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## Towards A Dispositional Comprehension of Conservatism

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### Abstract

*This paper presents a social critique of the conservatism as an ideology or a way of thinking through Pierre Bourdieu's relational sociology. It is argued that the established definition of the conservatism cannot analyze the holistic reality of the concept since it does not take into account of the conservatism as a set of dispositions. In addition to that, having the political discourse and cultural products as the only legitimate unit of analysis, the established definition of conservatism constructs an abstract actor whose link with the social world is essentially intellectual. Against the limits of the commonsensical definition of conservatism, this paper interrogates the merits of Pierre Bourdieu's sociology. It first introduces the key conceptual tools through which the French sociologist constructs the social world as a social topography. The paper explains both objectivist and subjectivist moments of research object construction. It also underlines the role of symbolic struggles in the formation of social world. Finally, this study develops a dispositional definition of conservatism as the symbolic form that the principles of vision and division gain within the struggles of various fields. The merits of the dispositional comprehension of conservatism are compared with the existing empirical definition of conservatism as a set of cultural values.*

**Keywords:** Conservatism, Pierre Bourdieu, dispositions, ideology, theory.

## Muhafazakarlığın Eğilim Temelli Bir Kavrayışına Doğru

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### Öz

*Bu makale Pierre Bourdieu'nün ilişkisel sosyolojisi üzerinden, bir ideoloji ya da düşünce tarzı olarak muhafazakârlık tanımının toplumsal eleştirisini sunuyor. Muhafazakârlığın yerleşik tanımı kavramın stratejik ve eğilimsel boyutlarını gözardı ettiği için, bütünlüklü bir analiz için elverişli değildir. Buna ek olarak, siyasi söylemleri ve kültürel ürünleri tek meşru analiz birimi olarak görmesi nedeniyle, muhafazakârlığın yerleşik tanımı soyut bir özne inşa eder ve bu öznenin dünyayla kendiliğinden entellektüel bir ilişki kurduğunu varsayar. Bu çalışma, yerleşik muhafazakârlık tanımının sınırlılıkları karşısında Pierre Bourdieu sosyolojisinin sunabileceği meziyetleri sorguluyor. İlk olarak, Fransız sosyoloğun toplumsal dünyayı bir sosyal topografi olarak inşa edebilmesini mümkün kılan temel kavramsal araçlar tanıtılıyor. Ardından bu kavramsal araçlarla girilecek nesne inşasının hem nesnel hem de öznel uğrakları tartışılıyor. Sembolik mücadelelerin toplumsal dünyanın teşkilinde oynadığı rolün altı çiziliyor. Son olarak, sosyal görme ve bölme ilkelelerinin çeşitli alanlarda verilen mücadeleler neticesinde büriündüğü sembolik form olarak muhafazakârlığın eğilimsel tanımı geliştiriliyor. Muhafazakârlığın kültürel değerler temelli mevcut ampirik tanımı karşısında geliştirilen eğilimsel yaklaşımın sınırlılıkları ve imkanları tartışılıyor.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Muhafazakârlık, Pierre Bourdieu, eğilimler, ideoloji, kuram.

## Introduction

One of the common features of social sciences is the fuzzy nature of research objects. Having blurred borders, social phenomena do not stand still to be measured or observed by social scientists. Having multi-dimensional reality, conservatism is one of the most blurred research objects. Despite the fact that the established definition of conservatism refers to ideology or a specific way of thinking, the holistic reality of the concept extends the limits of the ideology. Apart from being an ideology, conservatism refers both to a specific *strategy* that can be developed in many fields regardless of the agents' ideology, and a *set of dispositions* that are internalized within the socialization processes. Based on Pierre Bourdieu's relational sociology, this paper presents a social critique of the established definition of conservatism as an ideology or a way of thinking.

## Conservatism as an Ideology or a Way of Thinking

Conservative ideology as a part of the reality of conservatism came into existence under specific conditions of social turmoil during the age of great transformations. The birth of nation state, rise of capitalism, the embodiment of enlightenment philosophy in the emergent social order and state, and accompanying urbanization, secularization, and individualization can be described as the social conditions as a reaction to which conservative thought emerged (Nisbet, 1952; 2006). Like all other ideologies, conservative ideology is a way of thinking which manipulates the given social reality in order to establish a new social order by means of representations that are made of ideas. The conservative ideology rests on an anxious and pessimistic critique of the emergent state of society which was organized in the light of the principles of enlightenment philosophy. The core of the conservative ideology can be described as an organismic vision of society within which dead, living, and unborn are connected harmoniously by means of the volunteer obedience of the imperfect individual to the protective authority and wisdom of traditional institutions against the harmful impacts of bright future dreams under the guidance of reason (Lee, 2014; Fein, 2011; Beneton, 2011; Brennan and Hamlin, 2004;

Scruton, 2001; Müller, 1997; Kirk, 1995). These main principles of conservative thought unfold in the pages of founding figures' works as in the following,

*... From Magna Carta to the Declaration of Rights, it has been the uniform policy of our constitution to claim and assert our liberties, as an entailed inheritance derived to us from our forefathers, and to be transmitted to our posterity, ... [t]his policy appears to me to be the result of profound reflection; or rather the happy effect of following the nature, which is wisdom without reflection, and above it (Burke, 2009, pp. 33).*

As might be expected, the object of the pessimistic critique changed within the historical trajectory: the 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalist conservatism criticized the universalist nationalism by refusing the equal participation of all citizens; in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, revolutionary conservatism (Nationalist Socialism) emerged as a critique of all forms of rationalism; and when the cold war ended with the victory of capitalist camp, liberal conservatism came into existence as a critique of the cultural problems of modernity (Habermas, 1989; Heywood, 1992; Bora, 1998). Despite the fact that the content of conservative ideology changed with reference to changing social conditions, Mannheim (1999) argued that its everlasting trait was the form of thinking that prioritize concrete and given against the speculative and possible. As might be expected from the writer of 'Ideology and Utopia' (1966), conservative form of thinking emerged as a specific temporal relation with the social world that anchored in the centrality of the past against the future orientation of socialism and present orientation of liberalism.

One needs to keep in mind that the descriptive analysis of conservative thinking is based on the conservative philosophy which ignores the power relations that impacted on its formation. The conservative thinking emerged not only as a reaction to but also within the great transformations. The critiques of the founding fathers of conservative ideology (such as Burke, de Maistre, and de Bonald) are not only a philosophical reaction to the weakness of enlightenment philosophy but also an inevitable philosophical refusal of the emergent power relations that located the

privileged stratum of the ancient regime (such as aristocracy and clergy) to the dominated position in the field of power of the new regime. Therefore, conservative ideology's defense of the inheritance of privileges as a natural right against the principle of equality is not only a philosophical discussion about the virtues of privileges but also a quest of a philosophical justification of conservative political position.

Another point that the students of conservatism should be attentive about is the widespread threat of scholastic reason. Apart from the conservatism as a specific form of thinking or as a set of ideas, there are concrete conservative agents in the social space whose conservatism are not restricted to conservatism as a political ideology. The difficulty in the sociological study of conservatism is the widespread misapprehension of conservative political ideology as the basis of the mostly unconscious 'conservative attitude' in different fields of the social space. Despite the fact that the ideological ground constitutes a significant portion of the reality of conservatism, restricting the study of conservatism to conservative ideas leads to the scholastic reason which reduces the examination of conservatism to the logical conditions of possibility. This scholastic fallacy is so settled that conservatism as a form of thought is now a realized definition in the mind of the researcher. Taking the intellectual discourse and political acts as the only legitimate unit for the analysis of conservatism treats the conservative representations of the social world as the whole social reality of conservatism.

Moreover, by generalizing the logic of the conservative positions in the field of cultural production and political field as the common logic of conservatives in the social space, it identifies the conservative agent with conservative thinker and assumes that conservatives establish essentially intellectual ties with the social world. Since the conservative figure of the scholastic reason is a contemplative agent, her social existence reflects as a quest of meaning. Defining conservative attitudes as a form of 'natural conservatism', as Kekes (1998) does, just like the universal rational actor of the enlightenment philosophy, the conservative philosophy constructs an abstract conservative individual who is assumed to act compatible with the conservative ideology: "[t]o be conservative ... is to prefer the familiar to the unknown, to prefer the tried to the untried, fact to mystery, the actual to the possible, the limited to the unbounded, the near to the distant,

the sufficient to the superabundant, the convenient to the perfect, present laughter to utopian bliss" (Oakeshott, 1991, pp. 408). The problem in this definition is that it establishes a forced homology between the abstract conservative individual and the conservative ideology and generalizes it as the template to understand the concrete conservative individuals. Fabricating the social world through meaning, the conservative philosophy takes the conservatism of the conservative individual for granted and attributes logical reasons to their conservatism while the question of the social conditions that make an individual conservative remains unanswered (even unquestioned). Actually, the product of scholastic reason is the construction of a spontaneous ideal-typical conservatism which is not a methodological instrument to compare the reality in Weberian sense but rather the commonsensical reality of the conservative philosophy.

In spite of restricting it to a given set of ideas that are assumed to be shared by conservatives, the sociology of the really existing conservatism has to analyze the holistic social reality of conservatives which is not restricted to conservative ideas. The researcher's quest for the meaning of the 'conservative meaning' is a double-sided investigation which has to analyze both the objective social conditions such as the distribution of the forms of capital that make an individual conservative and individual's subjective stylization of her conservatism from a specific position in a specific social space. For a holistic social analysis of conservatism, I am going to benefit from the conceptual tools developed by Pierre Bourdieu.

### **The Inner Logic of Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology**

From his early works on the uprooting of peasantry in Algeria to his latest study on the state, the oeuvre of Pierre Bourdieu<sup>1</sup> can be described as a program of research object construction which is anchored in the central question of 'social conditions of possibility'<sup>2</sup>. Pierre Bourdieu's sociologi-

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<sup>1</sup> The oeuvre of Pierre Bourdieu comprises of 36 books and more than 350 articles.

<sup>2</sup> "... [M]y entire scientific enterprise is based on the belief that the deepest logic of the social world can be grasped, providing only that one plunges into the particularity of an empirical reality, historically located and dated, but in order to build it up as a 'special case of what is possible', as Bachelard puts it, that

cal theory developed as a 'theory in action' which started with ethnographic study of 'Work and Workers in Algeria' (Bourdieu, 2004) and was revised in the following years in the light of new fieldworks. Bourdieu's studies on Algeria constituted, on the one hand, the starting point for his cross-Mediterranean research program on kinship, gender, and power; and on the other hand constituted the basis for the construction of his sociological theory which was strengthened by various researches on education, legitimate culture, language, religion, law, economy and state.

Pierre Bourdieu's is a 'symbolic revolution' that overturned the schemata of vision and division in the academic field by overcoming the established antinomies such as subject/object, structure/agent, body/mind, history/reason, material/symbolic, theory/research, and subjectivism (such as ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism and existentialism) and objectivism (such as cultural, linguistic, and social structuralisms). His 'genetic structuralism' played a significant role in the overcoming of these dualities by emphasizing the correspondence between social structures and mental structures.<sup>3</sup> Especially the concept of 'habitus' as the internalization of the external world in the form of cognitive schema and the generative capacity of invention within the limits of the structural constraints led him to shed light on both power relations and relations of meaning as inseparable and equally legitimate object of sociology. Moreover, by unfolding the function of symbolic systems (such as language, myth, religion, art, and science) other than communication and objectification, Bourdieu's theory of 'symbolic power' pointed out the function of symbolic systems as the instrument of power in the constitution of the relations of domination (Bourdieu, 1991b).

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is, as an exemplary case in a world of finite possible configurations." For a detailed discussion, see: Bourdieu, P. (1991a). *First Lecture. Social Space and Symbolic Space: Introduction to a Japanese Reading of Distinction*. *Poetics Today* 12(4), pp. 627-638.

<sup>3</sup> The correspondence of social structures and mental structures is a prominent argument of Durkheim and Mauss. For a detailed discussion about the argument see: Durkheim, E. & Mauss, M. (1963) *Primitive Classification*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. For a social critique of Kant's a priori categories of mind, see: Durkheim, E. (1976) *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, especially pp. 9-23. To compare Bourdieu's view on the correspondence of social structures and mental structures with Durkheim, see: Bourdieu, P. (1996a) *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*, Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 1-6.



The fundamental principles of his 'sociological craft' can be framed as rationalist epistemology, reflexive methodology, epistemological vigilance as sociological habitus, historicist conception of action, and agonistic vision of social life (or ontology). Functioning as a sociological lens, these principles concretize in seven concepts through which Bourdieu constructs the social world as a social topography: social space, capital, field, habitus, symbolic power, doxa, and illusio.

### **Social World Constructed: Topological Social Space and Homologous Symbolic Space**

*[T]he truth of the social world is at stake in the struggles between agents who are unequally equipped to reach an absolute, i.e., self-fulfilling vision (Bourdieu, 1989, pp. 22).*

As a theoretical model of social world, social space is a topology of positions based on the unequal distribution of power or forms of capital. The positions made out of different volume and compositions of capital are the social conditions within which agents exist. The external conditions within which agents exist have an objective structure free from the will and consciousness of agents, just like the symbolic systems that structuralists examined. Different from structuralists, Bourdieu argues that the reality of the social world is not limited to the functions of structures, and similar to what constructivists argued, social reality is also a construction of individual representations.

However, construction of the social world does not occur in a vacuum but rather it is limited by the social conditions since social structures are internalized as mental structures which function as the logical instruments for the production of the representation of the social world. In this way, existing in structured positions, agents structure the social world through the cognitive schemata which was structured by social positions through the internalization of social conditions. The resulting vision of the social world may seem to imply reproduction as an inevitable fate. However, despite the fact that there is a strong link between mental structures and social structures, the individual representation of the social world is not closed to change. On the contrary, there are widespread individual and collective 'symbolic struggles' to preserve or transform the existing

social world by preserving or transforming the representation of it. The peculiarity of Bourdieu's 'structuralist constructivism' lies in the transformation of objectivism and subjectivism into inseparable moments of the construction of social space and thus overcoming of the seemingly incompatible duality of these perspectives.

### *The Objectivist Moment of Object Construction*

The objectivist moment is based on the historicization of the social space so that it will not be constructed as a social vacuum that is composed of the instantaneous encounters of interchangeable individuals. Therefore, the first act of the objectivist moment is to detect the "underlying immanent regularities of social world" with the help of the concept of capital which is "the history accumulated ... [in the form of] force inscribed in objective or subjective structures (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 241)." Thus, in the objectivist moment, social space is a topology of power which is not reduced to economic capital. By pluralizing the concept of capital (and thus Marx) Bourdieu can develop 'a general science of economy of practices' which is not restricted to economic theory.

The pluralization of capital reflects a significant shift in the apprehension of power from the model of mercantile exchange which is oriented to profit maximization to 'system of differences' in the social space. Thus, forms of capital can be pluralized as much as there are regular autonomous powers that impact on the differentiation of a position from the others. Except economic capital, there are especially three other forms of capital that impact on the constitution of social positions in advanced societies: cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital. Cultural capital is a form of power that is acquired to the extent that agents establish ties with cultural products and institutions. It is 'embodied' as a form of disposition and expressed most clearly through the 'linguistic competence'. Cultural capital is also 'objectified' in the owned cultural properties such as books, paintings, and instruments and 'institutionalized' in the certificates one gets. Social capital, on the other hand, is an actual or potential resource that is acquired with the membership to a group such as family.

Lastly, symbolic capital is any form of capital that is recognized as legitimate. Different from all other forms, symbolic capital accumulates as the perception of others and is not owned by the agents.

The peculiarity of the objectivist moment is not only restricted to the pluralization of power. Bourdieu makes his peculiar contribution in the objectivist moment by introducing his generic concept 'field' which further historicize power and social space. Like social space and capital, field is an abstract tool of object construction to shed light on the historical process of the 'diversification of power' and its impacts on social world. By developing the concept of field Bourdieu "focuses on the process that Durkheim, Weber, and Marx described, that is, how societies, as they advance over time, differentiate into separate and autonomous spheres..." (Bourdieu, 2014, pp. 201). For Bourdieu, at the core of the process of differentiation lays the formation and transformation of the dynastic state. Emerged as the concentration of various species of capital, the formation of dynastic state led to the totalization of various forms of capital<sup>4</sup> in one center and this generated "a kind of meta-capital, that is, a capital with the particular property of exercising power over capital. ... The state, then, as holder of a meta-capital, is a field within which agents struggle to possess a capital that gives power over the other fields" (Bourdieu, 2014, pp. 197). The differentiation of power, on the other hand, emerged as a part of state construction with king's delegation of signature and seal to persons of competence (such as jurists and clerics) or with the emergence of the legal (bureaucratic) principle against dynastic principle. Thus, the process of diversification of power is the result of the 'division of the labor of domination' which led to the autonomization of fields with the delegation of dynastic power which composed of the totalization of various forms of capital in the person of king.

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<sup>4</sup> The first form of capital in the formation of dynastic state was symbolic capital, basically the fundamental belief in that 'king is king'. Following symbolic capital, the capital of physical force (formation of armies) and economic capital (collection of taxes) played a major role. For a more detailed discussion, see: *ibid.* pp. 190-206.

Far from being “a seamless totality integrated by systemic functions, a common culture, crisscrossing conflicts, or an overarching authority” that the notion of society implies, social space is “an ensemble of relatively autonomous spheres of play that cannot be collapsed under a societal logic, be it that of capitalism, modernity, or postmodernity” (Wacquant, 1992, pp. 16-17). As a relatively autonomous microcosm of a specific form of capital, each field is the locus of the specific logic that derive from the structure of game, the general form of relation among the agents who, thanks to the acquisition of relevant form of capital, are magnetized to the field with the ‘feel for the game’. As might be expected each game is open to only those agents who are gravitated to the ‘illusio’ of the field by sensing that game is worth investing. Sharing of the doxic feel for the game, however, does not imply that game is played under equal conditions. The game is rather a power struggle among different positions from which agents develop differing strategies to conserve or transform the existing power relations in order to preserve or seize the monopoly over the properties of the field and impose the legitimate rules of the game. To grasp the logic of the game within a field, one can think of the struggle among the positions of magician, priest, and prophet to get the monopoly over the legitimate definition and goods of religion (Bourdieu, 1991c).

Despite the fact that all fields share the common structural properties such as game, struggle, positions, strategies, illusio, and interest (Bourdieu, 1994; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), each field has a relative value compared to other fields. Therefore, social space is composed of the forms of power some of which are more powerful than the others. The determination of the relative value of each field is the product of the confrontation among the dominant agents and institutions of each field in the ‘field of power’. Just like other fields, field of power is a gaming space where the stake of struggle is no more the accumulation of or monopoly over a specific form of capital but rather to dictate the dominant principle of domination and thus set the ‘division of labor of domination’ (Bourdieu, 1996a; Wacquant, 1993). These confrontations in the field of power among the dominant agents of different fields (and thus capital) “... can take the form of real face-to-face encounters (as with “palace wars” or armed struggles between temporal and spiritual power holders) or symbolic confrontations (such as those in the Middle Ages in which what was at stake was

the precedence of *oratores* [religious capital] over *bellatores* [military capital], or the struggles played out over the nineteenth century, and still today, in which what is at stake is the preeminence of merit over heredity or gifts)" (Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 265).

The struggle in the field of power is not only restricted to the seizure of the dominant position since the power as a brute force is not complete so long as its arbitrary nature of foundation was not misrecognized as legitimate. Thus, another stake in the struggles of the field of power is to dictate the 'legitimate principle of legitimation' by justifying the existing arbitrary power relations as necessary or natural. One may observe a correspondence between the holders of the dominant capital and their strategy of 'sociodicy' which contributes to the reproduction of the existing state of power relations: while aristocrats presented the ties with land and blood as a prerequisite of being in the dominant position, new bourgeois presented merits as the primary condition of being dominant (Bourdieu, 2014). Hence, in contrast to the widespread misapprehension, the reason of why reproduction is one of the most recurrent themes in Bourdieu's sociology is not that he sees it as an inevitable social fate but rather because reproduction is the most recurrent outcome of the power struggles. Even when the subversive strategies of the dominated positions succeeded to overturn the existing power relations, the struggle continues with the transformation of subversive strategies into conservative strategies so that the dominant position could be preserved.

### *The Subjectivist Moment of Object Construction*

Having constructed the structural regularities of social space by breaking with the pre-notions in the objectivist moment, Bourdieu experiences a second break with objectivism so that he could reintroduce what was excluded in the objectivist moment: the individual representations and visions of the world. The constructivist moment of object construction is mainly based on the inclusion of perception of social world to the analysis of the reality of the social world. The perception of the social world, however, is not free from the structural constraints of the world. As the concept of 'point of view' implies, the view of the world, according to Bourdieu, is a view from a specific point, that is, from a specific position. If the social

position is the primary variant of the perception of the world it is because, being exposed to the lasting influences of specific social conditions, agents internalize the external world as a 'system of disposition' or as habitus: "the structures characterizing a determinate class of conditions of existence produce the structures of habitus, which in their turn are the basis of the perception and appreciation of all subsequent experiences" (Bourdieu, 1990a, pp. 54). Hence, the agent of the social world is not the universal subject of phenomenology and ethnomethodology, and the construction of the social world is not a conscious process as the variants of finalist theory (such as rational action theory) assume: agent constructs the world with the complicity of structures.

Agent knows the world because the world is in the agent. As a body, agent is situated to a place where she is subjected to a process of socialization which rests on the inscription of the social order in her body through the inevitable confrontations and affective relations with the social environment. Thus, agent learns bodily. However, the corporeal comprehension of the world does not imply a Foucauldian normalization process through the disciplining of the institutions; it rather implies a process of an unnoticed social pedagogy that springs from being exposed to the ordinary order of the things (Bourdieu, 2000). Since the internalization of the external world is nothing other than the embodiment of the 'history objectified in things', one of the primary functions of the habitus is the production of the commonsense or the doxic relation with the world which helps agent to take the familiar world for granted.

Providing the bodily instruments of the perception, habitus arms the agent with the 'practical knowledge' or the anticipation of the forthcoming future and thus plays a central role in the production of practices. The invisible imprint of habitus over the individual practices is the 'amor fati' or the love of the occupied position which produces the most visible effect by 'stylizing' the seemingly unrelated realms of practices. As a schema of appreciation (or taste) habitus "continuously transforms necessities into strategies, constraints into preferences, and without any mechanical determination, it generates the set of 'choices' constituting life-styles, which derive their meaning, i.e., their value, from their position in a system of oppositions and correlations" (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 175). Therefore, habitus is the unitary principle of the diverse practices such as the choice of

the furniture, preferences of friendship, selection of food, choices of favorite sport or music, and support of political party which are conditioned by the similar social conditions.

However, the distinctive function of habitus is not limited to the generation of 'stylistic affinity', it also classifies the practices and works of others and thus generates the 'sense of place' (or the sense of what is for me) as much as the 'sense of the place of others' (or what is not for me) in the social space. Briefly, habitus produces classifiable practices and works, and classifies the practices and works of others by perceiving them as a 'system of distinctive signs' which are expressed most clearly by the pairs of adjectives such as heavy/light, bright/dull. "Taste is the practical operator of the transmutation of things into distinct and distinctive signs, of continuous distributions into discontinuous oppositions; it raises the differences inscribed in the physical order of bodies to the symbolic order of significant distinctions" (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 174-5).

Therefore, thanks to the habitus, the perceived world or the world constructed by the agent is nothing other than the social space or its fundamental principle of the distribution of the forms of capital translated as a homologous 'symbolic space'. In other words, functioning as a mechanism of 'social classification', habitus translates the differences among various positions, which in essence spring from the unequal distribution of power, as a system of symbolic differences. The direct outcome of this translation is the misrecognition of the differences of power as symbolic differences and the resulting exertion of 'symbolic violence' through the recognition of the arbitrary state of power relations as the natural state of the social world. Thus, in contrast to 'mechanistic theories' of the social world (such as Althusserian Marxism) the recognition of the domination is not the outcome of the institutions' conscious work of imposition but rather of the misrecognition of the world.

Even though the homology between the position/disposition and structure/construction is strong, the social world is still vague and indeterminate. The fact that social world presents itself to the agent as highly structured does not mean that it cannot be constructed other than how it presents itself. Because, "[t]he categories of perception, the schemata of classification, that is, essentially, the names, the words which construct social

reality as much as they express it, are the stake par excellence of the political struggle ...” (Bourdieu, 1989, pp. 20-21). The positions of the social space which are occupied by individuals and groups in the social world constitute the basis for the generation of oppositional (or differential) relations. However, the content of these oppositional relations can be defined in various ways. The same group can be called as working class, ethnic group, or religious group. Therefore, the identity of the groups is not a substantial component of the reality of the group; rather the legitimate definition of the identity of a group is at stake in the symbolic struggles. Bourdieu’s is especially a critique of variations of Marxism which treat the ‘classes on paper’ as the real classes. Thus classes are not the given occupiers of the positions but rather they can be constructed as the outcome of a purely political work (Wacquant, 2013; Swartz, 2013).

Despite the semantic elasticity which makes the various constructions of the world possible, symbolic struggles tend to reproduce the objective unequal distribution of power as the symbolic order of the social world. This is simply because each construction of the world does not have the same capacity to produce ‘belief’ in the constructed world. The social authority of the making of the world by means of the words, that is ‘symbolic power’, is the derivative of symbolic capital which was acquired in the previous struggles. Making of the dominant narrative of history is a good case to illustrate how symbolic power functions. Like the social world, history has a semantic elasticity, that is, a historical event can be interpreted in various forms. A peasant revolt can be interpreted as an emancipatory social movement or as treason to the dominant political power. Becoming the dominant narrative does not spring from the inner logic of the discourse but rather from the symbolic capital of the agent who utters the discourse.

Lastly, Bourdieu emphasizes the role of state, the central bank of symbolic credit, in the functioning of symbolic power. By ‘codifying’ a symbolic capital, state transforms a specific symbolic capital into the general power (Bourdieu, 1990b, pp. 76-86). For instance, the foundation of an Islamic republic in Iran is nothing but the codification of the symbolic capital of religious leaders. Even though, the symbolic power tends to reproduce the existing order, Bourdieu’s sociology is not incapable of explaining revolutionary changes. On the contrary, symbolic revolution or the



revolutionary re-construction of the world is one of the central themes in his examination of the field of cultural production.

### **Reconsidering Conservatism with Bourdieu**

The difficulty in the sociological study of conservatism is the fuzziness of the concept. What makes it even more difficult is the scholastic tendency of bringing an intelligible explanation by excluding the fuzziness of the concept. 'Conservatism as an ideology or a way of thinking' is the commonsensical site of research within which the partial reality of the concept is treated as the totality of the reality at the cost of covering over the murky reality of the concept. This study interrogates conservatism beyond its ideological posture by applying to the relational approach which implies "shifting the unit of analysis to the relations of force and meaning surrounding the folk category, including the social determinations that gave rise to its emergence in social life" (Medvetz: 2012, pp. 35).

The merit of the relational approach for this study is that it provides the link between the conservatism as the product of experts (or entrepreneurs) from different fields and its consumers (conservative agents) in the social space by taking the acquisition of the dispositions into account. In other words, it relates the conservative politics, philosophy, periodicals, newspapers, literature, and other conservative cultural products with the conservatism of the lived world. A relational inquisition on conservatism does not satisfy with a definition of the concept on paper so long as it is not related to the conservatism of the actually existing conservatives. As Medvetz noted, "the relational definition of a concept does not promise a better definition but rather an empirical definition of it" (Medvetz: 2012, pp. 36).

The previous efforts of empiricization of conservatism in Turkey anchored in a religious affinity between conservative parties and people. Seeing religion as the central bank of conservative values, this perspective perceived the so-called 'religious cultural code' as the main dynamic that makes an individual conservative. The main problem in this latent cultural structuralism which is the commonsensical academic vision in Turkey is the assumption that the source of the conservative values (or the

practical conservatism of the conservative individuals) is textual or scriptural.

However, I argue that conservatism is a form that principles of social vision and division (such as gender, ethnicity, nationality, and religious affiliation) take through the symbolic entrepreneurship of experts from various fields. The principles of social vision and division are basically the socially produced symbolic frameworks about how to relate the world, such as the proper ways of manly/womanly or Islamic/Christian perception and action. "Their sociological significance" lies in their potential "to pattern the social space through the formation of habitus" (Wacquant and Akçaoğlu, 2017, pp. 45). In other words, forming what a man/woman is and how a man/woman perceives the world implies broader social formation such as the formation of family, division of familial labor, interior design of house, and participation to social life.

The 'conservative form' emerged as the orthodox re-construction of the doxic values that the principles of social vision and division had in the ancient regime. In other words, conservative form is a pessimistic critique of the differentiated society within which the doxic definition of the principles of social vision and division lost legitimacy. Thus, the conservative form is not constructed in a void. It emerged as a part of the practical and symbolic struggles of the social world during the great transformations. Once emerged within the dominated social position of the emergent differentiated society, the conservative form is not destined to remain as dominated. It can be the legitimate form depending on the trajectory of the struggles.

There is no substantial and universal source of conservative social vision and division. The strong relation between religion and conservatism lies in the symbolic potential that religion provides for the conservative objectification of the social relations. However, unless the religious, political and cultural experts apply to them, the religious symbolic tools do not construct conservatism by themselves. To put it more clearly, if conservatism in Turkey is strongly related to Islam, it is not only because the inner logic of Islam requires so but also because the religious experts forge the doxic character of everyday life, or because the political agents applies to religious tools while making the political groups or because the cultural entrepreneurs (such as writers and artists) applies to Islamic sources in the

making of their cultural products. As there is no substantial source, there is no monolithic conservative form. There are multiple conservative forms of the principles of social vision and division, and the legitimate definition of the conservative form is at stake in the symbolic struggles among the conservative entrepreneurs.

Once a conservative form was given to the principles of social vision and division, these symbolic products may generate concrete results. Being acquired in family, school, mosque, and political party or association as a set of disposition, these symbolic products can make an individual and the social conditions she lives in conservative. In other words, once being acquired as a set of disposition, these symbolic products become the mental schemata through which the agent perceives and acts in a conservative manner.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I presented a social critique of the established definition of conservatism through re-reading of Pierre Bourdieu's relational sociology. For this purpose, I broke with the identification of conservatism with ideology or a way of thinking. I argued that conservative ideology is a significant dimension of the reality of conservatism. However, treating conservative ideology as the whole reality of conservatism leads to the scholastic reason which identifies conservative agent with conservative philosopher. In this way, the possibility to investigate the practical logic of conservatism evaporates. In the second part of the study, I introduced the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu's relational sociology. After the detailed examination of the logic and instruments of Bourdieu's theory, I developed a dispositional definition of conservatism. I argued that conservatism is a form that principles of social vision and division (such as gender, nationality and religious affiliation) take through the symbolic entrepreneurship of the experts from various fields. Through such a dispositional definition, conservatism is freed from the ideational cage of the scholastic definitions. The fact that the conservative principles of vision and division are open to change paves the way for the establishment of links between the conservative cultural production and cultural consumption of conservative agents in the social space.

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