Article

The Socio-Ethical Outlook on the Concept of Human Aggression and a Concept of Good Society—Towards New Socio-Religious Approaches for Human Morality—Theoretical Debate

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Abstract: The authors analyze the concept of human aggression and the concept of a good society as they are both perceived in the sociological and interdisciplinary domains. They debate the issue of human aggression observed in contemporary societies, which hampers general social development worldwide, the expedition of socio-religious morality, and the positive action of good behavior. Both concepts have a long record of sociological research, although the exploration of the concept of a good society was most popular in the sociological research of the 1970s. At present, a substantial increase in the levels of human aggression among and particularly towards religious communities in societies during peacetime is seen as the most complex impediment to the preservation of good societies, regardless of their structural endeavors. The authors analyze the available data, including empirical data, concerning their researched theme to identify a theoretical framework of linkages that would allow them to perform further research and take stock of the scientific efforts made so far to perceive morality as a platform connecting good society models with the potential for the reduction in aggression.

Keywords: human aggression; religious morality; good society; religion; community; violence

1. Introduction

For the human race, a phenomenon of struggle is an inherent element for moving societies from what they were to what they will be. This struggle has involved positive and negative forces that contest each other. On many occasions, these two forces have been so intertwined that the result of the struggle was never either purely positive or negative (Samuel and Sudgen 1981). If human beings by nature were uniquely driven by positive forces, i.e., positive emotions, positive actions, empathy towards others, and compassion, then these would be mirrored in the actions of others (Carré et al. 2013). The world as we know it today would not exist, and neither would poverty, nor social inequality. Nonetheless, the nature of human beings generates both positive and negative behaviors and actions. Out of a plethora of negative forces, and proactive and reactive aggression, violence might become humankind’s fiercest enemy, hampering positive social development, as well as the development of societies. Each human has a complex negative-positive make up (Hawley 2014), and if each human’s free will and spirituality became gradually more positive than negative, this could be an impetus to create better quality societies.

Aggressive and violent conduct was fairly common among human hunter and gatherer communities 25,000 years ago; it was prevalent in Egyptian, Greek, and Roman societies. It was present in other great ancient societies of India, China, and Japan; among most societies in the last two centuries; and in almost every society today. Once in a while, after such events as Columbine, the Holocaust, the Hutu-Tutsi war, war in the Balkans, the
World Trade Center terrorist attacks the long-lasting Afghanistan conflict, or the Syrian war, the members of societies reflect upon what the world has come to (Anderson and Huesmann 2003). However, soon after they are rehabituated to their daily routine, they tend to forget the mental and physical cruelty that was inflicted upon civilians caught in the conflicts. Essentially, the more they watch and see updates on atrocities in the media, the more they become desensitized to aggression (Fanti et al. 2009).

Therefore, the role of religions throughout the world, which has proactively promoted moral principles and actions, is crucial for human beings to become less selfish and to share and learn these principles while living in or identifying with religious communities. Numerous significant researchers have indicated that religious belief has had a positive effect, however casual the association with prosocial behavior. Thus, religiosity is regarded as a host of prosocial, positive outcomes, such as greater morality, increased self-regulation, helpfulness, and altruistic behavior. Nevertheless, social situations in everyday contexts occur in which individuals in need receive care and support from other individuals or social groups, irrespective of their religiosity or religious morality (Galen 2012).

Moreover, religiosity is seen as a major criterion for bonding good communities—those who are empowered by strong but reasonable affinities, and shared identities, values and norms—communities who may form a model of a good society, or communities who aspire to such a model (Etzioni 2002). It is seen as an equally important factor for the expedition of social, economic, and cultural development; however, in many cases, it is criticized for its invasive character towards norms that seem contradictory to religious norms and beliefs, which support religiosity (Samuel and Sudgen 1981).

It is evident that morality, religious morality in particular, constitutes the most researched theme related to identifying instruments to lessen the levels of human aggression in societies, or to channel them into a positive force. The formation of a good society model might be analyzed as such a force, in which the bonding of societies is based on the promotion of positive action, which in turn might lead to the suppression of human aggression levels. In that respect, linkages among the social impact of human aggression, the role of morality and religiosity in reducing human aggression, as well as good society models, are further explored in this article, including through the accessible existent literature on the topic.

2. Human Aggression and Its Social Adaptation—The Role of the Sociologist

In their research, sociologists often overlook human weaknesses, incapacities, and human biological limitations. The clear recognition of which forces are positive, and which are negative—what is “good” or “bad”—is crucial to then transpose it scientifically onto the paper and identify factors which are the best tools to minimize, in a social context, human aggression. There is a clear interaction between heredity and environment. No scientist claims that humans are born alike, as everyone is different, and some are more prone to violence and aggression than others (Ramirez 1987).

Aggression is a complex human phenomenon. Human aggression is a social behavior that might occur in relations between individuals or social groups. The subject of human aggression has been researched from many angles. However, it is difficult to conduct a meaningful analysis from the research results. It is acknowledged by researchers that aggression should be differentiated from violence, hostility and competitiveness. Aggression was most recently identified—to grasp a wide range of aggressive social reactions—as any behavior enacted with the intention to harm another person who, in turn, is motivated to avoid that harm. Subsequently, violence is considered a subtype of aggression that is intended to harm and requires medical attention (Warburton and Anderson 2015).

Violence is understood as a physical aggression at the extremely high end of the continuum of aggression, e.g., aggravated assault and/or murder (Anderson and Huesmann 2003, p. 298). Violence and aggression are behaviors, whilst hostility and competitiveness are categorized as types of mindsets (Warburton and Anderson 2015, p. 373)—long-lasting ones, which shape opinions and contribute to the formation of general trends in soci-
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eties. Different forms of aggression involve physically harming another, which entails beating, clubbing, hitting, kicking, stabbing, and shooting; verbally abusing another, e.g., name calling, screaming, swearing, and yelling; and relational harming, which includes damaging someone’s reputation and friendships. Aggression might also be classified as direct—with the presence of the victim, and indirect—e.g., destroying a victim’s property in their absence. Aggression varies by function. It might be categorized as reactive—affective, impulsive, hostile, hot, and retaliatory once a pure intent to punish or hurt a person is provoked—or proactive—instrumental and planned once a deliberate plan is conceived for a desired outcome to harm another person. Aggression may be automatic if performed as a self-protection mechanism or with a script that is commonly enacted and subconscious (ibid., pp. 373–74).

The aggression function is understood through a three-dimensional approach: the degree of the perpetrator’s benefits versus the degree of their goal or intensity to perform harm; the level of hostile emotions involved in performing harm; and the degree of calculated action while performing harm (Anderson and Huesmann 2003, pp. 298–99). Humans in social contexts display certain peculiarities in terms of proactive and reactive aggression. Capital punishment and homicide are types of proactive aggression in humans. They are more prevalent than any other type of reactive aggression. The low propensity of reactive aggression in humans is associated with abilities of close cooperation and a capacity to exhibit high tolerance, parochial altruism and a cultural group selection for social norms. They are linked to socioecological factors, such as interdependence between high population density and reduction in reactive aggression to aggression and/or sedentariness. In spite of these positive anti-aggression capacities intrinsic to humans, so far, researchers have failed to explain how human societies would prevent an aggressively determined individual from winning conflicts with the use of force. The problem arises once a bully wins a conflict by force and their behavior is accepted by a group, irrespectively of its agreed, commonly shared norms. Killing was, therefore, enabled by the evolution of shared group intentionality (Wrangham 2017, p. 249), which indicates the potential of anti-systemic revolutionary/rebellious movements.

Cultural adaption to suppressing violent perpetrators who opposed social norms was already observed in human communities of the Pleistocene. The reduction in the demonstration of reactive aggression was a genetic consequence of evolution, whereas proactive aggression in the form of capital punishment was sanctioned as a cultural universal (ibid.) Aggression was widely used as an effective tool to reprimand individuals who break social norms. The use of physical violence does not typically occur in isolation from other forms of aggression (Jackman 2001).

Once social and behavioral sciences started to progress, in particular, over the last seventy years, more cooperative research should have been conducted to standardize and categorize the associational adaptive force of the aggressive pursuit of conflicting ideas and ways of life (Dahrendorf 1969), so as to address paradigms that would qualify social consensus on constructs of aggression, and better define which aggression could be considered a positive force (Mumford 2017). Human violence is the result of decisions taken, regardless of whether the aggression is induced by a war or an assault. War is a specific social situation—institution of war, in the course of which humans play strictly defined roles—politicians conduct propaganda, generals direct, soldiers fight and civilians attempt to survive at any cost. The research undertaken on this theme confirms that wars might be not inevitable and that humans are able to strive to prevent them from occurrence. Human history viewed as the theater of wars indicates that humans resort to aggression with the aim of their own survival and domination (Ramirez and Hinde 2003, pp. 105–7).

Human aggression is a human biological limitation which cannot be overlooked and cannot be simply overcome. Individual and community work is indispensable to lessen the social impact of human aggression through the identification of a common morality, which would both minimize levels of aggression and channel it into positive action. No child is born preprogrammed for aggression but learns to balance anti- and prosocial impulses.
in accordance with demands and resources offered by its communities and surrounding social environment (Elliot 2021, pp. 73–75).

3. Good Society—Reality and Aspirations, and Models for the Action of “Good”

Communities form societies. Communities such as quality social groups contribute to what might be called a good society (Etzioni 2002, pp. 83–89). Communities share norms, values, religion and identities. If a group is a social system comprising identifiable elements found in the composition of an analytical community, then it might be viewed as a type of social group, which might be suitably explored using methods applied in the analysis of social groups. In such scenario, at least four elements might be identified for communities: members, a test of admission to membership, specific functions, and the roles of members and norms, which regulate and formulate a code of conduct (Hiller 1941).

This community is characterized by two substantial elements: a web of affect-laden crisscrossing, reinforcing mutual relationships among members of a group, and a measure of commitment to shared meanings, norms and values characteristic of a culture. Nevertheless, such definition does not imply that communities’ upfront social entities are good in the normative sense. The definition allows for conflicts to occur in such a community; however, the conflicts have to be contained by the community members within sustainable limits so that the measure of commitment to sharing—common values, principles and norms—is maintained and is not seriously breached (Etzioni 2002).

Forming a community entails bonding. Bonding—the idea that community members ought to be related by a bond of affection—provides a positive factor to build a good society. Bonding cannot be excessive; otherwise, individual creativity and spontaneity are constrained, and the community becomes corrupted. Bonding, however, deprives the community from the ability to be inclusive towards non-members; therefore, it makes the community less tolerant to values, norms, and identities shared by other communities. A good society composed of good communities is able to reduce inequality to the extent that the Rawlsian rule (see Mongin and Pivato 2019) is not often in use. Finally, a good society has many communities, which might in turn be composed of smaller communities, and there is a space left for unaffiliated individuals (Etzioni 2002, pp. 83–91).

Theorization efforts concerning a good society display two major ways of approaching the theme. Whilst Rawls (see Rawls 1980) and Habermas (see Habermas 1984) proposed a neo-Kantian setting of a good society based on weak universalism to a certain extent, Boltanski and Thevenot (see Boltanski and Thevenot 1991), Taylor (see Taylor 1985), Walzer (see Walzer 1987) and Young (see Young 2000) preferred an approach focused on community-based standards, cultural specifics and situated self-relativism. It appears that both universalists and communitarians tend to recall and move towards their rival approaches. The key issue is that they both admit an indispensable sphere of justice so that any society could function and discern positive and negative trends, actions, and behaviors, in short, to distinguish “good” from “evil”. In fact, this intertwineement forms a “binary discourse of civil society” in which the language is a social referent of culture and shared observations, opinions, orientations, values, and institutions providing a code of conduct (Alexander 2000).

If one explores the history of social movements, inclusion and exclusion in contemporary societies, and individual and group demands, it would be preferrable to refer to an imaginary, utopian kind of society. In this vein, Kant imagined an a priori regulated but imaginary ideal—people equal in human status without references to religion, gender, political, ethnic or economic affiliations. In his theory, a free and autonomous individual forms communities with fundamental capacities and rights. Although this is a Kantian ideal, it had been observed in a wide range of societies and social structures—starting from aboriginal bands to ancient Chinese empires, where many moral and ethical values remain widely accepted nowadays. This might be traced to the ancient transcendent community of Israel; Christian “universal otherhood”; the Greek Polis; movements of the Renaissance; the French revolution—fraternité/égalité/liberté; and finally, to social practices in the form
of socialism in the modern Western world. In debates regarding a good society, there has always been a tension between “ideal” and “real”—between the moral sphere of civil society and ethical spheres—whose role is to control the moral sphere (Alexander 2000, pp. 296–97).

However, no society can be entirely homogenous for communities and individuals whose members cannot demonstrate ideal behavior or a high level of morality in everyday life (Gehrlein 1987). Morality, which is considered older than religion, is a significant legacy of human evolution, and the fact that humans can be rational does not stand in opposition to the human ability to be moral (Vierich and Townsend 2015). This assumption leads us to assume that no society can function without morality and that morality provides a framework for a good society to be operational.

4. Religion’s Role in Reducing Human Aggression

The relation between morality and religion has been widely researched; however, only in recent years has it provided a tangible insight into the relationship of both. It has been evidenced that religion might promote some aspects of morality, just as others might be used to obstruct or suppress the same or different aspects, all depending on the definitions of “religion” and “good” (McKay and Whitehouse 2014). Morality arises from human respect and awareness of the uniqueness of human existence per se and the world. Both respect and awareness are invaluable, as well as theoretically unprovable values pertaining to truth. Thus, the moral imperative is understood as the call “to care for” the lives of others in this shared place (the world), and to inflict “no harm”. The first call, i.e., primum mover, of human will is the fact of being in the world (Capurro 2009).

Religion is viewed as one of the most wide-reaching and respectable social institutions, which in fact contributes to shaping and articulating every sphere of culture and society. The Pew Research Centre indicated that approximately 84% of the worldwide population is affiliated with a religion (see Pew Research Center 2017, p. 8). Different religious traditions around the world present diverse worldviews, which consequently makes the identification of an adequate definition of religion difficult (Ives and Kidwell 2019). For this reason, and in the context of our research topic, we regard the following two definitions of religion as overarching and indispensable for social bonding aspects, which could streamline positive action:

(i) Religion as “beliefs, worldviews, practices and institutions that cross borders, time and scale from the level of individuals all the level to transnational and transhistorical movements” (Haluza de Lay 2014);

(ii) Religion as an integral part of society (Durkheim 1947; Weber 1958; Marx 1973) in which religion comes into existence through its unified system of beliefs and values, which uphold personal sacredness, spirituality or communal spirituality (McGivern 2014).

Such an approach, which takes into account both definitions of religion, forms a link between the outlined concepts of good society models, human and religious morality, and constitutes an attempt to reduce human aggression in its socio-biological domain. Both definitions might be pragmatically applied in the event of a comparative analysis of the religious trends, social roles, views and practices they represent, which is, for example, the case of western sets of beliefs and eastern religious systems together with their differing institutional hierarchies and structures (Ives and Kidwell 2019, p. 1355). Religion as an institution is processed by societies and its members through a socially constructed reality. However, a large portion of its internalization plays a pivotal role in the profound, long-term and solid belief and practice of its members. Each religion needs a religious community and, to live in such a religious world, requires affiliation with the religious community (Berger and Luckmann 1966, pp. 78–83, 178–79).

Irrespective of some recent debates that morality displayed itself in humans long before religion started to be widely practiced (Hauser and Singer 2005) and that humans “are endowed with natural moral instincts” towards friends, family, community members”, the
idea that religion is an indispensable precondition for morality is shared by many believers around the world (Norenzayan 2014). An example that might serve as a description is the global survey by the Pew Research Center, which underlines that half of Americans are of the opinion that morality is impossible without belief in God. Interestingly, there are studies that point to associations among atheism, atheists and immorality, highlighting that believers claim that atheists might be more immoral than believers (McKay and Whitehouse 2014, pp. 447–49).

In the studies performed across 13 countries, which included samples conducted among a total of 3461 participants, the researchers found that a high amount of participants—mostly religious believers—intuitively stated that an atheist is immoral; and that an atheist is more likely to commit an immoral act than any religious believer. Some interpretations by study participants were inconsistent (Gervais et al. 2018) and pinpointed confusion surrounding not only religious beliefs in diverse populations but chaotic and complex relations among morality, religion and ethics. Contrastingly, some substantial debates have been published, which show that atheism cannot be connected to immoral conduct, as atheists are still humans, the majority of which are not prone to immoral acts (Schellenberg 2019).

Following the assumption that morality is a general equivalent of goodness and that its goodness constitutes “good”, it is taken for granted that to be moral is to be “good”. For the sake of morality, many innocent individuals surrendered, and were murdered, slaughtered or became a victim of the aggression and evil of human insanity and brutality (Kaye 1941). The premise that moral good and evil exist has a strong link to the existence of God and the rationale for religion. Throughout the history of human morality and immorality, good is often mixed with evil, i.e., in the case of killing and murdering civilians in wars or permitting slavery. Morality does not come from human consciousness but from human evolution; however, human nature for any reason needs morality (Kreeft 2019). “Being good” is understood as performing good actions that positively affect other individuals, enriching and endowing them with welfare, whereas “being evil” is a contradictory action. Evil is reflected by bad actions, which negatively impact other individuals (Petit 2015). In fact, a moral aura surrounds whatever we say and do (Martin 2012, p. 170).

Regardless of being religious or not, humans resort to aggression. It is religions’ morality which has claimed the primordial right to exert the dominant role among its believers to encourage them to abide by moral rules and avoid aggressive behavior. On many occasions, religion, being ideally prosocial through the use of communities, has categorically imposed obligations to avoid violence and aggression within communities and outside communities. Nevertheless, the best long-term results in reducing negative behaviors, including aggression, stem from a link between a determined self-control and self-regulation of believers, as well as the encouragement of religious institutions not to resort to aggression, rather than from draconian obligations imposed on believers by religious institutions. It was observed in the past that the use of strict measures by religious institutions could contribute to the motivation of violence and aggression (McCullough and Willoughby 2009).

It is evident that religious morality, if it is corrupted, distorted and misled by the realm of religious fundamentalisms, may easily lead to the outbreak of human aggression, in particular, once due to political reasons (Berger 2011; Harris 2004; Yilmaz 2006; Bennoune 2013; Okpa et al. 2018). Such aggression might be equally provoked by the fundamental interpretation of religious practices and views by some religious communities, which in turn might trigger aggressive behavior toward outside communities on the grounds of not accepting the modernity of the outside world and its lack of respect towards traditional beliefs (Bruce 2000).

Textual analyses used to depict relations between aggression and religion can scarcely grasp nuances of the correlation of both, and simply affirm that religion is the reality of believers and their beliefs (Beit-Halahmi 2015). It is easier to find empirical studies exploring negativity, which might be produced by religious fundamentalism, including aggression. However, it is much harder to find empirical, experimental studies that reflect
upon the extent to which religious morality in its sense of “caring”, expediting “good”, “goodness” and intrareligious tolerance may reduce aggressive behavior among these communities’ members and how, in general, religious morality might generate positive trends of tolerance and cooperation within societies.

We can note some studies that attempt to assess a relation between religion and aggression, or rather violence. Most of them are associated with socio-psychological perspectives, which provide significant socio-religious information. Shaw et al. scrutinized the relation between moral certainty and violence. It turned out that those who often prayed supported more violent warfare to defend and exert their certainty about the moral principles of their religion (Shaw et al. 2011). In the study conducted by Mark Leach et al., 63 participants were assigned to three experimental groups. A laboratory task of aggression was completed, which revealed that neither meditation nor memorization of biblical passages helped to reduce aggression. The experiment showed that intrinsic-oriented religiosity participants reported lower levels of aggression than extrinsic-orientated religiosity participants and that spiritual transcendence showed no differences in the type of aggression (Leach et al. 2008).

Wright conducted a cross-national multilevel analysis to identify the effects of religion on levels of violence and aggression. The researcher used a robust 6th wave World Values Survey and collected data from 59 countries for the period 2010–2014 from individuals and communities of diverse religions. Each national sample was drawn from individuals of 18 years old and above before stratified random sampling to ensure representative samples. Participants were asked whether violence against other people could be justified. Contrary to notions that religion incites violence, the frequency of prayer, importance of religion and importance of God were negatively linked to the justification of violence. Essentially, the justification of violence had a positive relationship with the frequency of attendance (Wright 2016).

Greer et al. examined the relationship between religious orientation and retaliation perceived as vengeance. Participants competed in pairs in a time game and executed self-report measures of intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation, vengeance and quest orientation. Participants chose shock levels to top up their maximum tolerance. The highest shock was not achieved, as it was an instrument of provocation rather than an element to be realistically delivered. Vengeance was operationalized as the average for the last two participants; the intrinsic orientation was linked with less reported vengeance and not related to retaliation, whereas extrinsic orientation was associated with more reported vengeance and was not related to vengeance. The quest orientation, however, demonstrated a relation to less reported vengeance and retaliation (Greer et al. 2005).

The evidence results of socio-psychological studies concerning intrinsic orientation displayed that intrinsic orientation is associated with less self-reported aggression, while on the contrary, extrinsic orientation relates to more self-reported aggression, and quest orientation is associated with less self-reported aggression (Wright and Khoo 2019). Psychological approaches indicate that in order to better evaluate the impact of religiosity on the reduction in the incitement to violence, clear common features should be identified, which are characteristic of all nations across a number of religiosity measures (Wright 2016, pp. 178–89).

Ginges et al. analyzed the Israeli–Palestinian conflict from the perspective of a long-term multigenerational conflict with a religious background. The results of the study showed that Palestinian Muslims valued more Palestinian over Jewish Israeli lives. Nevertheless, Palestinian participants admitted that God wished they treated the lives of Jewish and Palestinian communities equally. The majority of participants prayed regularly and admitted that they were devoted believers. Two experiments were conducted. In the first experiment, participants were told that a Palestinian had to be pushed from a footbridge to stop a truck to save the lives of five children. In the second experiment, participants heard that a Palestinian had to jump from a footbridge to save the children (Ginges et al. 2016).
Huesmann et al. offered a unique perspective in the exploration of the effects of religious participation on aggression over one’s lifetime and different generations. Their data included participants from three generations over 40 years. The data demonstrated that prayer, religious participation and spirituality are very much intercorrelated and might be represented as a single construct. Clear evidence was found that religious practices and participation have a major effect on the reduction in concurrent aggression occurring at any age. Effects were related neither to gender nor religiosity. The reduction in aggression was due to parents’ religiosity, which developed children’s religiosity; social support provided by religious institutions in the case of problems and hardships; and religious exposure, which built a strong self-regulatory mechanism to avoid aggression (Huesmann et al. 2011, p. 316).

Research performed on the impact of religion and morality on the reduction in aggression has led to some important advances. These all point at the immense importance of religion in establishing moral self-regulations for individuals and a growing need for further efforts to be conducted by religious communities’ members to promote good practices.

5. Discussion: Religion and Aggression—Two Contradictory Themes?

No modern religion promotes violence in their central moral principles as they would be simply called immoral. Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism have virtually no place for violence and aggression in their practices and theological thinking. Vastly developed legal frameworks limit the roles of religions morality within societies (Hall 2003), unless states openly declare that they are religious states. Religion per se should not incite communities to violence or include theological elements that would encourage aggression. Notwithstanding, it was found that some traditional elements of religions formulated their theological doctrines from the justification of aggressive behaviors in the name of religion, e.g., the Crusades, which have been a point of contention for centuries and have led to serious multigenerational misunderstandings, hostilities and outbreaks of aggression. Hinduism and Zoroastrianism turned combat myths into theological elements; ancient Judaism deceived a confederacy to condition a war portraying God himself far from being merciful; early Christianity had martyrs as victims of aggression; and the medieval Roman Church has somewhere lost its moral principles in the course of the Crusades and the Inquisition (Hall 2003, pp. 359–61).

The ritual killing of animals or taking human life as sacrifice for God is also stigmatized by aggressive behavior, which is justified in the name of religion (Battaille 1989). The persisting propensity for politicization in human history observed in the largest religions, such as Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, have not helped them to protect their moral principles from corruption (see Causey et al. 2010; Ivanescu 2010; Syarif 2017; Glass 2019; Campbell 2020). Militarist trends in the expedition of politically motivated religious goals by some religious communities, e.g., the Islamic State (ISIS) communities and Al-Qaeda communities, have created a picture of dissimulated, distorted morality—in fact, immorality. This picture of today’s reality of religion makes the role of religious communities’ worldwide more significant than ever in preserving religious morality, promoting actions of good to nurture the return to very basic standards of morality—“caring, no harming”.

Although Hinduism and Buddhism offers little place for aggression in theological teachings and practices, in Buddhism specifically, cases of the use of aggression have occurred in the history of both religions. In Buddhism of Southern Asia, some monk communities resorted to the use of aggression to defend their faith and promote positive values and the morality of Buddhism—highly contradictory picture provoking a clash of morality and immorality—e.g., Saffron Robed soldiers in Thailand, Chogye Order of Korea, Shaku-Soen Battlefield Chaplaincy in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) (Tikhonov and Brekke 2013). In Hinduism, the agitation of Hindu communities to the Partition war against Muslim communities and vice versa initiated by the Partition Pact of 1947 is an evident example of aggression (Saberwal 2005). Compared to other religions, Hinduism
most firmly recognizes that violence exists; it is the foundation of human survival and no one is able to live without any form of aggression. Non-violence is thus considered the highest virtue, moral ahinsa, to which all individuals and communities should aspire and live in its accordance. Buddhism equally recognizes the existence of human violence but encapsulates that it should be totally rejected (Nelson 1959).

If we regard morality in its simplest definition—“caring, no harming”, the action of mutual tolerance should be automatic for all religious communities. Tolerance is a constituent—a check factor for religious morality, whether it is corrupted or not. If all major religions are indeed peaceful in their central tenets, they are, therefore, able to form a good society. Then, the reasons for recurrent aggression observed in some religious communities lie in the biology of human nature, lack of or poor self-regulation mechanisms and ultimately in actual low levels of religious morality.

6. Conclusions

The study of relations among religion, religious morality and aggression has been unusually uneven, often due to morally differently inscribed metanarratives. Valuable socio-religious informative studies have been conducted; however, the understanding of linkages between religion and aggression is still rudimentary. Explanations for such an approach might be manifold:

(i) Extreme complexity of relations between religion and aggression/violence;
(ii) Wide-ranging value-based approaches—either methodological or theoretical;
(iii) Liminal non-rationalized feature of religious aggression and violence.

It is evident that more attention attracts religious persecution rather than religious violence (Hall 2003). Such a situation might stem from the fact that some violence and aggression are, to a certain extent, justified by religious institutions and communities. Ultimately, human aggression can be triggered in any human if they are pushed to their maximum tolerance in a tragic situation.

The authors of this article have proposed an approach of linkages between the reduction in aggression, good society models and human morality in the context of religious morality at large. The approach might be used to expedite further research so that human morality might be used as a platform to measure worldwide advancements in the formation of good societies, which would be based on the promotion of “good” practices through communities and their bonding.

Such an approach might also be helpful to cross conventional moral categorization, which in turn would allow for an enhanced understanding of social processes behind the externalization and internalization of religious views and practices of religious communities. To better comprehend the nuances of religion and aggression, two-layer comparative studies should conducted to analyze tenets of religious and human morality of all major religions so as to subsequently identify common features, which trigger aggression in all religions.

In light of recent scientific developments, including in human evolution and nature, the elaboration of common measures and variables allowing the exploration and operationalization of relations among religious morality, human morality and aggression is indispensable to improve the cohesion of academic debate aiming at reducing aggression and violence. Uniquely, interdisciplinary efforts by sociologists, social psychologists, neurobiologists, socio-biologists and anthropologists could offer a paradigm, which would have a practical transposition in how societies should better cope with aggression through the use of religious and human morality.

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Notes
1 The Rawlsian rule implies an approval of certain increased quality on the condition that have-nots benefits from increased resources, which result from growing shares of haves, regardless the increase in haves' shares, are higher than the increase in haves not shares, i.e., allocation of resources are to be done by the maximin criterion.
2 Australia, China, Czech Republic, Finland, Hong Kong, India, Mauritius, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, UAE, UK, USA. The researchers summed up that humans are religious species however atheism exists in all societies, whilst this is a growing phenomenon in industrial societies.
3 Causey et al. draws upon the sociology of politics and by evidence, demonstrates that religion is fundamental to politics, including in major religions worldwide.
4 Ivanescu examines the policization of Islam, predominantly in Western Europe.
5 Syarif examines an apparent interdependence of religion and politics in Islam vis-à-vis the concept of leadership.
6 Glass explores the relations between nationalism in politics and religious conservativism in small towns of the U.S.
7 Campbell analyzes an increasing intertwining of religion and Politics in the U.S.

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