VIOLENCE AND SILENCE: TOWARDS A POLITICS OF ACTION.

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Let me start with a puzzle. Bali is an Oriental paradise: its people civilized, refined, artistic, where humble peasants learn its exquisite culture under benevolent local aristocrats and show the vast creativity of the free human spirit. Bali is an Oriental hell: its people dishonest, cruel, violent, where tyrants rule by treachery and holocaust and its people face 'continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short'.

My aim in this paper is to explore the implications of this apparent paradox. To do so, the obvious question 'what is violence?' will be rephrased as 'how is violence represented?' This will lead in turn to a more general question 'how is action represented?' For I shall suggest that the interesting question lies in cultural interpretations of violence and power.

The argument:

Asking 'what is violence?' commits the essentialist error of assuming there to be such a thing with general properties discussable cross-culturally.[1] Arguably anthropological method stresses the contextual issue of the frameworks within which violence is explained. Commonly these involve a theory of nature, human nature (or mind), power and agency. The question of how violence is represented, by whom and under what conditions is one about power and knowledge.

As to power, I shall suggest that in Bali, which has a history of extraordinary violence (in our terms), the elite has been to pains to stress its mastery over violence, through the martial and political activities of princes and through the agency of gods, understanding of, and communion with, whom is exercised by high priests. Violence is removed from the mass of peasants who actually commit it, but are held to be unable to control it. So violence becomes a manifestation of the power of the elite, as power, being abstract, requires interpretation of its forms. This is the visible aspect of power. The classification of most Balinese as passive instruments, and their exclusion from discussion of power and violence, is its hidden aspect.

As to knowledge, we need to inquire how violence fits in with ideas of agency. The Balinese have fully-fledged theories of mind and action, but are loth to explain acts of violence, as against the existence of violence, in terms of these. What is at stake is how to explain action. I shall argue that our own discourses which stress the mind, guided by reason, as the potentially all-knowing, controlling agent of action is the product of a discursive tradition and has important political implications.

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[1] The same applies of course to terms like 'culture', 'Bali' and 'the Balinese'. I use the terms merely as loose labels. The Balinese refer to villagers and aristocracy in the area of Bali where I worked, although other sources are used as well. When I talk about the 'traditional' situation, in the pre-colonial or recent past, I am of course speaking of representations of this past, not of what actually happened, which we simply do not know.

What is violence?

Before proceeding to representations of violence, it may be useful to sketch in some background. For a start what do we mean by violence? That standard fallback source, the Oxford English Dictionary, shows the range of uses of 'violence' alone to be wide. They include 'the exercise of physical force', causing 'bodily injury', 'forcibly interfering with personal freedom', 'to outrage or violate', 'undue constraint applied to some natural process, habit etc., so as to prevent its free development or exercise', 'perversion of meaning', 'great force, severity, or vehemence', 'vehemence of personal feeling' and 'passionate conduct or language'. These are only the positive aspects. Perhaps the most effective forms of violence are indicated by the absence of signs or representations (like the constraint on choice of the unemployed or the elimination of those deemed unqualified - like students, or women - from taking part in certain activities or discourses). If violence is a useful notion, we need to consider silences and exclusions as well.

It is hard to find simple equivalents in Balinese to the variety of states and acts denoted by 'violence' in English. There is a plethora of terms which specify kinds of extremity. Of those which deal with force, *gemes* is used where we might 'cruel', 'tough on', 'not disgusted by'. *Paksa*, which is usually glossed as 'force', brings out the coercive, but not necessarily physical, aspects. Violence and brutality are, however, associated with a term with complex uses – *kasar*. Its antonym, *alus*, is used of people who are refined, controlled, well-mannered; and *kasar* signifies the reverse, what is coarse, uncontrolled, brutish.

The implication of a lack of control, of 'naturalness', may lead to a link with violence. Demons who stoke the fires of hell are portrayed as *kasar* and cruel. However one must be careful. The two terms are used of styles as much as the consequences of actions. Princes were reputed to be far deadlier in war, because of their control, than coarse and flailing peasants. Refined men have invented refined tortures for their fellows as recently as the abortive coup of 1965. *Kasar* also suggests a certain simplicity and straightforwardness: more associated with unthinking brutality than cruelty. The Balinese incline to the view that the simple are, on the whole, honest; it is the clever who are responsible for the chicanery, and engineering the violence done by others. Whatever the details the Balinese do not seem to have a general category of 'violence' but break the subject up into different forms which do not overlap with ours.

One might ask, for instance, why violence is of interest to us and why violence has become a popular subject of academic inquiry? Bunuel's film 'The discreet charm of the bourgeoisie' brings out elegantly the embarrassment 'proper' people feel when faced with violence while they quietly engage in it themselves in other forms. Life and style of living have become property to be maximized and defended against competitors and intrusion. Similarly our professional interest in violence owes much to constitutive metaphors. If society is an organism, or a language, violence becomes its pathological disorder or failure in communication. One might question the argument that our interest stems from increased technological efficiency in destruction and ask

whether it may not be that it is our assumptions and classifications which have changed so we discover new forms of violence from baby-bashing to economic domination, or created new ones from mugging to brain-washing.

A hidden essentialism:

Whatever one's theoretical predilections the difficulty in studying violence seems to be connected with the central role that reason plays in our discourse. Like most dichotomies it decentres and makes largely incoherent, or inexplicable, the category about which the taxonomy is not built. So the alternative to the Enlightenment values of reason, progress, science and understanding tends to be formulated negatively in terms of the place of unreason, desire and violence, which have kept people from Nietzsche to the post-structuralists in happy, but hopeless, defiance of the dominant view. For the difficulty of this counter-view is that it merely brings out other faces of the presuppositions it claims to attack and so is doomed to play the role of Loyal Opposition, or at best Iago to an enlightened Othello.

The presuppositions of immediate concern are our ideas of nature and human nature, of power, of violence and of agency. For violence is rarely treated in itself. It is part of a view of the world: and in an 'ironic episteme' commonly a symptom of something deeper in terms of which it is to be 'understood', and so stood back from. Violence may be seen as chaos against the cosmic backdrop of a theory of nature and order. In so far as we are concerned with human violence, it is enfolded in a theory of human nature, whether as a constituent tendency or stemming from something external, usually society. Apart from involving us in a worn dichotomy of 'individual versus society', it presupposes there is an essential human nature and essential characteristics of society as such. Once one has decided what natural, human and social features are essential, the rest of the analysis follows spuriously easily. The drawback is that our ideas of nature, humankind and society tend to change. The problem, I suggest, may be summed up as one of a pervasive essentialism.

We can see the difficulty by looking at the question of power. Like the search for the Holy Grail, the quest to grasp the nature of power consists more in the grunts of the disappointed hunters than in any solid results. The reason may be simple. Power, like time, is abstract. Coming from an epistemological tradition that stresses a dichotomy of ideas and things,[2] we require a tangible instantiation to give substance to the idea. So power is represented metaphorically: it is something one has, exercises, uses, seizes, but cannot ignore. Power is comprehended through its manifestations, such as force and violence. Rather obviously, however, power is neither force nor violence; and we are left with the awkward task of fighting through the material metaphors we invoke to ponder on what ontology we must assume if power is to be 'instantiated' 'manifested' or more voguishly 'dramatized'. Power may be represented as coercion, potentiality, or cause but it is none of these. Awkwardly we seem to be caught in defining it in terms of something else.

[2] Either may be the privileged category, often at the expense of the other (and so the supposed dispute between Plato and Aristotle). Both accept the dichotomy in different ways however.

The malaise stems, I suspect, from our tendency to essentialize and hypostatize. Why must there be a real, essential power (or violence)? The answer that we would not otherwise be able to explain phenomena like violence is circular. The difficulties of grappling with this Western Chimaera are, to my mind, neatly summed up in Foucault's last shifts of position. Recognizing that power tends to be represented catachretically he carefully mixed his metaphors, to break the hold of any one. Seeing the tendency to invent some Platonic 'Power', he wrote instead of the different 'powers', available in different societies at different times. Faced with the difficulty of powers appearing as things, and conscious of the lurking positivism, he moved towards the exploration of what was unsayable and undoable. Given the presuppositional limits of his own discursive tradition, he seems finally to have moved backwards and away, to the Classical Period and the definition of self, to dissolve the problem by studying its representations.

Lurking behind all this is the problem of explaining violent acts. It is commonplace in theories of mind to cope by postulating a destructive drive or predisposition (Freud's recourse to thanatos is an example). This may be useful, but it cannot be used to explain destructive actions without *petitio principii*. The argument is circular. It seeks to account for destructive, or violent, tendencies by postulating such proclivities, the reality of which are shown by the violent behaviour! A more general weakness of such approaches stems from the crucial role that reason, manifested here as 'intention', plays in explaining action across the Cartesian divide of mind and body, reason and cause.

One simple difficulty is that we cannot explain most normal action in terms of intentions: 'why' questions and intentionality are invoked to account for the abnormal. Instead of trying to explain it away, it might be more profitable to see violence as normal. For it is far more prevalent than pathological or bourgeois theories, which displace or disguise it, suggest. Accounting for actions in terms of intentions, or the nature of mind, is fraught with difficulty. For it is one thing to state the conditions under which people act (ecological conditions, symbolic ideas etc.); it is another to treat these conditions as the causes of actions.[3]

Should I seem to be making matters unnecessarily complicated, consider the following questions. What do answers to 'what is violence?' actually tell us? How accurate is our portrayal of violent events anyway?[4] In what sense does any possible explanation of 'why did he (you) kill so-and-so?' give a person's 'real' intentions any more than 'why did you stop beating your wife?' or 'what is your intention in having

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[3] Clifford Geertz, writing for example on the Balinese state (1980) is notably guilty of this confusion. Having laid out some Balinese symbols the analysis concludes, the implication being that having given us the collective representations he has somehow explained why the Balinese do what they do. I shall argue this is inadequate on two scores. It commits him a priori to the relation of ideas and actions. It also contravenes Balinese views on the matter.

[4] This question has been discussed beautifully by Keegan (1976). He points out that whether a battle has occurred or not is open to interpretation. Also most of our accounts of war are quite implausible and come from people who could not see what was happening or were not there at all. The terror, confusion and human limitations conveniently disappear in almost all portrayals of what happened.

breakfast?'? A study of violence involves us in murkier waters than might at first appear.

Representations of violence:

Let us return to our initial puzzle. Perhaps the paradox comes from Western discourse which distorts and misrepresents the Balinese? The argument has indeed been advanced that European (and American) accounts of Bali say more about their respective cultures than they do about the Balinese (cf. Boon 1977). Dutch reports represented Bali as a mysterious oriental Shangri-La, its wars more theatre than real, its people idyllic inhabitants of 'the morning of the world', in Nehru's phrase. The paradox would then dissolve. Bali, as the West's Eden, misrepresents the 'real' Bali, that Hobbsian world which Cambridge and LSE anthropologists believe to be how people everywhere actually are.

The drawback of the 'critical anthropological' view, which otherwise has much to recommend it, is that it tells us much about Western collective representations but very little about the Balinese, or their representations. Does a 'naive realist' position tell us more?[5] The short answer is that it tells us less; for it is based on assumptions about people and society which owe more to Utilitarianism than to what happens. There are still puzzles which are irresolvable without taking account of Balinese metaphysical categories and their implications. In short one need some way into how Balinese represent what in English is classed as violence and power.

For there are other seeming curiosities in the Balinese ethnography. For instance, the paintings in the Krta Gosa in Klungkung depict ingenious tortures in the afterworld for offences in life; yet the offences are mostly trivial - the graver ones are unmentioned. Balinese have a theory of personal responsibility enshrined in the Hindu doctrine of *karma pala*, 'the law of action and response', by which a person's future is solely determined by their past actions (see Hobart 'Thinker, thespian, soldier, slave?'). At the same time one suffers by the same law for actions committed by family members, while Fate (*ganti*), magic (*pangiwa*) and ritual offer recognized means of evading the system. Balinese have a comprehensive theory of human agency yet, in many situations where Europeans would appeal to the psycho-dynamics of the self, they seem to prefer to leave the self largely alone and resort by way of explanation to extra-human agents to account for abnormal and violent behaviour.

To understand what is at issue, I wish briefly to reflect on representations of power and violence in Bali. Then I shall conclude by looking at ideas of action, which may illuminate some of the puzzles.

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[5] This is the intellectual stance which would dismiss a scholar like Boon for introducing unnecessary complications into what is really a straightforward, bluff and manly business. There is no real need, on this argument, to question many accounts of events. The witnesses were reliable Europeans (a synonym for drunks!). There is still less need to question reasons or motives for action. People act out of self-interest and there's an end on it. The rest of the world behaves like the Dutch, or British shop-keeper.

Violence in Bali:

Traditionally the Balinese were Hindu-Buddhist; and peasant farmers of irrigated rice from which they produced a surplus sufficient to support an aristocratic elite in relative affluence and style, and to underwrite slaving expeditions and internal and colonial wars (for instance, over the Sasak of Lombok). There were nine independent kingdoms under rulers who claimed (K)Satriya status and maintained complex ties with Brahmana priests, who had a notional monopoly in matters of ritual and textual interpretation. The internal organization of kingdoms meant that the control of each ruler was dependent upon cadet lines which were farmed out to govern loose territorial areas and combat the influence of rival potential dynastic families. These princes were often effectively independent lords and, in the frequent wars, alliances and intrigues reached a complexity surpassing Renaissance Italy.

Accounts of Balinese warfare are probably pretty inaccurate. Certain general features may be noted, however. Fighting was on foot. Although there were a few horses, cavalry skills appear to have been limited. The aristocracy had no monopoly over any ‘means of destruction’, armies consisting of peasants who wielded the same kinds of swords, clubs and lances as their rulers. There were elite soldiers, presumably trained in *silat*, indigenous techniques of defense and attack, who might be used in confrontations between rival teams of champions. One suspects that the princes, who trained in dancing and other forms of self-control, possessed greater skill if they were to survive than did villagers. Victory in war was not infrequently attributed in indigenous royal chronicles (*babad*) to the non-physical powers (*sakti*) of princes, and their weapons. Standard scenes depict the opposing rulers motionless behind their armies, locked in a confrontation of the rival *sakti* of themselves and their weapons. When one side retreated, the *sakti* of its leader was held to be at fault. Other accounts suggest that some princes leapt into the fray with their weapons and terrified the enemy by more direct means.

If accounts of recent European battles are subject to massive doctoring, we must be careful in regarding these accounts as other than what they are representations by the aristocracy of what wars were about. The recollections of old men in my village (who were remarkably accurate about other matters) and some written local accounts suggest that wars were far bloodier than the reports in either Western or Balinese literature. Butchery of defeated civilians, the abduction of women (were the population not taken for sale as slaves) and plunder of valuables seem to have occurred. Such a scale of violence is portrayed in Balinese paintings and other literary accounts, which dwell on severed limbs, gushing arteries and screaming victims.

Violence was not the prerogative of princes. Balinese village law deals extensively with punishments for various forms of violence to others. Sanctions against fellow villagers for failure to comply with communal decisions including sending to coventry, bricking up offenders’ houses and sentencing them to death. During my fieldwork a thief in a nearby village was taken from armed police and torn limb from limb. In another a man who insulted the village during a meeting was

promptly taken and killed by pinning him to his own grave with an agricultural hoe through his neck. Rival villages seem often to have engaged in fights of their own; and bloodshed between irrigation associations over water was still not uncommon in the 1960s. It is sometimes hard to tell when fights started by royal decision or when peasant feuds were legitimated by princely intervention or fiat.

Less obvious forms of force abound too. Marriage by capture (*malegandang*, legitimated locally by reference to the abduction of Sita by Rawana), where a girl is carried off screaming by a band of armed men, was a recognized means of forging a union in the part of Bali where I worked although it was both illegal and strongly disapproved by the young women concerned and their parents. (In some ways, it was precisely the illegality and danger which made it a suitable demonstration of one's power.) Cock-fighting and animal sacrifice, which villagers recognize as bloody, are frequent.

If one follows Foucault (1977), Balinese villagers have developed elaborate powers of control by surveillance and discipline, through which people and their doings are subject to regulation. Almost all activities are done either in groups or under the critical gaze of others. The famed poise of the Balinese is arguably as much a response to surveillance as it is any 'natural' grace. (At night it becomes another story, which is when most theft, violence and philandering goes on.) If we regard such control as subtle coercion, the powers exercised in village society are considerable. Princes were also engaged in less direct surveillance. Palaces are dispersed among the population, as were political agents, to keep an eye on what was happening. There are fruitless arguments about how far princes actually ruled village society or how much it was a closed world in itself. The point here is that powers of various kinds proliferated and violence was widespread.

Injury to other human beings was hardly the monopoly of the aristocracy. Natural events took substantial toll. For a start Bali is a precipitous volcanic island. Lava and earthquakes have always taken many human lives, as have flood and famine. A mud flow in 1815 seems to have claimed more lives (over 10,000 is reported) than the bloodiest dynastic massacre of rivals. Balinese do not, however, recognize a domain of nature separate from culture and such activities are ascribed to Divine, or other non-material kinds of, agent. Violence then was all around.

It is in this context that I wish to look at representation of power and violence. Such 'natural' disasters were deemed to be the working of retribution (*karma pala*), or brought on by the gods for the actions of the princes. The dynastic chronicle of the northern kingdom of Bulèlèng, the Babad Bulèlèng, interprets the mud flow referred to as a divine response to the throne having been usurped by a princely family from the neighbouring state. It is not so much that particular princes took the blame for misfortune on themselves as that the aristocracy incorporated the entire range of possible violences and represented them as the sole results of their critical importance in the world.[6] Something similar seems to have happened in the portrayal of wars. We

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[6] Likewise they claimed mastery over anomalies, such as dwarfs, monsters and other unusual phenomena, which confirmed and added to evidence of their *sakti*.

know that most violence was carried out by commoners (for instance the massacre of the old royal dynasty of Bulèlèng at the orders of the usurping king), and that the aristocracy did not have the military technology to maintain the populace subject, nor it seems the organization. Without wishing to push what is after all only a functionalist argument, I suggest that it is interesting to look at the wars started by princes, and their subsequent representation in the light of the mastery of violence. The argument is supported by the way Balinese interpret untoward events as the result of *sakti*. Where people die unexpectedly, odd events happen and so forth, this is usually seen as the workings of human or divine *sakti* (witches appropriately are known as *manusa sakti*, *sakti* people). Princes are known for claiming powers of this kind and some people in fact study Tantric texts to further their abilities. I was originally puzzled as to why my local prince should go to such lengths to claim responsibility for what looked like witchcraft, until something of the royal concern over the monopoly of violence became clear to me.

We are some way to understanding my opening paradox and the first of the three subsequent puzzles. Royal representations embrace Bali both as a land of flowering civilization with princes at the helm; and as a violent place where they are masters and without whose grace life is vile. If violence is a manifestation of power, then those who obtain power require to demonstrate it through violence. Bloody slaughter seems not just to have been a way of getting rid of enemies, but of proving one's mastery of force. So war, would be part of the aristocratic image of the world; and extolling its magnificent, terrible, even evil, but never vulgar, nature would make good sense. As Wilde remarked: 'As long as war is regarded as wicked it will always have its fascinations. When it is looked upon as vulgar, it will cease to be popular.'

Violence and silence:

Power then is represented, in part at least, as being manifest by mastering violence. For how, otherwise, is one to know who has power? This is not to suggest that other means of control and domination did not exist. We need to be careful not to get caught in a residual positivism and must look briefly at what was not said or done. Foucault has outlined some of the ways in which discursive traditions structure what can be said and what made unspeakable (Foucault 1981). These include social procedures of exclusion, internal constraints on expression and the conditions of actual communication. I consider each in turn.

In certain contexts, he suggests, some topics are prohibited; for the Balinese these may include questioning divinity or caste. Some people are ruled to be outside, and unable to contribute to, normal social discourse like madmen, children, women and, in other contexts, all low castes. Finally what constitutes truth and so socially approved objects of knowledge complete the circumscription.

Discourses also 'exercise their own control; procedures which function rather as principles of classification, of ordering, of distribution' (Foucault 1981: 56). First, there are privileged commentaries. '...there is scarcely a society without its major

narratives, which are recounted, repeated, and varied; formulae, texts, and ritualized sets of discourses which are recited in well-defined circumstances; things said once and preserved because it is suspected that behind them there is a secret or a treasure' (1981: 56). In Bali there is a vast literature, ritual, literary and casual, and sets of discourses which frame what ought to be, may be, and should not be said and done.

Finally there is the question of who may speak about what. For, '...not all the regions of discourse are equally open and penetrable; some of them are largely forbidden.., while others seem to be almost open to all winds and put at the disposal of every speaking subject, without prior restrictions' (1981: 62). Roles, like priest or traditional healer, in Bali limit those who may properly hold forth on, questions of ritual or medicine; and less formally, oratorical skill and training limits who is likely to dominate occasions for public speaking. Clearly, the more notions of 'education' are developed, the greater the circumscription, which leaves priests and princes relatively freer than peasants who are ignorant by definition. As Mark Twain remarked: 'Soap and education are not as sudden as a massacre, but they are more deadly in the long run.' If we wish to retain a word like 'violence', should such prohibitions and exclusions perhaps not be regarded as the epitome of a subtle violence?

Violence and action:

The ascription of responsibility for violence to Balinese princes is not, however, as simple as might appear. The relation of agent and action may be quite different from our everyday view of people determining their deeds through the intentions produced by a reasoning mind. The difficulty of this commonsense view may be put in two different ways. First, if Quine's argument (1960) of the underdetermination of facts by theory has any bearing, it would hold just as well for the underdetermination of actions by reasons. As there are always alternative intentions which would explain the same actions equally well, how are we to ascribe determinate causes or reasons? Second, the analytical philosophers of action have shown how difficult, or even meaningless, it is to try to pin down why people do what they do (see White 1968). Arguably it is impossible to establish intentions, let alone show them to be the necessary and sufficient conditions of action, for normal activities (Anscombe 1957). So I would like to consider briefly how the Balinese handle the notion of violence in the light of their ideas about action.

Classical Indian ideas have in some instances filtered down to the village in Bali. Two such schemes are referred to in daily life, not just by members of the aristocracy, but by ordinary villagers. The human psyche has three constituents, the *triguna*: *sattwa*, desire for knowledge or purity, *raja(h)*, emotion or passion, and *tamas*, ignorance, violence and apathy. These are linked to three goals of human life, the *triwarga*: *darma*, the disposition to do good, *art(h)a*, the pursuit of wealth and pleasure, and *kama*, the enjoyment of sensual pleasure. *Tamas* may be aroused in the search for either *arta* or *kama*.[7]

[7] For a more extended discussion, see Hobart 'Thinker, thespian, soldier, slave?'

The system may be used to explain the range of potential human activities and, interestingly posits a conflict model in that three divergent kinds of drive are recognized as existing in all human beings. One should add that Balinese make extensive use of the idea of fighting, or conflict (*miegan* and *ngalawan* respectively), metaphorically to describe other kinds of process. So contradictory ideas are said to war with one another; male and female in marriage are in relations of miegan, as are analogic extensions of the genders such as slit gongs, paired instruments in orchestras. If we seem to retain some presupposition of consistency or harmony (traditionally traced to Pythagoras), Balinese build their world about opposition and conflict.

Although the language is available, in many circumstances Balinese seem to desist from using these models of mind to explain particular actions. This is not because they are alien to villagers, who make use of them when inclined. They are also found in the same texts that attribute responsibility for violence in a curious manner. An example from the Babad Bulèlèng makes the point. When the young prince, Ki Gusti Ngurah Panji *Sakti*, is playing in a field, a voice suddenly speaks to him:

> Hey Barak Panji! Don't be alarmed by your great-grandfather (here his sword, Ki Semang, is speaking itself - note the generational kinship idiom, which implies close sympathy and near equality)...for he has in his point a *pasupati-astra* (a mythically powerful force), which is the means of your becoming a ruler of the world and enjoying the affection of the people of the world. Look now to your great-grandfather's excellence. Remain here now. You have an enemy, called Ki Pungakan Gendis, who rules over the *sima* of Gendis. It is right that you should kill him, Don't be anxious in your mind. Simply point your great-grandfather at him. I will see to his death. (Worsley 1972: 141, my parentheses).

As Worsley makes clear, the responsibility for the murder of what has been up till then a perfectly innocent person, but one who happens to stand in the young hero's way of becoming ruler, falls upon the sword not upon the murderer, to whom no blame attaches in this account.

Another text puts a similarly interesting light on the attribution of responsibility for violent deeds. The Siwaratrikalpa (originally composed in Java, but known now only in Bali where it is elaborated in ritual and painting) is a famous poem which explains how a good-for-nothing hunter, who happens to spend the entire night awake up a tree near a shrine to Siwa, on death is rescued from hell on the orders of Siwa. For anyone who has kept a vigil on that night in the right manner is freed from all his past sins, no matter how repugnant and, as killer of animals and ne'er-do-well, the hunter is a pretty low fellow. Much of the text is taken up with exceptionally detailed accounts of butchery as the demons of hell fight with the emissaries of Siwa. The translators' commentary is particularly interesting when they remark on the violence: 'Another compulsory feature of almost all *kakawin* (poems) is the elaborate, and to our taste exaggerated, descriptions of wars and battles between armies of heroes and demons...The fantastic weapons and gruesome methods of warfare which the poet's imagination conjures up are almost equal to what our modern society has actually achieved.'(Teeuw et al. 1969: 31-32) Violence and absolution from responsibility, or even intention, seem to go hand in hand.

Such trends are not only found in literature. If a villager gets wild, *amok* ('amuck', the term comes from Malay and is identical in Balinese) and assaults or kills people, it is questionable if the blame is theirs. Villagers and priests were universally agreed this condition was attributable to '*karangsukang kala*' and the person's responsibility for subsequent actions was effectively suspended. Now *karangsukang* is the passive form of a root which is used to mean 'enter', 'under the influence of', but the glosses are poor because it is one of a series of terms by which the Balinese express the relationship between the invisible world of gods and thoughts and the visible one of humans and the world. *Kala* is often rendered as 'demon', or more rarely 'Time', although some vague idea of abstract, destructive forces might be more apt. Now there were at least two schools of thought on what *karangsukang kala* refers to in the area where I worked. The village priests (*pamangku)* were inclined to the view that such a person is entered by an invisible superhuman agency. Villagers on the whole took the view that *kala* was simply energy in the body which got out of hand. They, if anyone, were more sceptical about claims that responsibility for actions were waived.

These pointers are linked, I suspect, with the disinclination of the Balinese in daily and juridical matters to inquire into intentionality. Although classical texts draw a distinction between intended and unintended actions, to my villagers it was the act - say running over a child on a motorbike - not the state of mind of the perpetrator which was at issue. This was often given as a reason for the care Balinese take in their movements and keen sense of vision. If we recall Foucault's point that, in the development of contemporary notions of sexuality, control has moved from mere externals to determining what one may think, the corollary is that Balinese leave internal action and motivation as the private sphere of individuals and beyond the proper business of others to inquire into. This is not just inference: some Balinese say so explicitly. They may indicate the conditions under which they acted (for instance that they felt angry, sad, tired at the time), but they are usually careful not to suggest that the one was the reason for, or cause of, the other. This caution exemplifies a subtlety in recognizing the complexities of the relationship between intention and action which Western philosophers might do well to emulate.

So Balinese may be disinclined to explain the causes, or reasons, behind specific actions - as against describing the conditions under which they occurred (which is not the same thing at all). More generally they tend to regard normal activities as outside the range of explanation. It is rather like asking us what our intention is in breathing. One is responsible for one's normal acts because one did them, but not because one intended them. Extraordinary acts definitely require accounting for but, as we saw, these involve the further distancing of intentionality from the perpetrator.

Time and the theme do not allow me to consider the question of the relation of actions and ideals in Bali in any detail. I must confess I have always found the notion of ideals a little perplexing. So, perhaps, do some Balinese. I suspect their idea of the relation differs in the light of their empiricism. Several observers have been struck by what they see as the apparent hypocrisy of the Balinese, because they refer to 'ideals' which they manifestly are going to do, or have already done, nothing about. To appeal

to some notion like ‘hypocrisy’, ‘normal human inertia’ or whatever, seems to me weak, as it begs a theory of mind and action. My guess is that what this is about is a assertion that one holds certain values dear (rather as Azande statements of belief are commitments to their culture, rather than explicit choices), while at the same time recognizing one’s own frailty, and even lack of capacity to realize one’s aspirations. It is a realist view, not an idealist. There is no search for that Platonic *telos* which has brought us so much confusion.

We come at last to the crunch. Balinese and popular Western views of the relation of agent and action differ in vital ways. The presupposition of the agent being master of his or her actions, by virtue of a knowing, reasoning mind is an epistemological assertion which itself constitutes an important political fact. It makes the agent answerable, and open to inspection and control, in a way Balinese do not. The theory of intentionality is an excuse for (what Ron Inden has rather nicely described as ‘the thought police’, whether) psychiatrists, teachers, family members, or the law to intervene. It is questionable though whether one can really ascribe responsibility to the agent any more than, say, most witches are aware of flying out at night to kill others. Intentionality is, I submit, the equivalent of others’ witch beliefs and involves as much violence to those under scrutiny. Theories of mind, or human nature, are not neutral; they are the power aspects of knowledge.

Finally let me try to clear up the remaining two puzzles. The last has, I think, been reasonably discussed. What can be said about the punishments of hell (which are depicted on the walls of the Krta Gosa, in Klungkung, the supreme Balinese Brahmanical criminal court; and taken in part from the story of Bima Swarga, where the Pandawa hero Bima descends to hell to find and rescue his father, Hinzler 1981: 198-224)? Scenes show people in various torments: having a burning brand shoved up the anus for farting, being put upside down in a mortar and having one’s backside pummeled by large vicious demons, having to suckle a hairy caterpillar for being barren, but nothing for murder (except of animals), treason and other forms of violence.[8] First, I think, these are part of the Brahmanical representation of their power to control, explicate and, as they were the judges, emulate in a small way the majesty of divine violence. It may be part of the attempts of high castes, not to inquire into the mind, but to extend control over the body. It may also be part of the concern with explicating the abnormal. Balinese whom I asked took the view that lying, treachery to friends, political intrigue and so on were so common that there would be no room in hell! Be that as it may, the supreme criminal court stands as a beautiful example of the kinds of violence over which the Balinese aristocracy claimed mastery, but not always responsibility.

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[8] An obvious criticism can be made that the reasons for the omission of some offences is contingent on what happened to get remembered in the text, for which there was room on the wall of the Krta Gosa and so on. Even if this be so, we still need to account for the popularity of these representations and the ability of the Balinese to recite the punishable offences.

Conclusion:

I have suggested that asking 'what is violence?' is dangerously essentialist and misleading. It takes violence out of its context of explanation, where it is commonly justified by reference to unrecognized cultural presuppositions and served up in an enticing metaphorical sauce. It is not what violence really is, but how violence is represented, which opens up interesting questions. The Balinese aristocracy tries to portray themselves as masters of violence, as an aspect of their claims to transcendental power. If we interpret Balinese collective representations in terms of Western metaphysical categories of action, however, the result is paradox and confusion. Western models of action, which tend to posit the supremacy of a knowing mind – which is threatened by violence as the epitome of unreason – are based on an image of internal domination (of reason over passion; ego or superego over id; mind over body). Externally this permits the exercise of power over persons by encouraging inquiry into postulated inner states, and judgement for failure of proper control. By contrast Balinese, who seem to have a different view of human agency, leave the inner person in silence, as a space, so to speak, where power and violence cannot reach. Any study of violence will be grossly lacking if it fails to inquire not just into the positive representations of violence, but into the ways in which knowledge, discussion and action are prevented, or wreathed in the silence of unthinkability. To paraphrase von Clausewitz, it may be that

'*Das Schweigen ist nichts anderes als die Fortsetzung der Gewalt mit anderen Mitteln.*'[9]

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[9] 'Silence is nothing other than the continuation of violence by other means.'

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