violence

From the Glossary:

violence, see also non-violence

1. A swift and intense force. It can be used to cause injury. There are two forms of violence, legitimate and illegitimate. Legitimate violence is carried out by the state in order to enforce its laws and interests. Illegitimate violence is carried out by those outside of the authority of the state with the intention of benefiting themselves at the expense of others.

-Freud

Sorel views violence as a necessary, even beneficial, element that serves a catalyst in the forward movement in history. His advocacy is for political violence (i.e. as detailed in his conception of the general strike).

Merleau-Ponty:

2. A tool of the state. Western humanism and communism differ ultimately in their uses of violence. His conception of violence is not only one of political violence, but of actual physical violence as well. Political violence requires at least some level of complicity of with the current regime; if one is trying to subvert a regime entirely, then violence must occur outside of the political state. Violence is a means by which states both keep and change power, within the larger global community, and internally.

Weber:

3. Ultimately, the legitimating force behind the state. The state is simply the institutions and individuals which have authority to wield legitimate violence. Violence not the sole or usual means of the state, but it is specific the state (310) (cf. Weber entry in 'State')

-Fanon

Fanon describes violence to be first created by the colonizers towards the native. This leads to his idea that the amount of violence the natives are using is equal to the amount inflicted upon them first, the only violence is the I make it their own; that is to say, the same violence is thrown back upon us as when our reflection comes forward to meet us when we go toward a mirror" (Wretched of the Earth 207). He also thought that violence was necessary if you wished to keep things the way they are or to change them. 207 The political party may well speak in moving terms of the nation, but what it is concerned with is that the people who are listening understand the need to take part in the fight if, quite simply, they wish to continue to exist.

More on Fanon's violence:

- Fanon on the Native: The very same people who had it constantly drummed into them that the only language they understood was that of force, now decide to express themselves with force (Wretched, 42). - More supporting text for Corey's summary - The uneducated native, having grown up in an atmosphere of violence on the part of the colonist, will realize that the violence of colonialism will only yield to greater violence.

-Fanon

4. Part of the natural human condition and the death drive (thanatos). The super-ego emerges from man's redirection of violent and destructive tendencies back towards himself, internalizing them. In this sense, it is very similar to Nietzsche's 'bad conscience.' People then exercise internalized violence against their own egos and wills, where the morality imposed by the super-ego becomes an ever harsher critic of our actions and desires, leading to a kind of masochism on the part of society, as we seek to become even more pious to make up for our perceived 'sins.'

-Drew Synan

Even more on Fanon's violence: (Also Sartre and Arendt)

- According to Fanon and Sartre, there are two types of violence. Violence used as an instrument and violence used intrinsically. When violence is being used as an instrument, it's used to achieve a certain end, but when it's used intrinsically, it's used simply because of the violence. Fanon and Sartre argue that violence should always be used intrinsically. Fanon said that violence is what allows man to discover himself and gain freedom, therefore in order to gain freedom and keep it, violence should never leave the body. Arendt doesn't agree with Fanon and Sartre's interest in violence, but she argues that the instrument of violence will always lead to intrinsic violence. One instrument achieve something, such as a new state, it will not stop continuing working. The new state will use violence to keep order and eventually, it will turn into a police state, therefore turning an instrumental use of violence into an intrinsic one.

- Kevin

Fanon argues that there is a twofold nature of violence. First, he contends that violence is some kind of behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something. However, he adds to this classic definition, arguing that violence can be of an institutionalized type which systematically robs the individual of his or her civil, economic, and human rights. Therefore, colonization, wherein one class of human beings subjugates another, is pure violence both because of, and beyond, the brutality of knives and guns. Violence can be both a physical violence, and an oppressive violence which causes a highly abnormal and unnatural condition.

-Daniel Weissbart
Furthermore, I believe Fanon would argue that there is no such thing as nonviolent resistance. Nonviolence, although not physically violent, arguably falls under Fanon's definition of violence; wherein one class of human beings causes a highly abnormal and unnatural condition (through the robbing of civil, economic, and human rights) to another class of human beings. This is so because nonviolent resistance, whether in the form of a boycott, sit-in, or march, disturbs the lives of the oppressive (or the uninvolved) in an unnatural way. Store owners are stripped of their economic rights, etc.

-Daniel Weissbart

Sorel:
Sorel lays out the distinction between force and violence, where force is an act "to impose a certain social order in which the minority governs" while violence "should be employed only for acts of revolt" (Sorel 195). Thus violence according to Sorel is a requisite to ending middle-class authority, and will only "end finally by establishing a Socialist State" (Sorel 200). Thus, violence is "ethical" since "it is to violence that Socialism owes those high ethical values by means of which it brings salvation to the modern world" (Sorel 295). -- Ahmad Qamar