

# Violence Ontology in Pierre Bourdieu's Perspective and Its Relevance to Violence Phenomenon among Religious Society in Indonesia

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**Abstract:** This article discusses how Pierre Bourdieu's viewpoint on violence ontology and its relevance to violence phenomenon toward Indonesia's society. According to Pierre that violence is form of domination to the human itself taking place subtly and not realizing that has become a form of habit in human life. Within the context of Indonesian, it can be involving violence between religious society in this country, or it can be specified over again into the society who embraces Islam. A new violence is actually a practice of domination conducted by the parties who think they are the only one true and majority in order to perpetuate the truth dominance of religion. In other words, the violence can only be understood as a form of domination to the other religions teachings, especially for the teaching or religion categorized as a minority religion or belief – in this case of Muslim and non-Muslim community.

**Keywords:** *violence, religious society, ontology, Phenomenon.*

## Introduction

Society is a dialectic phenomenon in the sense that society is a human product that will always provide feedback to the manufacturer – society is a human product. People have no other form except the form given to it by human activity and consciousness. So, the social reality is inseparable from the

human itself, which can be then ascertained that the human is a product of society (Berger, 1991: 3). Therefore, all things created by humans consciously or not is a necessity in its around.

On some phenomena that are often found in public life, it is often found various forms of violence, especially in the settlement phenomenon of some complicated problems. Even, the violence is often used as the only solution to assuage or stop on going conflicts or complicated problems. In this case, what happens then is the opposite of the principle of Pawnshop company in which solving problems by generating new problems.

The same thing is often found in the phenomena of religious community life, especially in Indonesia. In some phenomena, for example, it is found that some actions leading to violence that seems to have been possessed by a form of ideology mechanism in it. In this case, religion is used as an ideology foundation. It happens because all efforts to systematically understand social action that cannot be separated from the phenomenon of ideology (Haryatmoko, 2003: 16-17).

In this case, according to Haryatmoko (2003: 17), a social group tends to show his identity or represent himself. The reason of this preference is – basically the meaningful action will always take into account the reaction of other people or groups, whether the reaction is against, donate something or support it. Therefore, the violence phenomenon which often

covers a variety of conflicts or problems, particularly in the context of the religious society life, can not be separated from ideology that has obsessed the community life.

On the other hands, violence cannot be also separated from the things that tend to be political nuance accompanied by crime. This is caused by the authorities as a holder of violence monopoly who has legitimation can be arbitrary. For examples in some cases when the new lord order is over, what he does being a problem with a variety of his legitimacy, then tries to maintain his power (Haryatmoko, 2003: 34), certainly with violence action. According to Rene Girard in Haryatmoko (2003: 34), it is not only the structure of social-political condition which requests a violence, but the basic structure of human mimetic desire also incites violence because a basic human desire is anger.

Surprisingly, in Indonesian context, religion as one of tool that should be anti-violence is often used as a means of 'dominance' to legitimize a violence action in order to impose their religion. Religion itself is understood by Bourdieu (1991) as an idea that gives power to mobilize. Thus, in this case, it has a potential to commit violence acts as a means of religious political domination. This issue actually has made religion as a symbolic tool for violence justification as well as the ideological basis of existing use of violence (Haryatmoko, 2003: 34).

What is described above is a representation of Kristeva's view (1982: 147) as a madness that has imprisoned

humanin bestiality; wandering beyond any fantasy of violence, blood spots and death. So, what's going on then is a dehumanization process on a broad scale, involving various elements in society. Indonesian human reality, according Piliang (2005: 73), has met with a long dark period, in which humans have never found a space for humanity actualization. Finally, Indonesian precisely lives in the various systems of inhumanity.

As an initial introduction in this paper, the description above can at least be regarded as a representation in cases that will be discussed later in this paper. Especially in viewing violence phenomena in the country which is often said as a democratic country. So, with the analysis conducted will be found a formula over the essence of the violence itself, which will then be related to some violence phenomenon happening between religious society in this country.

### **Problem Statement**

As stated previously in the introduction of this paper, some problem statements will be discussed in more depth in this paper, in terms of:

1. What is the essence of violence according to Pierre Bourdieu?
2. What is the relevance of violence essence according to Pierre Bourdieu in Indonesian context, especially the violence phenomenon between religious society in Indonesia?

## DISCUSSION

### A. Violence Essence According to Pierre Bourdieu

In a pluralistic society, conflict is an inevitable thing. Because in the community, a lot of things are dynamics in which at certain times it may lead to a conflict which certainly can not be separated from an act of violence. So, it can then be true what assumed by Karl Marx that conflict is an inevitable part in a society in which it reflects to his dialectical life philosophy (Pruitt and Rubin, 2011: 12).

Such dialectical philosophy of life is certainly very vulnerable to the various forms of violence that often accompanies the process of conflict happening in it. This is because of the desire in humans to always exist in the world. So in other words, to be exist human life often requires a trait that has a passion for the superiority of the symbiotic form of violence. The goal is clear as a form of human life existence itself.

If we view the issues stated previously from the perspective of Bourdieu, it will lead to a form of dominance in human life, which then ended in a *habitus* in human life. *Habitus* itself dealing with Bourdieu's view is a system that lasts long and changeable (in human life; durable and transposable disposition) that serves as the generative basis for structured and integrated practices objectively (Bourdieu, 1984: vii). Thus, *habitus* in human life ultimately refers to a set of dispositions created and formulated through a combination of objective structures

and personal history of humans which led to a form of domination in life.

A set of these dispositions are obtained in a variety of social positions in a domain, and then implies on a subjective adjustment of the position. Such as the person's behavior, adjustment is often implicated through sense of a person – in the social distance or even implied in the attitudes of their bodies (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes, 2009: 13).

In this context, if we look more closely, the violence that occurs later in the human life is essentially an absurd irony. Why is that? Because on the one hand, the various incidents of violence in human life are regarded as an act of violence where there are coercion elements against another person. In this case, it is a clear violation of other human right. On the other hand, the various incidents of violence in reality is creative (creative destructiveness) where it is necessary novelty, innovation, ingenuity, information, knowledge, and intelligence. However, the existing creativity, according to Piliang (2005: 83), is creativity referred to crime and destruction (destructive creativity). Then this creativity (destructive creativity) becomes *habit* in human life, especially in viewing or handling a happening conflict or violence.

At this point then, the reality of human beings turns into something socially constructed. In *The Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckman states that the reality is anything that is accepted as a reality and as a knowledge that everything

is socially constructed in which it is established by the society where the reality takes place. According to them, humans live in a world where knowledge is represented through signs that have a particular meaning in human beings. However, the signs are not a human creation but has been provided by the elites (in this case, it is enabled by the media producer and the holders). Humans as a part or member of a community of people just understand the codes and their meanings (social code). The meanings will generate every human being as a social (Berger and Luckman, 1981: 49-61).

The happening issue is the birth of a deviation form of violence (marks, images and truths) which become a public knowledge in performing violence acts. So, the existing violence is almost in the form of a violence simulation or simulacrum where the existing violence cover up a truth of violence incident with a false truth (Piliang, 2005:83). This case, Bourdieu (1990) describes it as a symbolic violence.

Symbolic violence is used by Bourdieu (1990) to describe a specific form of violence especially in language and authority mechanisms. It is a form of soft violence that does not look hiding the depended mechanism. This concept then lead human beings to a the social mechanism, in which the ongoing relation communication are interlocked with power relations (Bourdieu, 1990: 42). In these circumstances, the authority as a system tends to perpetuate its dominant position by dominating communication media, language used in

communication, and meanings as well as interpretation form of these meanings. Such this thing is then viewed by Bourdieu as symbolic domination (Bourdieu, 1990: 46).

In the domination process described above, it is actually a form of violence in the form of soft symbolic coercion. However, according to Bourdieu (1990: 46), the humans dominated symbolically do not realize the existing coercion or otherwise accept the coercion as something that is supposed to be happening. Finally, at some points, exploitation or violence against a human being is not perceived as a form of violence or exploitation but rather as a form of fairness occurring in their self and life.

In addition, the concept of symbolic violence offered by Bourdieu, according to Jackson (2010: 145), is the best concept described as the imposition by dominant social actors to the meaning and representation of the social reality that is internalized by other actors as natural and legitimated thing. It is particularly effective as a social practice domination because it is not recognized as a form of violence. Though symbolic violence actually serves as a tool to legitimize dominance structure by representing them as a natural condition.

This is then viewed by Bourdieu (1991: 139-140) as a internalized representation and become *habitus* part of social actors who make up for their understanding and expectations. Therefore, from this premise, it comes the concept of '*misrecognition*'. It is the failure to identify all interest forms



(economic and politic) that is inherent in the practices and resources represented as '*disinterested*' or and without the benefit and interest (Bourdieu, 1991: 209-210).

Then, in the other models, the model of symbolic domination, Bourdieu defined violence as something defined as a way in which the domination is imposed and suffered as a form of compliance and the effects of a form of smooth, imperceptible, and invisible violence, even by the victim itself (Bourdieu, 1990: 213). Dominance is accomplished through the symbolic communication and knowledge, or correctly said because of ignorance and victim acknowledgment. This relationship, according to Haryatmoko (2010: 13), is strangely very usual and offers the privilege to understand domination logic that goes in the name of the symbolic.

According to Bourdieu (2010: 32-33), the construction work of the symbolic principle can not be equated with an operation that is always on the performative act of nomination (naming) orienting and structuring representations, particularly representations of the body. The work ending and completing in a profound and long-lasting transformation of the body and the brain. It is through a practice construction work that imposes an differentiated definition of legitimate uses of the body. It is then reincarnated into some *habitus* and differentiation dealing with the principle of the dominant division, in which in some habit make people accept the dominant principle (which certainly can be understood and perceived symbolically).

It seems based on the presence of the actions that rise to a form of recognition in practices, approval of *doxa* and a belief that not only to be thought and affirmed as they are, but the existing actions, in a certain meaning, is a form of symbolic violence. Therefore, Bourdieu in *Masculine Domination* warns that misunderstandings sometimes occurring in viewing the symbolic violence phenomenon are caused by a more or less reductive interpretation of symbolic word itself. The mistakes that often occur also in the understanding concept are often associated with references of ethnology in which they are regarded as a way restoring the existing myths with scientific clothes (Bourdieu, 2010: 49).

In this issue, Bourdieu actually wants to clarify that the structures of domination occurring in the symbolic violence is a product of a historical continuous working reproduction. It is committed by several single-agent and institutions (family, religion, education and the State) which has a big influence in bringing the product (symbolic violence).

According to Bourdieu, there are some categories that are often made with the clan's dominant viewpoint in carrying out the violence. These categories are then applied by the dominated clan when trying to understand the relations of the existing domination. Thus, the dominated people then makes these categories seem natural. This then makes the dominated people doing a kind of self- depreciation. Moreover, they also disfigure and blame themselves systematically. In this process,

the symbolic violence is then institutionalized through the mediation agreement that cannot be done by the dominated party to dominators when the dominated people have nothing except a knowledge instrument that also belongs to the dominators, and when the dominated people want to think about the dominator or themselves and or to think about between their relation and the one who performs dominance (Bourdieu, 2010: 50).

This knowledge instruments, a manifestation of the formation of dominance relationships that create violence occurring in the relationships, do not seem natural or as if nothing happened. In other words, the symbolic violence occurred has been institutionalized through the mediation agreement that cannot be provided by the dominated people to dominator. Then, the categories schemes established previously are used by the dominated people to understand and assess themselves or assess the dominator itself.

At the end of the process as described previously, when we view it from Bourdieu's perspective, it will then generate compliance dispositions. It is a product of unconscious adjustment of associated probabilities with a more objective domination structure. The existing dispositions are often expressed by or in the preferences, so the existing dispositions produce an equivalent thing from a well-understood interest calculations. In contrast, the existing dispositions tend to weaken when the objective dependencies also declined. It

means that the objective dependencies involve presenting and maintaining the existing dispositions (Bourdieu, 2010: 53).

So, in the various forms of violence (especially symbolic violence), people cannot think a form of domination specificity, unless it has been detached from alternative between coercion with force and with logical agreement, between mechanical coercion and voluntary, free, deliberate, even full calculation of compliance. The effect risen in this model (symbolic domination), according to Bourdieu it is enacted not in the pure conscious logic that is able to realize, but through perception schemes, appreciation and action that make up *habitus*, and a very dark underlying relation of knowledge, outside of all forms of conscious decisions and desires control (Bourdieu, 2010: 54). It will then end in a paradox logic in a form of violence, in which domination is the essence of the violence in the form of something spontaneous as well as imposed.

Description above, it has exactly led to a true viewpoint of the essence of violence itself. In which the violence occurs in a person as in the form of representations and practices when the happening violence is not realized because of the symbolic character in the happening violence. Then, it happens continuously until it then transforms into a *habitus* in human life. In other words, the essence of violence on human beings, when it is viewed from its shape, symbolic violence, is a form of domination to the human which happens softly and unconsciously that has become a habit form in human life.

The greatest risks appeared in this model are; violence can be considered as a usual thing and legitimacy form in order to perform dominance relationship. So the real world encountered is often defeated by a metaphysical order. The achievement or struggle just means in categorical framework beyond the reality itself. Social order is running like a symbolic machine that certifies the metaphysical reality domination: the physical is subject to the spiritual, asceticism and condescend material and comfort, are now only valued when supporting the upcoming (Haryatmoko, 2010: 13).

### **B. Violence Relevance according to Pierre Bourdieu in the Context of Religious Society Life in Indonesia**

The series of conflicts in Indonesia seem uninterrupted. The piteous thing is almost all conflicts consisting of various forms and intensity violence. Even Colombijn&Lindblad (2002) has stated that "Indonesia is a violent state" (Indonesia is a failed state). Violence has even become an everyday commodity to impose the willing and the individual components of society accustomed to impose their willing through violence utilization. Conflict is then the same with violence and destruction, and of course the physical and non-physical loss.

The same thing happened in the past few years in which it is often found some violence forms based on religious conflict among the society. In fact, religion can serve as a

unifying factor, especially in a pluralistic society such as Indonesia. But in some ways, religion can also be easily misused as a divisive tool. A classical Islamic Sociologist, Ibn Khaldun, concludes that the feeling of co-religionists might need, but not enough to create a feeling of group belonging or social unity. There must be other factors that further strengthen and maintain social cohesion. On this basis, it is not surprised if it appears optimistic and pessimistic group about the religion. Optimists believe humans could not be separated from religion, as the man himself as *zoon religion*. Religion has also proved its role in uplifting human dignity. In contrast, the pessimists view religion as a driving force to persecute fellow human beings (Rosmaniah Hamid, 2006 : 1).

This is the new irony that often occurs in Indonesia in recent decades. The irony tends to describe human nature of this nation that is the same with violence when resolving a problem, especially in the religious life among the society in this country. Not only that, particularly in the last two decades, the most significant impact that can be seen is the threat of disunity of the nation, such as Balkan country broke to pieces or as countries in Africa that conflict hitherto is indeterminate when it will end (Basri, 2008: 5).

Then, a question is coming, should the existence of a religion be defended with violence by ignoring the sense of justice among human beings as a civilization forming? This question, though sad tone, but it must be contemplated and

reflected deeply for the courtesy of the religious society relations in the country. As in the Constitution of 1945 which guarantees the freedom of every citizen in this country to embrace and carry out the teachings of their respective religions.

One thing that is often trigger the conflict among the religious society in this country is the size of one's piety based on symbols and formal religious practice that they do, in which that should be the same as other people (Haryatmoko, 2003: 62). In fact, if the symbols and the formal religious practices serve as the primary measure of one's piety, when religion can lead adherents to the depth of life and acceptance of plurality? As well, when sectarianism serves as pillars of adherents identity, then how does religion build more equitable and fair social institutions?

Probably, this is often called as the two faces which are contradict each other in religion. On the one hand, religion is a place where people find peace, the depth of life, and a firm hope, even many people and groups gain strength and get the strut when they deal with suffering, oppression or totalitarian regimes. On the other hand, religion is often associated with the phenomenon of violence surrounding the religion, especially in Indonesia lately. Moreover, there is misunderstanding issues for personal or group interests which then invites violence based on religion (Haryatmoko, 2003: 62-63).

In the previous context, it has been a sort of *totemism* in religion. Where religion is integrally defined as something related to the tribal organization systems and as a form of marking group identity in the religion. So, it can be said that the religion is as a form of holy totem, as the case in Australia in totemism followers (Durkheim, 1965).

Through the superficial meaning of the religion, when there is a thorny issue in the religious scope, it is very difficult to find an integrated solution in the completion process. It happens because there is no aspiration or satisfactory alternative solution among the conflicting parties. So that, the process of matching perception for a peace agreement between the two interested parties becomes something impossible (Pruitt and Rubin, 2011: 38).

According to Kelley and Stahelski (1970), the perception of the lack of good alternatives in resolving the conflict is sometimes realistic. It is very often caused by *zero-sum thinking*, a way of thinking that my advantages are your disadvantages and vice versa. This kind of thinking seems to arise from personality dispositions that tend to be authoritarian. It leads to a view that the world is a jungle in which every person cannot avoid conflict with others.

When viewed from Bourdieu's perspective, violence between religious society described previously is a form of violence in order to show dominance. In this case, it applies the logic of majorities (dominant) and the logic of minorities



(which in domination). It happens because in doing a domination process, according to Bourdieu (1998: 54), is required an arena (fields). In this case, the arena concept shows a place of power fights and a tool of struggles to maintain or alter the structure of the relationships dealing with in the dominance. In other words, religion was used as an arena for practicing domination in the form of violent behavior.

Religious teaching is then used as a symbolic power in practicing dominance with violence. The symbolic power is intended as a form of power that is applied directly to the body and like a magic. Existing power is then applied to the body without the use of any physical restraints. However, the magic will not work unless it is supported with the dispositions that have been stored in the subconscious in the body (Bourdieu, 2010: 54).

This then generates actions in the form of knowledge and recognition of the magical boundary practice between the majorities (dominant) and minorities (dominated). In fact, according to Bourdieu, it is often present in the form of physical emotions or in the form of desires and feelings (especially for dominated people). All of them are the ways to be subservient on the dominant assessment, though the dominated people often dislike or do not want it (Bourdieu, 2010: 55-56).

In the condition previously, sometimes in the position of an internal conflict in religious teachings, all emotion forms can be categorized as a hidden way or agreement form

(symbolically) done by the body. In this case, the body has actually given up on the direction of consciousness and desire which generate the desires of dominated people being *a habit*. The desires of the dominated habit is a somatic social relationship. The social laws converted into a law building that must be obeyed (Bourdieu, 2010: 56). It then makes the violence become a legal thing, because the practice of violence for the sake of domination are also believed by the dominated people (the minority). Also, the violence also becomes a legal institution (institutionalized) to be practiced.

If the issues previously refer to the phenomenon found in Indonesia, where Islam is the majority religion, it will be apparent how actually the position of Muslims and non-Muslim societies do something concerned with their religious implementation. Likewise also the internal teachings of Islam itself, if you use Bourdieu's approach, it also happens dominance done by the Muslim majority (in this case of Sunni thought). Then, the domination is institutionalized in the form of habit in every Muslims in Indonesia. The result of these is the birth of logic among Muslim majority and minority in Indonesia itself as well as the birth of the superior and inferior soul in the implementation of their religion teachings.

This is possible dealing with Fromm's statement (1973: 167) as part of a syndrome, where violence and aggression caused by humans is an independent trait, even both are found together with other traits within a system such a rigid

hierarchy. They have a strong bond domination and the division of society into classes which eventually transformed into a form that can be understood as a social character formed culturally in the community. In other words, if we use Bourdieu's approach, it has actually become a habit in which the violence is perceived as a common practice in every process of domination to the individual or group or other groups, especially in the various cases of violence between religious society often happening in this country.

Another cause can be seen from the various forms of violence in the context of religious life among societies that often occurs in this country. In addition, there is a desire to dominate others. It also seems based on the institutionalized violence into a form referring to as particular religion or belief. This kind of violence is usually very difficult to break into because the violence has been regularly systemized and frequently used or practiced as an attempt to argue against or debilitate other groups or individuals. In other words, the violence occurs as a commonly used psychological violence in the political social system (Haryatmoko, 2003: 48).

Such as in the case of conflict between Ahmadiyah and FPI (Islamic Defenders Front) and several Islamic organizations in Indonesian which the Ahmadiyah followers are the minority. If it is analyzed using Bourdieu's view, it is actually a form of systemized violence. The causal factors of every single form of violence occurring in the conflict are often

used to weaken the structured minority groups. However, they really want to break of the minority groups until to the roots.

Bourdieu explains in *Masculine Domination*, the circumstances must actually be recognized that the conquerable dispositions (occurring in the form of violence) is sometimes used by people to blame the victim as the product of objective structures. Then, the structures will not work unless they are supported by the revival dispositions and contribute in the production of the objective structures (Bourdieu, 2010: 57).

In this position, violence (symbolic violence) is not based on the mystical consciousness, but the dispositions are adapted to the structures of domination that have given rise to the dispositions. Therefore, a person cannot expect the existence of a separation between supporter relationship given by the dominance victim to the dominator, unless there is a radical transformation of the production social conditions to the dispositions making the dominated people taking a place on the dominators and by using the dominated people's viewpoint to themselves.

Therefore, getting off the existing paradox, in the context of religious society lives in Indonesia in which it can be specified in a Moslem society, needs to be instilled an attitude of tolerance, solidarity, dialogue and interfaith communication that can then be used as an agenda in philosophical, sociological, cultural, and religious thought in order to create a more tolerant, inclusive, peaceful, friendly generation that does

not regards himself as superior and dominant generation. Then, the generation emphasizes mutual respect and understanding among all the pluralistic nation elements. Therefore, Richard Rorty in Piliang (2005: 87) states that it can be realized a tolerant society.

In addition, if it is reviewed using Bourdieu's perception, violence among the religious society often occurring in this country (rather as symbolic violence) will never happen except through an act of knowing and considering bad practice done outside of awareness and desire. The acts of knowing and considering the bad then deliver a kind of 'hypnotic' power on all forms of manifestations (Bourdieu, 2010: 60).

Finally, in this model, all forms of violence in the context of religious society life in this country can be easily parsed. The essence of violence done by groups or a particular religion may be clearly understood as a form of domination to the religion or other religions, especially for those teachings or religion categorized as a minority religion or doctrine. The main point is when no more violence in the name of religion aiming to dominate certain parties is the re-humanized religious society life within the togetherness frame (the *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* can be finally realized in the frame of religious life).

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the description above, in this writing, it can be concluded that the essence of violence based on Pierre

Bourdieu's viewpoint is a form of domination to the human itself taking place subtly and not realizing that has become a form of habit in human life. So, the violence happening to someone as a representation and practice when the violence happening is not realized because of the symbolic character contained in the ongoing violence continues over time. Finally the forms of violence occurring are transformed into a habit in human life in the form of dominance to others, and that it is the essence of the forms of violence, in the form of spontaneous and imposed things at the same time.

The relevance of violence according to Bourdieu contextualized within the context of Indonesian, especially in matters involving violence between religious society in this country, can be specified over again into the society who embraces Islam. A new violence is actually a practice of domination conducted by the parties who think they are the only one true and majority in order to perpetuate the truth dominance of religion. In other words, the violence can only be understood as a form of domination to the other religions teachings, especially for the teaching or religion categorized as a minority religion or belief – in this case of Muslim and non-Muslim community.

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