

四維系列大師講座：通俗演講

暴力的神話與真相

MYTHOLOGIES AND REALITIES OF VIOLENCE

Randall Collins

Professor of Sociology

University of Pennsylvania

The chief mythology of violence is that human beings are good at it. Most theories assume that if humans have a motivation for violent conflict, that is enough to cause fighting, injury and sometimes death. Various theoretical motives have been given for violence: the biological propensity for young males to propagate their genes; the need to protect one's honor or revenge previous offenses; conditions of poverty and oppression; inability to control one's anger, especially because of alcohol or drugs; cultures which glorify violence. But if we examine the social situation where persons confront one another in a violent threat, one pattern stands out: most people are unable to unleash violence directly at another person, and when they do so they are largely incompetent, failing to hit their target. In military combat, most soldiers do little or no firing at the enemy, and most of their shots miss; the same is true of police, criminal gangs, or members of rioting crowds. Violence is difficult because humans experience an emotional barrier of confrontational tension and fear. Successful violence happens only when there is a pathway around this barrier. Thus contrary to the mythology of violence depicted in the entertainment media, real violence is mostly very ugly, unfair, and incompetent, and often hits the wrong victim. This is what we see when we examine detailed evidence of violent events, especially from photos.