Insights from Hans Achterhuis Applied to the Violence on LGBT Communities in Uganda[1]

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Abstract

There are many reasons for violence. Like an approaching thunderstorm is a clear indication of possible lightning to follow so the current world conditions is conducive for violence. Violence is inevitable and immanent in what Hans Achterhuis refers to as the 'violent times we live in'. It is however impossible to predict where lightning will strike. Hans Achterhuis, a Dutch philosopher, utilises philosophy and fictional literature to illustrate the causes and effects of violence. In his book *Met alle Geweld* (2010) (Full Force of Violence), Achterhuis identifies six perspectives on violence: goal-orientated violence; struggle for recognition; polarity of us vs. them; mimetic desire; tension between morality and politics and the barbaric human nature. In the discourse on violence philosophers have the task to identify the possible localities where lightning might strike next and to warn, prevent and if not that at least suggest precautious measures – 'installing lightning rods'. That is the purpose of the book by Achterhuis. Lightning has recently struck in Uganda. The author here looks at the occurrence of religiously inspired violence against the lesbian, gay, bisexuals and transgender communities (LGBT) in Uganda. The perspectives presented by Achterhuis are utilised in order to try and make sense of violence. The author suggests that discussion forums can serve as lightning rods preventing similar violent outbursts in communities in Southern Africa.

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Introduction

There is not only one theory as to what violence is or to identify its origin (Achterhuis 2010:40,44). Violence is best understood when the multiplicity of perspectives informs our understanding of it. Achterhuis utilises six perspectives illustrated by philosophy and literature to bring about a comprehensive understanding of violence. Achterhuis (2010:24) employs the following six perspectives on violence:

Goal-orientated violence: In order to reach a goal (i.e. survival, wealth, power etc.) humans will violently remove any obstacle (i.e. people or structures) that comes in their way (Achterhuis 2010:45). Violence becomes the means in order to reach a goal. Violence is then viewed as an instrument. As philosopher presenting this perspective Achterhuis (2010:46) suggests the name of Hannah Arendt. In Arendt's work *Crisis in the Republic,* she purports that violence has become a means to several ends (Arendt 1970:145). She however emphasises that the concepts of power and violence need to be separated. Political power ensures a safe existence for society. Violence can be destructive to the good life the state is supposed to maintain. Terrorism and structural violence is discussed by Achterhuis in this category. Structures may oppress and may be necessary to remove in order to restore harmony and peace in society. Violence is then justified in terms of the good that can come from it. In order to remove oppression violent opposition is necessary. Violence becomes the means to reach the goal of an ideal society even if violence is necessary to bring about peace.

Struggle for recognition: Humans are in need of recognition. Achterhuis (2010:47) follows Hegel's philosophical theory to explain how two people living besides one another struggle to be recognised by the other. This struggle ends inevitable in the submission of one. This serves as basis for the explanation of cultural clashes. Achterhuis applies the theory of Hegel to the violence between sexes (male and female) and violence against children (2010:48).

The polarity of us vs. them: In a multi-religious society (and even secular!), different identities clash. Achterhuis (2010:49) however indicates that this opposition of parties existed from eternity. In a globalized world people are trying to recover lost identities. Within this context Achtherhuis (2010:49) places the occurrences of genocide. Even Xenophobia can be seen as a symptom of this problem. The 'other' is considered a threat and constantly viewed with suspicion. Any negative incident is blamed on the 'other' as an evil attempt to destroy that which is considered dear. The philosopher Carl Schmitt indicates according to Achterhuis that the polarity of we and them is inevitable part of the political reality. The solution Achterhuis (2010:49) suggests is that different religious and ethnic groups ought to exist in one political system where the identity of the minority is accepted.

Violent human nature: Violence is not the activity of barbaric people. Hannah Arendt (2003:18) indicates how violence is committed by normal people who act on temptation to do evil. Her research on war time atrocities illustrates that normal people are capable of horrid and violent acts. Evil is not something autonomous outside of human nature. Violence is potentially present in every human being. Humanity has been described as being 'the naked ape' (Achterhuis 2010:52) and more vividly as the angry primate possessing weapons (Lorenz 1966:208). Achterhuis' (2010:52) conclusion is that through the evolution of mechanisms human nature has ended up still being described as violent.

Morality and politics: Violence based on moral grounds can take on any form in politics. The American theologian-philosopher, Reinhold Niebuhr, discussed the moralisation of violence. Violence in politics is morally motivated. This perspective describes the differentiation of all political actions into good or evil. Violence in service of the good against that which is considered as evil then becomes acceptable or tolerable violence. As an example Actherhuis (2010:50) discusses the concept of a just war. In this regard Achterhuis investigates the thoughts of the church father Augustine. Violence is acceptable when it serves the moral good.

Mimetic desire: Based on René Girard's (1986 and 1989) theory that all human culture originates from mimetic desire, Achterhuis (2010:51) indicates how conflict has always been part of human interaction. According to mimetic

desire humans want that which others possess. By mimicking the other in terms of their desire humans end up in conflict. This creates the scarcity of things. Mimetic desire entails subjective as well as objective elements which are scarce and lead to violence in order to get hold of limited resources (Achterhuis 2010:52). Malthus' theory (1798:4) that the increase in the world population will lead to violence based on limited resources applies here. To ventilate tension violence is directed at the scapegoat. The identification of the scapegoat in society is according to Girard (1986) the origin of human society. Culture has a violent origin. This is betrayed by rituals and myths attesting to this. Hannah Arendt also attests to the violent origin of culture, nations and states.

These six perspectives are presented by Achterhuis in order to come to a better understanding of what violence is and where it comes from. This is however not an exhaustive list. The perspectives however help to get a handle on understanding current cases of violence.

To search for one cause and reason for violence is like ignoring the current weather pattern that predicts that lightning is eminent. To search for one source of violence is already to engage violently with the understanding of something so complex as violence (Achterhuis 2010:39). There are many possible reasons for violence: class differences, poverty, social structures such as capitalism, socialism, Muslim fundamentalism etc. (Achterhuis 2010:39). Violence only gets meaning the moment when all perspectives are taken into account (Achterhuis 2010:44).

World conditions are conducive to violence. We live in a world characterised by the violent power of the times ('gewelddadige geest van die tijd' (Achterhuis 2010:21). Like during a thunderstorm the conditions worldwide are right for lightning to strike. It may be impossible to say where lightning will strike (2010:26), but it is clear it will strike (Achterhuis 2010:25).

Violence is Inevitable

Understanding violence includes understanding oneself (Achterhuis 2010:23). Philosophical approaches include being self-critical and attempting to think differently (Achterhuis 2010:24). In the discourse on violence philosophers have the task to identify the possible localities where lightning might strike next and to warn, prevent and if not that, at least suggest precautious measures

('installing lightning rods') (Achterhuis 2010:25). The book by Achterhuis has exactly this purpose in mind. This reflection on the contribution by Achterhuis as applied to violence in Uganda ends with a suggestion as to a possible lightning rod.

Violence against LGBT Communities in Uganda and Other Parts of Africa (Describing the situation)

The past decade has witnessed a rise in legislated homophobia across Africa. The Pew Research Centre reported on 2013 that people in Africa tend to oppose homosexuality. Of those participating in the poll 98% in Nigeria, 90% in Kenya, 96% in Uganda, Senegal and Ghana indicate homosexuality as unacceptable (Baker 2015:28).

The past 6 years saw an increase of anti-Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender (LGBT) sentiment in Uganda. The reason behind this is religiously inspired. Religious leaders in Uganda launched a campaign supported by politicians, to rid Uganda of homosexuals (Baker 2015:28).

During October-December 2010 two prominent popular magazines in Uganda (Rolling Stone and Red Pepper) published a list containing the identities of prominent homosexuals in Uganda. Part of the reporting contained calls to kill homosexuals. Headings such as 'Hang them; they are after our kids' (Rolling Stone Oct 2010) enticed members of society into violence against LGBT communities. Up till 2014 this led to a gradual increase of harassment and assault on LGBT communities in Uganda. In 2009 only 12 cases of assault were reported as against 300 cases in Kampala during 2014 alone (Baker 2015:28). Acts of public shaming of LGBT communities included physical assault, cursing, threats, and eviction from living quarters, fired from jobs and even being disowned by families.

These forms of violence were religiously motivated. Since 2009 conservative church leaders in Uganda started expressing concern over the presence of growing liberal Western values in Uganda. The church leaders invited evangelical preachers from the USA to speak in 2009 in Kampala at a seminar with the title 'Exposing the Homosexuals' Agenda' (Baker 2015:30). These evangelical pastors came from a conservative background of Christian ministry hostile to homosexuality. Their campaign was focused on exposing and fighting the supposedly gay attempt to break down the nuclear family model and destroy civilization (Baker 2015:30). The preachers from the USA

engaged in a process of informing the Ugandan population of the gay attempt at taking over the world. Local communities were encouraged to prevent the gays from introducing their value system of 'sexual promiscuity' to society and thereby educating a new generation with foreign values, threatening children, traditional marriage and society at large. This message was well accepted by the Ugandans as they were already afraid of losing their cultural identity to modernization and globalization (Baker 2015:30) and having to cope with European Christians' seemingly acceptance of homosexuality (Baker 2015:31).

Six weeks after the pastors from the USA left Uganda, the then finance minister of Uganda introduced a bill to parliament suggesting the death penalty for gay people. Colonial-era laws still in force in Uganda had already banned homosexual sex (Baker 2015:31). The new suggested law in 2009 was debated several years until promulgated in 2013. Critique at the signing of the bill was that it was political opportunism. Politicians deliberately played in the hand of the majority of society against a misunderstood minority and thereby gained political support for the 2016 elections (Baker 2015:31).

In February 2014 president Museveni of Uganda signed the Anti-Homosexuality Act as law, allowing courts to sentence gay people to life in prison. The motivation for signing this Act was explained by president Museveni that homosexuality was clearly an example of the West's 'social imperialism' (Baker 2015:31). During August 2014 a Ugandan court however overturned the Act due to the fact that there was no quorum present the day the bill was passed in parliament. Many observers see this as an act of reparation as the contentious Act did attract international attention in the forms of cancelled contracts and sanctions (Baker 2015:28). In November 2014 the minister of Ethics and Integrity submitted a revised bill, entitled Prohibition of Promotion of Unnatural Sexual Practices Act, making publication and propaganda supporting LGBT communities in Uganda, illegal (Baker 2015:31).

This bill is still under discussion in parliament. There seems to be some reconsidering among parliamentarians as to pass the bill as it influences the international status of Uganda. What is clear is that the debate on homosexuality in Uganda has only started. Support and opposition groups are more vocal contributing to the awareness of the LGBT communities in Uganda to be accepted in society.

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The Principles Identified by Achterhuis Applied (Explaining the Situation)

Violence can never be condoned. An attempt to make sense of and explain acts of violence should never be confused with justifying violence. What here follows is an attempt at explaining from a religious point of view the acts and planned acts of violence against the LGBT community in Uganda. The principles Achterhuis mentioned as perspectives on violence will be employed to make sense of the violence in Uganda.

An explanation of violence in Africa needs to be viewed from a particular worldview – if we dare to label Africa with having only one worldview. A traditional African worldview subscribes to the following characteristics. (i.) A strong sense of community and unity. Society is a close-knit unit with close bonding within the extended family as well as to broader society. Unity is also extended to include a bond with nature as well as the souls of the deceased. Unity also implies that there does not exist any separation between spheres of existence. Everything has to do with everything. Religion and politics for instance are not perceived as separate segments of human interest. (ii.) A traditional African worldview consists of an animistic and dynamistic understanding of reality. The invisible mysterious world of the spirit realm overlaps with the visible world people live in. Reality is filled with a mysterious power that can be manipulated in order to bring about the desired effect to human benefit. Good and evil exist alongside one another manifesting in different perceived forms.

Africa however has a varied heritage. The traditional way of thinking has been influenced by colonial and post-colonial sentiments. Africa was taught to think along modernistic lines as well as separating spheres of existence and emphasising the sovereignty of the individual. In this regard the remark by Achterhuis should be kept in mind: Conflict between modern and traditional world-views lead to uncertainty, fear and violence (Achterhuis 2010:68).

Conservative politicians in Uganda motivate anti-gay legislation as an attempt to 'protect their nation from this Western import'. These legislations must be seen as being part of post-colonial process of reclaiming Africa for Africans (Baker 2015:32). This would imply restoring the prominence of religion as decisive factor in society. Anti-gay legislation tend to be more strict 'in communities with high levels of religious observances' for example in

Africa, Middle East, Asia and Russia (Baker 2015:30). Anti-gay legislation is not only due to religious conservatism or fundamentalism but a restoration of social structure. The church and mosque has become the cornerstone of society in Africa. Religion once again enters the public life, which is an opposite tendency taking place in Europe and to a lesser degree in North America with the privatisation of religion. Africa does not separate religion from social life. As to the dynamistic element in the traditional African worldview, the prominence of magic cannot be overlooked. Rituals of violence act as magical events. Burkert denies the function of rituals as being magical but rather psychological and sociological (Segal 2008:32). For Burkert rituals are more expressive than efficacious (Segal 2008:32). The participation in rituals is for Burkert an expression of belonging in society. I however believe that rituals in an African context still have a magical function. This does not deny the psychological and sociological role of rituals as Burkert describes. It much rather emphasises the theory of Frazer of the magical use of rituals (Segal 2008:16). For Frazer rituals function causal: there is a direct relation between cause and effect. The act of violence is the cause which will bring about a certain effect. A discussion on violence in Africa should be seen to this backdrop.

Trying to makes sense of the violence against LGBT communities in Uganda the principles as suggested by Achterhuis will be helpful.

Polarisation of Normal and Abnormal (Us vs. Them) and Goal-orientated Violence

In a pluralistic society communities live under the constant threat of comprimising their identity. Each group in society has its own criteria for being part of the group. Some are included and others are excluded. Belonging provides the individual to share in protection, sustenance, tradition, language, culture and even religion. Groups with different identities become a threat to the other groups. Walter Stephan, Oscar Ybarra and Kimberley Morrison (2009) describe this phenomenon as the intergroup threat theory.

Stephan et al (2009:43-44) describes two types of threat: Realsitic threat which describes physical harm and loss of resources. Symbolic threat is the immanent threat to one's identity, values, religion and beliefs. Different societies express the concern over threat differently. Communities under threat

can respond in different ways (Stephan *et al.* 2009:55): Cognitive response; Emotional response or Behavioral response. Cognitive responses describe the way in which a group under threat will construct perceptions and stereotypes of the out-group which will lead to hatred and intolerance. The emotional response describes the feelings of fear, anxiety and resentment the in group may experience upon the threat. Empathy towards the in group grows as sympathy with the out group diminishes. The behavioral response describes the stage where the in group acts against the out group. Acts of discrimination, hostility and harrassment can ensue.

In the Ugandan scenario the various responses have been clear. The media contributed to the creation of perceptions and stereotypes of LGBT communities. The majority of soceity reacted at first emotionally as they felt threatened. Eventually emotions flowed over into action, acts of violence. People under threat react even in violent ways. When the majority of Ugandans experienced a thread of a possible change in social identity and a change in the structure of family and a change in values, they reacted to the thread. Within a monolatric society the majority determine values and identity. Minority groups are considered in different degrees as outsiders to society. The dominant way of understanding identity, tradition and values does not leave room for difference. A power imbalance relegates minorities to the periphery, emphasising an Us vs. Them polarity.

The otherness of the minority may also function on a different level. All who subscribe to the rules and values of the in group are considered as that which is considered normal. Normality is socially constructed. Normality can be sanctified. A specific social order can then be considered as sacred. Divergence from what is considered normal and sacred becomes a threat and falls into the category of abnormal and impure. Abnormality can be a threat to the stability and sanctity of society (Girard 1986:18). Society may be in need of ritual purification in order to remove impurity and restore the sacred status of society. Girard (1986:16) indicates how the persecutors wish to purify society from the impure who corrupt society. Sacredness is restored due to the effect of the scapegoat (Girard 1986:44).

The LGBT community in Uganda could be viewed as the other (Them), divergent out group threatening the sanctity of society (Us) and needs to be ritualistically removed in order to restore the sanctity of society. Violence directed at the LGBT community in Uganda can then be viewed as a symbolic

act of ritual purification; violence as sacrificial act in order to restore sanctity; sacrificing the individual to the benefit of the community[2].

Both Burkert's as well as Frazer's understandings of the function of ritualised violence apply here. Violence, in a magical causal understanding (Frazer), brings about the restoration of the sanctity of society. The violence against gays is a form of sacrifice (cause) in order to rid society magically of perceived evil (effect). Violence is a demonstration of solidarity by members of society (Burkert).

This theory also subscribes to Achterhuis' (2010:45) description of the goal-orientation of violence. Through violence the achievement of a higher goal is in mind. By restoring the tested values of the past violence has the goal of restoration of that which is subscribed to by the community.

Baker (2015:32) reports on an interview he had with a member of the LGBT community in Uganda. In the interview the individual expressed a view on the treatment of gays in Uganda: 'Ugandans, they had something in their heads that gays are sick, cursed, abnormal and not African'. This reflects the sentiment how 'abnormality' is viewed and treated within the African society.

Mimetic Desire

René Girard's (1989) understanding of violence as the origin of civiliazation is based on an economic understanding of society. In an environment of scarcity individuals want that which others have. This does not only apply to material objects but can also allude to spiritual elements. By mimicking the desires of others people come into conflict in an attempt to get hold of that which others possess. Achterhuis (2010:51) has indicated this as a perspective on the occurrence of violence in society.

The theory of mimetic desire (Girard 1989:143) applied within a psychological perspective might give new insight into the violence against the LGBT community in Uganda. It might be that the majority of society in Uganda desire to be free from social convention and conformity to gender roles. Freedom as a mode of being becomes the object of desire and the LGBT community the 'rival' whose behaviour society (the subject) mimics (cf. Girard 1989:145). Even if this is not a desire openly expressed, it might be

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[2] Compare Burkert's (1987:150) description of what constitutes a ritual.

unconsciously based on human curiosity to know what lies beyond the borders of social convention and conformity. The subject is ashamed of revealing the desire as it would unveil the lack of being (Girard 1989:146). Even although both parties desire the same object, they become rivals as the subject feels inferior to the rival and therefore conflict ensues (Girard 1989:146). Violence is the signifier of ultimate desire (Girard 1989:148).

LGBT communities have dared to break free from social conventions regarding gender and sexual roles. By practising sexual roles different than the roles agreed upon by social convention (fixed as taboos), the LGBT community can experience freedom from social conformity. By desiring the same freedom members of society can vent their frustration of being unable to acquire such freedom in the form of violence against the LGBT community. The transgression of the boundaries by the LGBT community is a transgression of social rule. Transgressions must be punished. The LGBT community becomes the scapegoat (Girard 1986:39-40) that even being innocent must be sacificed to the benefit of society. Although the sacrifice of the scapegoat cannnot reverse evil into good, the event of identifying a scapegoat has an effect on human relations (Girard 1986:43). Social cohesion is only possible by finding a substitute victim upon whom violence is expressed (Girard 1989:144).

In this case violence can be viewed in terms of a punitive function. Killing is the penalty for the transgression of social rule. It is clear from the Ugandan case that these social laws need not be written laws. Boundaries and taboos can be based on social agreement. The prescribed punishment can also only exist in communal memory and need not be captured in the law books of the nation.

Although this theory of mimetic desire among the community members in Uganda may be highly speculative without clear indications from society to confirm this desire to be free from conventions, it does however provide a valid perspective based on the theory by Girard.

A different perspective based on mimitic desire but now within a financial context is presented by Segal. Segal (2008:14) points out how Engels and Marx indicated that religion always masks economics, causing religious revolt to be seen as economic revolt. In Uganda LGBT communities might be seen as counter-productive to the economic progress and sustainability of society. LGBT communities introduces new values, contrasting the traditional way of conducting business in society. Confusion sets in with the introduction

of the LGBT community's values relating to the traditional roles of men doing hard labour in order to provide for their families. With new values introduced, new questions arise. Who will tend the fields? Who will herd the cattle? Who will concieve and raise children? Who will take care of the elderly? The moment traditional roles are reversed or changed it is a thread to society, even a financial thread.

Religious violence can be a justified means to a nonreligious end (Segal 2008:14). Violence can be done for the sake of the community (Segal 2008:16). Violence becomes a sacrifice: sacrificing one or more members of society for the benefit of the community. Girard (1989:15) indicates how the persecutor can convince themselves and others that even a small number of people (in this case the minority LGBT community in Uganda) can be a threat to the whole of society.

This is based on the theory that violence is part of religion and not seen as something evil or bad. It is a necessary function within relgion to maintain and sustain society. In that way violence binds society together, as Segal (2008:16) interprets Burkert's theory on violence.

Violence can re-enforce social bonding. 'The ritualistic function of aggression is the communication of solidarity, not of attack' (Segal 2008:29). Through acts of violence against outsiders (the commonly perceived enemy of society) the bond between members of society is strengthened. The acts and even the planned acts of violence (laws prescribing the death penalty to gays) in Uganda can be viewed as attempts of restoring and affirming social bonding. In a situation where communal values and identity are at stake, the Ugandan society tried to establish their identity and re-enforce values by demarcating who is allowed to be part of this society.

Violence creates anxiety. There might be reasons that create anxiety and violence is merely the reaction to calm the anxiety. Burkert (1985:54) indicates how the ritual of violence has the function to calm violence and re-establish society. In Uganda the brewing antagonism against gays created anxiety in society. This anxiety manifested in acts of violence which once acted out restored a feeling of unity in society, even though temporarily.

Morality and Politics
When acts of violence can be framed within a moral frame it becomes not only

condoned but even desirable. Good must always oppose evil. If the preferred lifestyles of individuals are portrayed as being evil, (violent) action directed against such individuals is not only condoned but even becomes desirable.

It is clear how the media contributed to the negative sentiment against the LGBT community in Uganda, creating stereotypes and labelling such sexual orientation as evil. The majority of society became victims to such propaganda by accepting the negative portrayal of the LGBT community without questioning it. Values are emotionally laden. By referencing to a threat to values, society was emotionally predetermined against the LGBT community. Action against the LGBT community was not only advisable but now became a moral obligation.

By acting and condoning in a distinct violent way politicians in Uganda managed to gain political support for their efforts to protect the social values of the majority. Violence not only became a way of demonstrating political dominance and a warning for those considering opposition, but also became a commodity presented in exchange for political support. By promulgating a law opposing and punishing gays, politicians demonstrated power in support of traditional values. This was another attempt to exhibit how good conquer evil.

Violence as Human Nature and Struggle for Recognition

Violence is potentially present in every human being. As unnatural as violence may appear, as natural is the existence thereof. Humanity has been described as being 'the naked ape' (Achterhuis 2010:52) and more vividly as the angry ape possessing weapons (Lorenz 1966:208). Achterhuis' (2010:52) conclusion is that through the evolution of mechanisms human nature is still being described as being violent.

Burkert (Segal 2008:29) follows Lorenz's theory that humans are like animals: many human behaviour is innate (like that of animals), many animal behaviour (like some human) is learned. Aggression is innate as well as learned behaviour. Lorenz (1966:204) believes that aggression can be transformed into sociability. Through showing mutual signs of aggression, bonds of friendship can be established (Burkert 1996:9). The acts of aggression become rituals repeated to unify the group. The ritual confirms the solidarity of the group (Segal 2008:29).

Violence as part of human nature then has a positive outcome in society by re-enforcing social cohesion. In Uganda the re-enforcing of social cohesion came at the expense of a component of society. The marginalised LGBT community in Uganda is part of society, comes from society and wants to remain part of society. Standing at the periphery of society the LGBT community are through violence being excluded from social cohesion.

LGBT communities have the wish to be recognised as part of society. This struggle for recognition is perceived as a non-violent violation against social norms and values. The LGBT community is not suggesting the replacement of social values with a new (their set) of values. Instead it is merely a plight for recognising multiple values in society and an appeal on society to acknowledge the existence of different enclaves in society.

Lightning Rods

When Joas and Knöbl (2009) discuss the occurrence of violence and conflict within society, they emphasise the theory of Lewis Coser who indicated the positive effects of conflict. Conflict in society is a sign of a stable community (Joas *et al.* 2009:177). A community gets the opportunity to release tension via conflict. This corresponds to Burkert's suggestion of violence releasing anxiety (Segal 2008:31). When conflict is oppressed, tension increases. A healthy society is permitted to vent the anger or 'clear the air' (Joas 2009:177). Further, conflict may lead to the opportunity to learn and change existing social rules and institutions (Joas 2009:177). If no conflict is permitted, societies are prevented from gaining insight from others and prevented from learning and adjusting to new situations.

Somehow this perspective provides some material for reflection when applied to the LGBT communities in Uganda. Will conflict truly bring about (positive) change? Will those 'venting their anger' truly gain new insight and adjust to a new environment where LGBT communities are tolerated? Or will the opposite be possible: will LGBT communities understand their 'wrongful' departure from set traditional ways and adjust back to the norm set by society? Of course the occurrence of violence can never be accepted, but if it restores equilibrium to a community[3], there might be some meaning to the violence.

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[3] This is what Achterhuis identified as the goal-orientated violence: violence in order to achieve a bigger goal.

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A 'lightning rod' that may act as a precaution against forms of such violence is to create discussion forums in society. Such forums may present opportunities for learning and venting anger. Learning about the other is just as much as learning about oneself (Achterhuis 2010:23). In a discussion forum one is not only confronted with the other, but also confronted by one's own convictions. In discussion with others one needs to be critical with oneself. Stephan (2009:55) suggests as a counter-measure how to deal with immanent threat to engage in dialogue. Forums supporting dialogue between opposing parties create opportunities to learn from one-self and the other as well as vent anger.

Religious communities can act as such forums where opportunity is given to all members of society to state their concerns and objections to LGBT communities. By creating opportunities to discuss such sensitive issues a stable community is created. It may not prevent violence but may divert aggression, alleviate anxiety and create reciprocal understanding. The situation in Uganda proved the point: the brewing violence against LGBT communities in Uganda resulted in bringing the issue of homosexuality to the fore and forcing society to talk about it. An Ugandan lawyer who defended many LGBT cases formulates it clearly: 'When something is in the public domain, it is no longer a taboo' (Baker 2015:32).

Conclusion

Violence in society should come as no surprise to anyone. As lightning is an extra-ordinary, natural phenomenon to be expected from time to time to occur, so violence seems to be an extra-ordinary but natural phenomenon to be expected. Humanity can however never be complacent about violence; therefore the description of violence as being extra-ordinary. In this article an attempt was made to view the occurrence of violence from different perspectives as presented by Achterhuis. The recent violence against LGBT communities in Uganda served as case study.

What is clear is that violence should always be contextualised. Violence manifests differently in an African than in an European or Asian context. The reasons trying to understand and explain violence needs to take the local context in mind. Magic and dynamism for example still functions in an African context and does influence the way in which violence is perceived.

Violence does not have one or even two reasons or just as few solutions. Violence is a complex matter. Philosophical perspectives identified by Achterhuis did provide some perspective on general and universal truths about violence: goal-orientated violence; struggle for recognition; polarity of us vs. them; mimetic desire; tension between morality and politics and the barbaric human nature. Even by being able to explain the phenomenon of violence does not provide any solution.

The solution to deal with violence seems to be to act pro-actively. By installing 'lightning rods' growing aggression and anger can be vented in responsible ways in order to prevent uncontrolled outbursts or violence. Open and unbiased dialogue seems to be one such lightning rod. The effectiveness of dialogue however still needs to be proven. There should however never be a feeling of being helpless that prevents humanity from seeking ways of stemming violence. The suggestion Achterhuis makes in this regard encapsulates the proper human attitude towards violence: It is better to spend energy on preventing violence than to spend energy on understanding it (Achterhuis 2010:53).

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