A Sociological Look on Violence

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Abstract: Violence is as old as human history. It has come in different forms during the transformation process of first man's survival struggle for existence. Along ages, lots of thinkers examined the violence around and the violence took part in a way in their life, then they made different definitions. Environmental conditions and personal characteristics of individuals enabled different perception and definition of violence. From moving on that point, in this study different viewpoints on violence have been handled and approaches have been evaluated. So, this study also involves theoretical information. In this study which aims to understand violence through different point of views, violence has been examined on sociological scale.

Key words: violence, power, war, conflict

1. Introduction

The history of violence is as old as humanity. Violence has been fed by the human notion, as a result like all the other mentalities, violence also has come into variant forms but kept its existence. At the outset, violence appeared as a method that human being had to prefer in his struggle against nature. The notion to use body power against nature as a weapon in need of meeting basic needs as nourishment and self-defense has turned into a prevalence fact. Especially while emphasizing the beginning of the human history, violence in that period is observed as nude, lack of all means and in a native form (Ayan, 2010).

In time, by the civilization of the peoples and with the formation of the states, violence's form has changed parallel with the today's conditions. Elias thought that, controlling the fire ensured the progress in cooking food but by the way, it made it easy to demolish the houses and cottages savagely. Moving at this point, the appearance of a state which controlled the means of violence made a similar effect (Keane, 1998). As a result, with this process; the outpouring, form and feature of the violence changed, have a transformation by the formation of the state, been refined, civilized and expressed in a roundabout way (Ayan, 2010). The violence expressed in different ways keeps its existence today; it has been the subject of different sciences. It has kept the attention of different academies and a lot of study has been made about it. In those studies violence has appeared in different definitions and forms.

The variety in the perception and expression of violence causes the studies on it to be different and the definitions on it to be variable (Çayır & Çetin, 2011). At this point the study started off the point of understanding violence. At the first part of the study the definition of violence appears, and then it has been discussed by taking different viewpoints into consideration. Moving at this point, the study aims to be informative by the discussion of that point of views.

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2. Definition of the Violence

Violence is derived from the Latin word of "violentia". "Violentia" means violence, stern and fierce personality. The verb of "violera" means behaving violently, not appreciating and not obeying the rules. These words are related to "vis". "Vis" means that power, energy, authority, violence, usage of body power. It also means quality, abundance and essence or main structure of something (Michaud, 1991). Violence has etymological explanations alongside different definitions. Because violence has been examined in the context of power relations and sometimes in the context of focal point of the physical and emotional harms (Yücel, 2007; Kızmaz, 2006).

Alongside with various sciences have brought different approaches with the frame of their own viewpoints. For example, there are studies which have anthropological approaches to the violence (Hayiland, 2002). Riches made one of these studies and he expressed some differences. According to him, every society has different social actions and collective conscious (mythology, aesthetic etc). Rivhes mostly commented on the Anglo-Saxon usage of violence and generally drew attention to illegal physical oppression. Foucault deals with the concept as events that are exposed to violence by means of the distortions that words impose on. And Copet–Rougier mostly featured French meanings of the word (Parkin, 1989).

According to Keane's evaluation, violence is a form that one imposes on oneself (Keane, 1998). John Dewey interprets violence with an understanding that depends upon physical power, and Newton Garyer puts violation on center. Hegel dealt with violence as negation (Dursun, 2015). İçli and colleagues think that violence contains the actions that one makes to give pain to the others (İçli, Öğün & Özcan, 1995).

History comprises of the results of the violence, the effort of people to control violence and reproduction of it while making this (Berktay & Toprak, 1996). The violence which has continued from the first human today firstly entered the field of philosophyy and then in other sciences studies were made about violence. In this context, there are lots of views and approaches like that which are related to the subject:

2.1 Heraklitus, Mark and Hobbes's Views on Violence

Heraklitus is one of the philosophers that mentioned violence in nature. He said that "war is the father and king of all". In Heraklitus's doctrine the universe is a place in which there are always conflicts and problems. "the fight is common for all; justice is a conflict". Violence exists in nature and man is a part of it. According to him even justice can be secured by means of fight (http://phil.metu.edu.tr, İnam retrieved January 27 2014). In short, Heraklitus, who refers that contrasts can hinder war by harmonizing each other; consider violence — under the name of war — as a precondition for making harmony among people in the essence of communal life (Ayan, 2010).

On the other hand, Marxist society theory allocates a particular place for violence, because according to him, the thing that activates historical progress is the active class war. According to Marxist theory, conflicts cannot be solved by means of compromises. It is impossible to remove conflicts. Each social system (antique, feudal, Asian style, capitalist) gets unique by typical manufacturing type and by means of a domination, exploitation and conflict process as a result of the opposite classes. Under these conditions, although violence is an indispensible part of the historical process, it is only second and indirect (Michaud, 1991). Also, class contradictions of the capitalist production relations in the society reflect upon class consciousness and fight. Contradictions are denominational and require fight. According to Marxism, class fight grows upon capitalisms objective class structure. Labor and capital give birth to contrast. As a result of the increase and progress in mechanization,

decrease in labor and crises causes fight between classes. Infighting cease to be individual and class formation occurs (Belek, 2007).

Another philosopher who dealt with violence is Hobbes. He explains the treasons of the conflicts and wars among people. According to him people compete for honor and dignity all the time. So jealosy, hatret and in the end violence rises among people. People like comparing them with other people and them only like precious things (Hobbes, 1993). Besides, he emphasizes that people may show good as bad and bad as good so that they can reduce or increase the real size of the good and bad. Thus, in the current circumstance, they can harass and the break the peace of others as they wish. In the and people's agreement depends on word and to perpetuate this there is a general power that will keep people in fear and will direct their actions to a common interest (Hobbes, 1993). In another words "without a sword agreement are nothing but words" (Arendt, 1997).

Considering the socio-cultural and economical structure of the era in which the aforementioned thinkers — Heraklitus, Hobbes and Marx lived, it seems that they tried to express the social evolution by using the terms like conflict, contradiction and inequality. In this situation, violence as emphasize today by some thinkers and scientists, is dealt as a phenomenon derived from a social interaction; and it is also perceived as social unity and solidarity (Ayan, 2010).

2.2 Fromm and Michaud Views on Violence

After a while from Heraklitus, Platon dealt with violence again. According to him violence is a self-defiance. In Gorgias, Socrates tried to reach truth through the dialectical way by means of technical polemics, and because of this he got reaction from the sophists. Sophists tried to put forward politically the most reasonable and profitable opinion. According to Michaud, the underlying truth beyond that harmless image of the sophists is the inclination to violence itself (Michaud, 1991).

In Michauld's definition of violence, mutual relations, the means used its extension in time and potential harms are taken into consideration. According to this definition, violence involves not only the phenomenon deriving from war, oppression and terrorism but also rudeness, pounding, hurting and assault that means rough expression of emotions (Ayan, 2006).

Michauld attract attention to violence from different angles. According to him objective definitions are useful in the expression of the term but cannot elude from prejudices. Besides, it is not possible to form a stable balance between the points of views. The thing to do in here is to make them complete each other. There isn't any universal word or universal information said on violence. Every society has its own violence problems unique to them. These are identified by original norms and more or less dealt successfully (Michaud, 1991).

Fromm made discrimination between the forms of the violence. According to him this difference originates from discrepancy among blind impulses. Because we can understand behavior, its origin, its itinerary and its energy only by clarifying its subconscious dynamics. As a result, Fromm made various violence classifications. One of them is violence which appears at games. Such kind of violence appears in stunts which do not originate from vandalism or hatret and which does not have such motivations. This kind of violence can be seen in many examples such as war games of the primitive tribes or in Zen Buddhism... In none of these games is the aim killing. If the game ends in death, this stems from that the rival stands in the wrong place. Another violence classification is reactional violence. This violence stems from fear and because of this it may be the most common type of violence. This may be a fear stemming from truth or doubt, either conscious or unconscious fear. This kind of violence serves not to death but to life, and its aim is not any demolish but to build (Fromm, 1982).

Another classification of violence that Fromm deals is the violence that appears in tension originating from hindrance. Animals, children and adults exhibit aggressive behaviors when their wishes or necessities are hindered. Such kind of aggressive behaviors mostly ends in vain attempts along the way of reaching the hindered goal by using violence. Under the title of hostility arising from envy and jealousy, there is tension caused by both envy and jealousy. The reason of this is either B has got something that A wants or B has got the love that A wants from one. Thus A gets a hatred and enmity against B who has everything that A wants but cannot have. The violence that aims revenge has an extraordinary function because there isn't any real defense situation in this case as harm has already been made. Another violence classifications are vandalism resulting from losing one's belief, compensatory violence and bloodlust (Fromm, 1982).

While researchers like Fromm and Michaud are analyzed, it can be noted that along with compensation and bloodlust, there is also reactional violence. Even this situation can be legalized by attributing it to defense mechanism. According to these thinkers, reactional violence is defined as it is a reaction against poverty, unrest, discrimination, attacks and preventions in need of survival and defense. To this theory, this violence comes along with hatred and revenge emotions. In other words, if a person's life is under threat the violence that individual refers in order to get rid of this situation can be considered as reactional violence (Gümüş, 2006).

2.3 Arendt and Keane's Views on Violence

In his book "On Violence" Arendt emphasizes that both in natural science and in social sciences violence is not an impetus like nutrition or sexuality, on the contrary provocation takes a critical role in aggressiveness. Namely, according to him the violence that appears without provocation is not natural (Arendt, 1997).

In the book "On Violence" Arendt puts forward how the violence that disrupts the public domain reveals and he presents its difference from other terms. Moreover, Arendt puts forward his ideas by using the terms such as authority, strength, power, force and violence and then conceptualizes them. In the first pair of this work; he criticizes the understanding prior to him; and says that most of the thesis has lost validity. In the second part; he puts forward the difference between violence and other terms, in the third part he criticizes the available theories about the origin of the violence and ends with his own theory (Alperen & Salur, 2008; Demir, 1998; Özkan, 2010; Yılmaz, 2007).

According to Arendt, violence does not need numbers but means. He thinks that a violence which accommodates totalitarian regime at its base is the only element that can annihilate public sphere. Like this, racism fuels discrimination and boosts violence. Then violence boosts discrimination and fuels it. In other words this is a vicious cycle. However Arendt runs into a partial contradiction with himself as he sometimes tries to his pessimism about this world with revolutionary action (Alperen & Salur, 2008).

Keane doesn't only accept that violence is a product of the human nature; to him some corporative elements must be explained. According to him, this corporative tradition can be interpreted by two ways. First of all are the medium-level regime theories. These theories insist on that violence which shows itself limited or extensive scales originates from historical organizing principles of a state or a socio-economic system. In other words, the origins of violence must be sought in monarchy (Paine), despotism (Montesquıeu), capitalism (Marx), in states structured with pre-capitalizm values (Schumpeter) or totalitarian dictatorships (Arendt). According to this, the violence can only end by revitalizing republic and active citizenship. Another explanation scale is macro-level regime geopolitical theories. According to this, the origins of violence must be sought in the nonpermanently centered structure of the international system. This represents anarchical dynamism of the international system, the lack of

the global regulatory mechanisms and the majority of the states having armed forces. This situation causes states to go to war very so often (Keane, 1998).

Behind the discourses of the Hobbes lies that the violence is an inclination which exist in human nature. Keane exemplifies this by showing the mortalities that people causes violently. This situation directs us to the belief that violence exist in human nature. Because this belief has a feature that adresses our commonsense. But then he asserts that is not enough and challenges this notion tradition. According to him those who try explaining violence only grounding it on human nature must accept that they need the contributions of those who explain it by grounding it on corporational elements (Keane, 1998).

3. Conclusion

Human being, who struggled to survive at the beginning, find the way of controlling destiny in time (Fire, agriculture, communication, new cities, trade ways, and martial art). So that new sources and new struggles were born and this gave people power (http://www.sadecebelgesel.com, retrieved October 30 2014). Thus and so, violence has been in our lives in diverse forms.

During this process, violence in the context of the era- has attracted the attention of many thinkers and has been interpreted in many ways. The definitions of violence-showing diversity with respect to the scientists' field of interests, has gained forms within the context of environmental, periodical and personal features. This different interpretation caused diversification on views relating violence.

Another reason that causes diversification of views concerning violence is the fact that it does not get the attention of only one discipline. A lot of disciplines tried to understand and define violence and made interpretations on it. Sociologists, anthropologists psychologists, criminologists, biologists and many other scientists dealt with violence. All of these approaches have different reference points, besides they also have common grounds.

Looking at violence from different angles adds diversity and richness to it. When this diversity-caused by the comprehensiveness of the term is examined, it can be said that violence cannot be dealt independent from individual and environmental factors despite of various approaches and point of views. Anyways, in conclusion like Michaud indicates, it will be appropriate to piece together all of the point of views and the approaches they bring along.

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