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Violence and Nihilism, hg. v. Luís Aguiar DE SOUSA / Paolo STELLINO. – Berlin: De Gruyter 2022. (VII) 321 S., geb. € 129,95 ISBN: 978-3-11-069895-4

If we would lack any moral frame, would we be more prone to violence? If there would be no religion, no sense of a political community, no God, or no ethical considerations grounded in some ontological truth, would people be more ready to accept violence or even commit it? These questions are important if we argue that we live in a nihilistic age where values and morals are not per definition shared by a large group. These questions are tackled in the edited volume *Violence and Nihilism* by philosophers *Luís Aguiar de Sousa* and *Paolo Stellino*.

The book is divided into two clearly separated parts. In the first half phil. perspectives on violence and nihilism are debated. The second part discusses the relation between nihilism and violence from the perspective of film and literature. Nietzsche is the central figure throughout the book. However, Nietzsche is not understood as the typical nihilist of Western phil., but rather as the philosopher thinking through the consequences of nihilism in the crumbling context of the presumptions of Christianity and Enlightenment (e. g. 11, 68, 77, 242, 258, 276–282). Interesting in this part is that phil. perspectives are constantly related to specific themes like power, respect (with Søren A. Kierkegaard), religion, punishment, or postcolonialism. This makes this part also interesting for theologians and scholars of religion. *Francescomaria Tedesco's* chap. on the state, sovereignty, and kinship for example raises very interesting notions on the construction of the political order and perspectives on the Islamic State, while *Gianfranco Ferraro's* contribution keenly addresses the “nihilistic violence” of the Sicilian mafia (139–157, 111–138). It becomes clear throughout these chap.s that addressing the subject of nihilism and violence cannot do without asking sharp questions about the state, state power, sovereignty, the law, and legality. The second part covers articles that include reflections on the representations of nihilism and violence in film and literature. This part addresses “nihilistic violence” as depiction, affect, reflection. This is a fascinating collection of approaches in which the authors of the chap.s include phil. notions of nihilism in debating the productions of – e. g. – Lars von Trier or Michael Haneke. *Joseph Kickasola's* article on sound and silence in cinema introduces a challenging material perspective on nihilism and violence that lures us away from texts, books, and scripts (203–230).

In the slipstream of the reflections, themes like the free will, freedom, and individuality, are discussed – important themes that touch upon wider ethical discussions. A question that remains for me as a reader concerns the dynamic between nihilism and violence as most authors relate nihilism to the absence of a convincing possibility to reject violence. Several speak about “nihilistic violence”. Within sociology, authors argue that most violence can be seen as the result of moral relationships

that are – in the view of the perpetrator – somehow disturbed and need to be restored (see Donald Black, Tage Shakti Rai & Alan Page Fiske, and others). How would nihilistic violence relate to this interpretation of violence as hypermoral? Here and there, authors are hinting into this direction but within the strong frame of nihilism and violence, this is not easy to address. The book is nonetheless a very rich collection of mostly fascinating chap.s that combine intriguing phil. and artistic perspectives on how we can understand the relationship between nihilism and violence.

Finally, I feel encouraged to make a critical note on the book as an edited volume. What the book is lacking, is a clear and strong frame that introduces the discussions within phil. on nihilism, Nietzsche-research, and clear notes on violence. Nowhere in the book, violence is clearly conceptualized (contrary to nihilism). It remains predominantly a phil. concept, also in the second part, without immigrating clearly into social realities. Violence “speaks” in literature, films, and texts. In some articles, violence is understood as synonymous with cruelty or seen as a branch of egoism. The lack of a clear editorial framing results in a collection of perspectives with Nietzsche as a central figure and Dostoevsky in his shadow, that makes it difficult to grasp what the book precisely wants to contribute. An extremely short introduction of only two pages and no reflection in an afterword is in my view really a missed opportunity to collect insights and show how the chap.s contribute to a wider discussion on nihilism and violence and a reflection on how to go from here. This is however a critical note on the presentation of the chap.s, certainly not on their content.

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