy, some had to be put through pain. It coalesced into institutions — law, punishment, warfare and ritual that all channeled individual aggression into socially condoned performance. What started as force from individuals, was turned into power of all.

The role of the individual did not vanish, as history marched forward; it grew psychologically more tensed. Contemporary societies do not just regulate bodies; they mold emotions, memories and moral stories (Halbwachs, 1992). They're follows an internalisation of social ideas when violence is approved, when it's heroic, when it's criminal. The reader is now actor and audience in one, committing violence or submitting to violence while watching the action and evaluating it. Therefore, history cannot be narrated strictly as the tale of independent people or dominating cultures. It is a chronicle of how individual instincts for pleasure, fear, power and life are always being refashioned as social controls. It is the man who cherishes it, society provides the theatre. Between them they stage the long, unfinished drama of violence.

Why Functionalism Takes It Positive

Oscar Newman in his book theorised the violence with aggression (Newman, 1987). Based on Darwin's Theory of evolution, he has proposed that the human species had grown over time starting from aggression. Aggression in human for survive and who were not aggressive were naturally unfit for the society. The functionalist approach of crime and criminality believed its necessary feature of society and argued that crime or violence has positive functions. Society cannot exist without it (Durkheim 1895). According to him, crime is inevitable and even necessary for the society and has

positive functions for scope and career to the well being of a society. It generates the social control institution and provides employment. Share values and moral beliefs of the society are not always in a collective sentiment and some of individual or group of the individual exposed to different settings and breakdown the law.

However, this perspective has been later on widely criticised for overstating the integrative role of violence while underestimating its destructive social consequences. By depicting violence as socially necessary just because it has historically occurred, critics contend that functionalism operates the risk of creating a conservative bias and inadvertently legitimising oppression, structural inequality, state coercion, war, caste-based dominance, and institutional discrimination (Merton, 1968). Violence is described as functional since it exists, and its continuous presence is thus justified by its purported societal utility. This tautological reasoning has led to criticism of the functionalist approach. The functionalist inclination to view violence as socially beneficial or essential is fiercely opposed by a number of philosophical and critical traditions. Conflict theorists, especially Karl Marx, contended that violence is a tool used by dominant classes to maintain political and economic dominance over subject people rather than a mechanism of collective benefit. According to this viewpoint, institutional coercion, punishment, and legal systems frequently serve the interests of the elite rather than promoting societal peace. Theodor W. Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, two Frankfurt School critical theorists, condemned contemporary cultures for normalising structural and ideological violence through capitalism, state authority, and mass culture, where oppression takes the form of social order. The assumption that violence may lead to true societal stability was rejected by nonviolent philosophers like Mahatma Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy, who contended that violence ultimately reproduces fear, dominance, and moral degradation rather than lasting peace. According to Gandhi's ahimsa philosophy, violence is inherently detrimental to both individual dignity and the advancement of society as a whole. Similarly, Johan Galtung developed the notion of "structural violence," contending that violence encompasses systems of poverty, exclusion, inequality, and institutional injustice that subtly undermine people's lives in addition to physical injury (Galtung, 1969). Together, these viewpoints refute functionalist presumptions by highlighting how violence frequently perpetuates

trauma, alienation, dominance, and systematic inequity rather than fostering true social cohesiveness or well-being. The theoretical shift from classical thinkers like Émile Durkheim and Jeremy Bentham to modern postmodern and dramaturgical interpretations mirrors the historical transformation of violence from an institutional and behavioural phenomenon to a symbolic, psychological, and media-mediated social process. While Durkheim's functionalism saw crime and violence as necessary elements supporting institutional order and social control (Neuhausser, 2022). Bentham's utilitarian interpretation of pain and pleasure placed violence within the logic of human calculation, morality, and punishment (Crimmins, 2014). However, violence could no longer be justified exclusively by legal rationale or social purpose as modern societies grew more mediated through communication technology, political narratives, and symbolic representation. As a result, modern theorists turned their focus to how violence is portrayed, acted out, told, and emotionally absorbed in society. The conceptual link between classical criminological theories and postmodern narrative approaches is provided by this shift from functional regulation to symbolic dramatisation, which shows how violence changes historically in form as well as in meaning, representation, and social interpretation.

New form of Violence and its Dramatised Representation

"Today's violence fights in storytelling as much if not more than with power alone." In addition to material coercion, geographical supremacy, militarised force, economic interests, and institutional control, violence in the contemporary world also takes the form of storytelling, symbolic representation, and narrative justification. Therefore, modern violence is simultaneously produced by both physical force and the narratives that explain, justify, and emotionally perpetuate violence in the public mind. According to Shadd Maruna Presser's conversations with criminals, many of them construct self-justifying narratives in which, rather of seeing their acts as evil, violence is reframed as sacrifice, resistance, necessity, vengeance, or justice (Presser, 2009). This type of narrative reconstruction symbolically transforms harm into a morally acceptable action within the perpetrator's own worldview, rather than rejecting it. Violence is repurposed as sacrifice, necessity, resistance, or justice in these narrative frameworks. What is not a denial of harm but rather an audacious rewriting of it, literally as self-authored text, in which the perpetrator

inserts himself as one who can be validated morally by no less an authority than his own story. This transformation of the story is symbolic of a larger postmodern predicament and sensibility which Derrida would later critique in his philosophy of stable meaning. In a social universe where fixed moral anchors are crumbling, how to understand violence seems slippery. Deeds that once cried out for condemnation now jostle with counter-narratives of justification, identity and grievance. In this transformational scene forgiveness or forgetting is no longer simply an ethical reaction. Its strangeness and rarity makes it, instead, exceptional in the sense that so few people do it an act which becomes symbolic precisely because it resists the dominant logic of grievance and memory.

In a postmodern society, violence is no longer just something that occurs but also something that is acted out, remembered and transmitted (Debord, 1967). All acts of violence imprinted themselves in the public consciousness through media, digital archiving and cultural debate. Those who forgive interrupt this cycle of endless indictment, and that is why they are actually not treated as regular moral actors but as historical aberrations. Their choice not to pay into the economy of perpetual remembrance is a refusal that upend(s) everything we have been taught about what violence means today. So contemporary violence is always Christ adjacent, which is why we accept that homespun gunslings who just keep on shooting were bound to be born in a barn. It is not only maintained by physical injury, but also held up by the stories that freeze those injuries into identity, grievance and collective memory.

Reality of Social Phenomenon of Violent Nature

Violence is frequently studied as an event that disrupts social order, but in fact it's one of the ways societies produce, sustain and re-create systems for coordinating human activities. It is not restricted to episodes of breakdown. On the contrary, it shines most blatantly when power is wielded, identities are defended and lines are drawn in the sand. The social world, then, is not simply interrupted by violence, and it is constituted through it. Every society makes a choice, often unspoken, of who gets to suffer and inflict suffering, and whose pain is worthy of recognition (North *et al.*, 2009).

The violence of social life isn't always written in blood or plain conflict. It is woven into the fabric of daily activities of exclusion, punishment, surveillance, humiliation and control. This more muted type of harm

paves the way for flashier eruptions of brutality. And what makes violence social is not just its physicality, but its capacity to signal rank, compel obedience and foster collective memory. Societies write their hierarchies on human bodies in the blood of violence (Muro-Ruiz, 2002). Violence endures for the very reason that it is symbolic. It turns fear into authority, vulnerability into dominance, chaos into a simulacrum of order. This symbolic function is used by institutions, communities, and even individual subjects themselves to secure their place in the social order. Whether pursued by criminals, by states or quasi-states, violence is a way of declaring and denying legitimacy. To comprehend violence, then, one needs to look past the idea that it is an aberration or a fluke. It is a patterning social practice that is deeply interlaced with the ways people compete, belong and survive. The truth of violent social phenomena is in what it does not just destroy, but create: power and identity and the ongoing conversation over who has whose hand.

Institutional Mapping of Violence in Contemporary India

The way the government perceives and manages violence in society has drastically positively changed, as seen by India's present institutional response to violence. Instead of seeing violence as a single criminal act, current policy frameworks increasingly view it as a socially entrenched phenomenon influenced by gendered power dynamics, public visibility, emotional trauma, digital vulnerability, and institutional performance. The Government of India's initiatives that show how violence is being technologically monitored, administratively mapped, and publicly dramatised through legal, digital, and welfare mechanisms are highlighted in the Press Information Bureau note on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. These acts highlight the tensions between public spectacle, institutional protection, and the persistent social elements that support violence. They demonstrate a rise in victim-centered governance and governmental accountability on one level. The state's efforts to expedite justice in cases of sexual violence and rebuild public trust in legal institutions are reflected in the creation and growth of Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs), which now operate 773 courts throughout 29 States and Union Territories and have resolved over 334,000 cases. Concurrently, the establishment of 14,658 Women Help Desks in police stations formalises gender-sensitive reporting in routine police operations. These initiatives show how bureaucratic visibility and procedural responsiveness

are increasingly used to moderate violence, with the institutional response time itself serving as a gauge of state legitimacy. But the focus on quick disposal and institutional growth also raises important questions about whether justice is being framed more through public reassurance and administrative efficiency than through a more profound change of patriarchal social relations that normalise violence (PIB Headquarters, 2025).

Emergency helplines like 181 and the integrated 112 response system, as well as digital mechanisms like the SHe-Box portal, which enables women to report workplace sexual harassment and track complaints in real time, show how governance now heavily depends on technological infrastructures to make violence visible, recordable, and traceable. These tools provide up new avenues for reporting and assistance, but they also represent a larger trend toward data-driven government, in which sensations of suffering are converted into quantifiable grievances, digital records, and responses focused on monitoring. In this way, institutional interventions contribute to the creation of public narratives about victimisation, safety, and government action in addition to addressing violence. The implementation of technologies like the National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO) and the Investigation Tracking System for Sexual Offences (ITSSO) further illustrates how violence is increasingly controlled through information management, classification, and predictive monitoring, integrating physical harm into larger digital control and risk management systems (PIB Headquarters, 2025).

Violence causes long-term emotional and psychological suffering in addition to acute physical harm, as evidenced by the establishment of psycho-social projects like Stree Manoraksha and the expansion of One Stop Centers. Similarly, initiatives like Digital Shakti demonstrate awareness of new types of cyber-enabled abuse and online harassment that target women in digitally mediated environments. These attempts imply that the modern Indian state is beginning to see violence as including symbolic, psychological, and virtual spheres in addition to physical attack. However, this institutional expansion also reflects the paradox at the heart of modern violence studies: while state mechanisms aim to lessen harm, they also contribute to the public circulation and dramatisation of violence through media visibility, digital reporting systems, awareness campaigns, and ongoing bureaucratic documentation of suffering. When placed within the larger global trends that the UN has

recognised, this institutional landscape gains more significance. Nearly one in two children experience violence every year, and there were around 500,000 homicides globally in 2017 — much more than the deaths from armed conflict (89,000) and terrorism (19,000), according to UN figures, making violence one of the most widespread societal risks in the world (United Nations, 2025). Despite making up just 13 percent of the world's population, the Americas accounted for 37 percent of all killings worldwide, highlighting the influence of gang-based violence and organised crime on regional instability. The discovery that intimate partners or family members killed 58 percent of female homicide victims is also noteworthy, indicating that violence is not limited to public criminals but rather has deep roots in personal social institutions. These worldwide trends support the claim that violence cannot be comprehended solely through legal classifications of criminal activity; rather, it arises from systems of dependency, performative masculinity, unequal social relations, and institutional failures that both normalise and control suffering. India's expanding institutional structure is a reflection of both the increasing development of legal and support institutions as well as a broader change in the social and political understanding of violence. The state is attempting to manage violence through visibility, emotional control, and technical mediation in addition to punishment, as seen by its increasing reliance on databases, courts, digital monitoring systems, helplines, psycho-social therapy, and public campaigns. By doing thus, these systems both challenge and mimic the dramatisation of violence in contemporary society, where pain is documented in public, handled administratively, and mobilised symbolically as part of governance.

CONCLUSION

Read in terms of pain and pleasure, a history of violence no longer looks like endless eruptions of chaos; it looks instead like relatively stable patterns of social technology. Throughout history, violence has continued to serve as a means of addressing social problems and securing divergent interests, punishing bodies and pleasures, feuding enemies and reinforcing relations of power. “No pain is just endured and no pleasure merely felt; we live in a world of pain and pleasure that are socially organized, historically produced, and politically useful.” Such duality is why violence persists even when the human cost of violence is universally recognised. From a functionalist perspective, violence is not situated outside of society it

contributes to its cohesion. Crime, punishment and institutional force constitute a system of mutual reinforcement wherein disorder may be translated into restored power. Courts, prisons, police and public narratives do not simply react to harm; they translate it into meaning, legitimacy and shared confidence. Thus the misery of some becomes the psychological and moral solace of others. Violence does the unacknowledged work of social continuity — it reacquaints people with the ruin, outside history, which is what history relieves them of.

But violence is never purely functional; it is also theatrical. All violence is a spectacle, all of it plays to an audience in media, law, political or cultural memory. Offenders dramatise their wrongs to exculpate themselves, institutions dramatise punishment in order to assert power, and societies do both to maintain moral limits. And the super-objective under which all these performances fall – control, domination, security, survival – is what gives violence its momentum and longevity. It was an example of perceived isolated cruelty that actually is just a piece on the board in which pain gets allocated and pleasure profited from.

Today, in a global design the script has been written more explicitly and narratively and even perpetually. Violence doesn't stop with the act; it plays on in images, stories and digital memories. The history of violence is the history of how societies have learned to make the human body a site for meaning. Authority is written in pain; pleasure endorses it. Between these two forces is the endless drama of social life, in which each wound speaks and every spectacle sings and when harm comes it asks quietly who may suffer so that others feel safe.

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