Journal of Applied Science and Agriculture, 9(4) April 2014, Pages: 2027-2032

AENSI Journals

Journal of Applied Science and Agriculture

ISSN 1816-9112

Journal home page: www.aensiweb.com/jasa/index.html

The Pathology of the Methodological approach to the Discourse of the Iranian Contemporary Intellectuals

Parisa Kadivar

Shahreza Branch, Islamic Azad University, Department of Political Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, Box. 86145-311 . Shahreza. Iran

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 20 January, 2014
Received in Revised form 16 April, 2014
Accepted 25 April 2014
Available Online 5 May, 2014

Key words:
Pathology, Discourse, The contemporary intellectuals of Iran, Philosophy, The methodological approach

ABSTRACT

Background: The gap between the Iranian intellectuals and the urban middle class, as their potential addressees, is a serious crisis of the tradition of intellectualism in Iran at present. Therefore, in the 4th decade after the victory of the Islamic Republic in Iran, we witness the decline of the social role of the intellectuals more than ever so that their discussions and theories have not been accepted by the public. It seems that they are theorizing in a vacuum far away from the current social matters and needs of Iran. **Objective:** The main objective of this article is to address the decline of the intellectuals' role in the society from a social constructivism point of view. Thus, having knowledge on the effect of factors such as the development of the mass media, the publicity of the secondary and higher education, and the conditions of post-industrial and post-ideological, this article regards the intellectuals' discourse as an independent variable and explains the reduction of their social effect. **Results:** This study seeks to prove that the body of intellectualism in Iran from the 60s has had an excessive tendency toward the continental philosophy. The influence of identity-oriented intellectuals from German romanticism, the influence of the left intellectuals of the 70s from Marxism, the influence of traditionalist intellectuals of the 80s and 90s from Haidger, and at last the influence of android-based intellectuals such as Seyed Javad Tabatabaee and Aramesh Doustdar from German idealism are examples of this trend and influence; therefore, the discourse of these intellectuals neglecting the socio-cognitive and pragmatic approaches, is full of abstract, non-dynamic and difficult-to-understand discussions which had no association with the problems related to urban society. Consequently, this caused that the ideas of these intellectuals not be welcome by the addressees in the society and go toward the isolation of intellectual circles. **Conclusion:** This article utilizes the critical view of Richard Rorty, the American new pragmatist philosopher, towards the intellectuals who pay attention to philosophical fundamentalism and have a unilateral emphasis on philosophical and epistemological categories as a default of social developments. This article believes that in order for the discourse of the current intellectuals of Iran to be welcome by wider addressees and their theories are more effective, they should adjust the subject and approach of their discourse to the needs and concerns of the social middle class of the society, using a pragmatic approach.

To Cite This Article: Parisa Kadivar., The Pathology of the Methodological approach to the Discourse of the Iranian Contemporary Intellectuals. ***J. Appl. Sci. & Agric.,*** *9(4): 2027-2032, 2014*

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the intellectuals of Iran and the urban middle class as their addressees in any society, in spite of rises and milestones, has been chiefly weak and discrete. In this relationship, the gap between secular intellectuals and their audience is more than that of their religious peers. This gap has been larger, especially after the victory of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Boroujerdi, 2012).

Some scholars believe in the effect of the religious society of Iran on the success of the religious intellectuals (Dabagh, 2011). Assuming this claim acceptable, in a more rooted attitude, this study believes that the distinction of intellectuals' perspectives in analyses and their attitude is a consequence of the theoretical fundamentals of their discourse and methodological approach. Consequently, this article studies the methodological approach of the contemporary intellectuals in the time frame of recent fifty years.

Thus, the main objective of the present research is to study the theoretical fundamentals of the Iranian intellectualism during the past half-century. This article criticizes the methodological approach of these intellectuals. Hence it seeks to show that most of the theoretical fundamentals of the Iranian intellectuals' discourse have been different trends of Continental philosophy through describing this approach from 1960s to the present in Iran. However, in a few cases in periods of time, some religious intellectuals have proposed their

Corresponding Author: Parisa Kadivar, Shahreza Branch, Islamic Azad University, Department of Political Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, Box.86145-311. Shahreza. Iran.
Ph: +98 (0) 321 3292706, E-mail:parisaa.kadivar@gmail.com

Journal of Applied Science and Agriculture, 9(4) April 2014, Pages: 2027-2032

theories in a socio-cognitive and pragmatic approach which has fortuitously a wider domain of influence (Mirsepasi, 2002).

This article utilizes Richard Rorty's theories, the American new-pragmatic philosopher, in its critical opinion of the philosophical approach of the intellectuals. The research methodology is analytical and based on library sources.

Statement Of The Problem:

During the last three decades after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Iranian intellectuals have gradually lost their social position and there has been a large gap between them and their audience so that since the early 2010s, most of scholars and experts have not expected a realistic prospect of intellectualism in Iran and most of them believe that the role of intellectuals is going to diminish more and more in the society and even some of scholars talk about "end of hero-intellectuals", i.e. atraditional symbol of intellectuals in Iran (Boroujerdi, 2012).

Experts have considered some factors in this process, such as technological development, especially in the realm of mass communication which has caused the intellectuals not to be considered as the only source of information like in the past and most of people are involved in discourse of criticism, urban development, publicity of secondary and higher education, post-industrial, post ideological conditions and other social and political factors.

In addition to the abovementioned factors, this research seeks to place an emphasis on the diminished social role of intellectuals from a social development point of view and join the strategic criticism of contemporary intellectualism of Iran to discourse analysis.

In the social development approach, theoretical and intellectual constructs are as important as materialistic constructs. Thus, the role of cognitive constructs at social changes is emphasized and is considered as an independent variable for explaining political behavior of nations (Pric& Smith, 1998). Accordingly, this research considers the intellectual discourse of Iran as an independent variable along with the abovementioned materialistic variables for analyzing the reduction of intellectuals' social role.

This article tries to explain the methodological approach of Iranian contemporary paradigmatic secular intellectuals' discourse based on a descriptive analysis as the main research question.

The research hypothesis of this article is the Iranian secular intellectuals' tendency towards the continental philosophy and excessive use of this philosophical tradition, has led their discourse into an abstract, non-dynamic and difficult discussion, resulting in the gap between them and the society.

The reason that this article studies secular intellectuals as the case study is that religious intellectuals, in contrast to secular intellectuals, have been able to obtain a social position for themselves during the last decades and have more influence on society.

In order to study the research hypothesis, this article, avoiding sweeping generalization abstraction, initially defines the meaning of secular intellectuals and then provides examples of them and summarizes their discourse.

Methodology:

This article uses the opinions of Richard Rorty, the American new-pragmatic philosopher, to criticize the approach of those Iranian intellectuals who believe in philosophical fundamentalism and place a biased emphasis on epistemology.

Rorty is a critic of Platonism and, in a more general view, is the critic of traditional approach of philosophy. Rorty criticizes the Representational approach which considers fact as the true reflection of reality and takes the role of discovering reality from philosophy and discusses that "the task of philosophy is not to discover the external and pre-determined reality, but as Dewey believes, the task of philosophy is finding the realization to solve the problem not discovering the pre-determined reality "(Rorty, 2007).

Rorty rejects the traditional approach of philosophy toward reality reasoning that since reality for philosophers has a definite concept and unrecognizable so there is no way to understand our distance from reality. In fact, Rorty believes that philosophers do not deal with reality but justification. He clarifies that we could never understand that a hypothesized belief is reality or not; but we could just know that nobody at present criticizes it and everyone agrees that it should be believable (Rorty, 2000).

Rorty rejects the traditional concept of reality and replaces it with justification. He believes that reality has no nature. This approach is due to his pragmatic view. Pragmatism is anti-essentialism.

Rorty is affected by pragmatic philosophers including William James and believes that it is ineffective to say that "fact is the same as reality" but "a fact is something to be believed as beneficial" (Rorty, 2007).

In pragmatic definition of fact, fact is function. It solves problems and ambiguities and relates people to life through experience" (Rorty, 1998).

Rorty, as a pragmatist, considers a new approach towards philosophy, which is modification and improvement of the society. Rorty disapproves the traditional epistemic concept of rationality and considers

Journal of Applied Science and Agriculture, 9(4) April 2014, Pages: 2027-2032

"discourse" as the concrete model of human rationality (Mokhtari, 2010). So he believes that a fact can improve the society, which is obtained through discourse.

He also criticizes the emphasis on philosophical issues as default of social development. He criticizes the philosophical approaches which consider philosophical knowledge as the basis of modern society. He believes that philosophical discussions and consequences of philosophical approaches, though very important, should be limited to private life. He considers philosophers as people using metaphors and allusions and does not consider philosophy as a proper tool for obtaining general objectives and believes that philosophers belong to a private domain whose task is to uplift this domain (Mirsepasi, 2002). So, according to Rorty, philosophy and generally any moral and subjective attempt to uplift human being has a positive effect on the private section but no effect on the general section of society, since human beings have abstract and general definitions and it is hard for them to meet their needs (Rorty, 2007).

This research regards the comments of Rorty as the theoretical base for criticizing the Iranian intellectuals who have a highly philosophical discourse.

Secular Intellectuals of Iran:

The Emergence of secular intellectualism has happened simultaneously with intellectualism in Iran. The Iranian intellectualism was born out of Iran. Thus, the first intellectuals were those who immigrated to Europe as students or political diplomats and grew in that atmosphere. Therefore, Iranian intellectualism was a product of modernism and the West. It is natural that in that period of time, after Constitutional Revolution, non-religious and even anti-religious approaches became dominant in Iran. This continued until 1940s. However, various changes affected secular intellectualism, including formation of various ideological trends which resulted in the emergence of different branches of secular intellectualism. So that, in the last three decades of the second Pahlavi period, secular intellectualism had two major trends of "left" and "national".

Left party was affected by Communist movement of "The Tudeh Party of Iran" (Party of the Masses of Iran) and nationalist movement was affected by various Iranian parties including "Iran Party" and "National Front". Declining the influence of Marxism and Nationalism in the society in mid-60s and the emergence of religious intellectuals, religious intellectuals dominated. So that after 70s religious intellectuals could dominate the society and affect the general structure of intellectualism. After the Islamic revolution, in 80s and 90s, religious intellectualism completely had a hegemonic role among the intellectuals (Kazemi, 2003). Left and National intellectuals were isolated in political, social and even intellectual domains. So, secular intellectualism in Iran, especially since 90s onwards, had an identity independent from political parties and ideologies and contradicted with religious intellectualism.

At present, distinguishing secular intellectuals form religious ones is based on their intellectual activities not their nature. In other words, a religious intellectual considers religion as an object and readouts and reconstructs the religious thought to modify with modernism. Religious intellectuals deal with maintain religion in modern world since they believe in "freedom and knowledge of religion in modern world" (Dabagh, 2011). So, they construct their discourse on modernism and based on "Islam".

But the discourse of secular intellectuals is against religious discourse. It means that they deal with other issues except religion in their discourse and thoughts. For example, the subjects as "history", "thought", "culture", "identity" are the topic of their discourse. It means that secular intellectuals do not deal with religion and if they deal with it, it is not due to epistemological concerns. Since a secular intellectual does not worry about the condition of religion in modern world. He does not believe in social function of religion in modern world. So he looks at religion form outside since religion is a cultural part of the Iranian society. For example, intellectuals such as SeydJavadTabatabaee, ArameshDoustdar, DarioushShayegan, RaminJahanbegloo, DarioushAshoori are secular intellectuals of the Iranian society. They do not deal with religious subjects in their research; the subject of Tabatabaee's research is the history of thought in Iran. Shayegan deals with identity and culture of Iran. Jahanbegloo deals with intellectualism and aversion to violence in Iran. Ashoori mostly deals with Persian language and translation. Doustdar, according to his work, can be called anti-religious.

Generally, the base for this definition is that every intellectual in Iran, who has discourse about subjects except religion, can be called "non-religious intellectual". It should be mentioned that this research does not recognize the characteristics of secular intellectuals as consistent and final but just transitional and functional to help the discussion.

Analysis of the Methodological Approach of the Iranian Intellectual Discourse:

The Intellectualism trend in Iran, form the beginning, was based on the theories of western civilization and modernism. Therefore, the concern of knowing west philosophy was the most important aim of the intellectuals at Constitutional period and first Pahlavi. This concern was due to the belief that the way of development to the western civilization is through coping the Iranian thoughts with western modern philosophy. Thus, the new philosophy of the West was one of the first imported sciences to Iran.

Journal of Applied Science and Agriculture, 9(4) April 2014, Pages: 2027-2032

The beginning of the western philosophy dominance of philosophical discourses of intellectuals goes back to the period of first Pahlavi especially to Ahmad Fardid. Fardid is one of the least known characters and; however, the most influential philosopher of the Iranian modern history. Some called him "the first philosopher of modern history" (Ashoori,1994)

The influence of Ahmad Fardid on the philosophers of 60s and 70s was the demand of "the origin, source and root" and "returning" as confronting the west influenced by German Romanticism. Martin Heidegger, the German philosopher who emphasized returning to "original German culture" as the only way to fight the degrading condition of Germany after World War I (Mirsepasi 2005), was known in Iran by Fardid and had great influence on Iranian philosophers , especially "identity Radicals". Romantic, nostalgic and anti-modern thoughts of Fardid which was highly influenced by Heidegger provided the condition for Iranian intellectuals to "return" to his cultural origins and fight against modernism.

"Identity" discourse which was dominant during the last decade of second Pahlavi period and was influenced by Romanticism had different trends: "localism" of EhsanNaraghi, "traditionalism" of SeydHasan Nasr, "Asia-ism" of DarioushShayegan, "Islamism" of Ale-Ahmad and Shariati. However, all of them had one aspect shared, which was "criticizing modernism and the West". They tried to promote "East" and "West" concepts and believed that the western culture is materialistic and so did not accept it. So, they pointed to maintaining our cultural heritage and going back to the roots against thewestern cultural invasion.

Generally, fighting against the West or modernism was a cultural fighting which had different challenges and approaches. These challenges and approaches allocated a huge part of Iranian history.

Opposite the first and second generation of Iranian intellectuals who includes the intellectuals of first Pahlavi and Constitutional period and had an idealistic approach toward the western modernism and wanted imitation of these thoughts, the third generation of intellectuals in Iran have generally an anti-west approach.

So, based on the concepts of "East" and "West", concepts such as "anti-west" , "returning to self" and "revival of Asian culture" were at the center of the Romantic philosophers' discourse. They celebrated all the cultural achievements of east and ignored the cultural achievements of west and like Shayegan suggested "technical thinking" in order to avoid damages of the western culture (Shayegan, 1992). However, Shayegan, after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, reconsidered most of his ideas and paid attention to modernism and its achievements.

At the same time, alongside German Romanticism, Marxism formed the theoretical base of Iranian intellectuals' discourse. Contrary to Romantic intellectuals, "the approach of the intellectuals, influenced by Marxism, was more political rather than philosophical or theoretical. The scope of the activities of these intellectuals, in addition to the parties and secret societies, was literary and political criticism." (AzadArmaki, 2005)

Marxism for those social critic intellectuals of the regime, who wanted a revolution, was inspired by priority of practice over theory, upon which, Marxist intellectuals whether religious like Shariati or non-religious ones wanted to change the current social and political condition through an "anti-government approach".

Shariati, though was one of the founders of "returning to self", introduced his localism and essentialism discourse with socio-cognitive approach. Shariati alongside his political project, i.e. fighting against Pahlavi regime, and social condition of his time, added practical components to the theoretical and philosophical concepts. So, due to the religious nature of the Iranian society, he used Islamic ideology in his discourse to be known as "religious intellectual". Socio-cognitive and pragmatic approach of intellectuals like Shariati made their discourse not only acceptableto public but also influential in social and political realm.

After the Islamic revolution, Left and Nationalist intellectuals isolated and a new generation of secular intellectuals was born who had a different discourse form their predecessors. This new generation of secular intellectuals along with a new type of intellectuals called "traditional" and "religious" intellectuals formed the main intellectual movements in Iran.

Traditional intellectuals are movements of Iranian intellectuals who organize their thoughts and theories to criticize modernism and defend "tradition"; in other words, their discourse is along with "localists". Traditional intellectuals have a negative view of modernism and consider tradition as a way out of modernism. SeyedHasan Nasr, who entered the eastern tradition, believes that modernism is a kind of poison to kill these traditional civilizations and we need an antibody against the poison which is traditionalism (Nasr, 2011).

Another representative of paradigmatic movement is Reza DavariArdakani. He used the modern discourse to criticize modernism and believes that the West has declined due to using the principles of modernism such as Humanism and rationalism. So, he considers post-modernism as a sign of the termination of modernism not a stage after that (Davari, 1994). He begins from criticizing modernism to defend tradition and stands in post-modern position in his discourse whether criticizing modernism or reflecting tradition and uses Heidegger's ideology (Pedram, 2003).

Davari's ideas about criticizing modernism and empathy with historic approaches of Hegel and Heidegger caused his critics define him as Heideggerian and Continental philosopher and define themselves as Popper or

Journal of Applied Science and Agriculture, 9(4) April 2014, Pages: 2027-2032

analytical philosophy. Heidegger- Popper arrangement is, in fact, arrangement of analytical philosophy against continental philosophy in Iranian intellectualism. The leader of the Popper movement of philosophy in Iran is Abdulkarim Soroush who was considered as a religious intellectual.

Soroush had modern and new theories about consistency in the essence of religion and variability of religious understanding and human needs and non-comprehensibility of Jurisprudential theories (Soroush, 1991). His theories and ideas were expressed by different religious intellectuals such as MojtahedShabestari and Mohsen Kadivar in different ways.

"Soroush, borrowing from sociology of knowledge, claimed that different interpretation of Islamic juridical from religion is due to their understanding of nature, anthropology and religious jurisprudence"(Boroujerdi, 1998). Following these opinions, he wanted changes in the present rules of religious authority and imitation.

Thus, religious intellectuals stayed away from continental philosophy and selected the analytical philosophy in their discourse. Since analytical philosophy mostly relies upon logic and argument and avoids ambiguity, the discourse of religious intellectuals became clear, cohesive and easy to understand in order for them to communicate with their audience more effortlessly in the society. In addition, the content of their discourse was consistent with the problems of the Iranian society.

Secular intellectualism, simultaneously with these two movements, with significant and important representatives such as Tabatabaee, Jahanbegloo, ArameshDoustdar and Shayegan, completed its discourse and used continental philosophy approaches, especially German idealism and Hegel philosophy. Tabatabaee and Doustdar were influenced by German idealism and encountered social problems of Iran with philosophical approach and simply summarized the complex issues of Iran society as "state of mind" and both claimed "rejection of thinking" in Iran and believed that this happened due to religious component of Islamic-Iranian culture. They had an eastern and "negation" approach toward history of thoughts in Iran and considered the lack of thinking as the cause of present crisis in the Iranian society. According to them the only way out of this crisis is the dominance of modern philosophical rational on the society (Tabatabaee, 1998; Doustdar, 2004). So, influenced by Hegel philosophy, they understood philosophical crisis and suggested a way for passing the crisis.

So, intellectual trends in Iran, except for a few cases of religious intellectuals, took a methodological approach of philosophy that is Continental philosophy, and involved in hard, complex and abstract issues which were mostly far away from the social reality of Iran. So, they isolated in non-productive and inactive thoughts and could not communicate with their audience in society., Their discussions were so professional, complex, hard to understand and abstract that even educated class of society were not able to understand it. Consequently, instead of opening their way in society and solving the problems and causing political, social and cultural developments, they were isolated in intellectual circles.

Conclusion:

Since the emergence of intellectualism in Iran, intellectuals have considered western philosophy in their theories. But in 60s, the entrance of German philosophy to the intellectual domain of Iran, considering philosophical approach became the strategic paradigm of Iranian intellectuals. Accordingly, different philosophical approaches and trends of Continental philosophy became the source of intellectualism in Iran, so that the discourse of last half century in Iran was influenced by these philosophical trends.

The effect of Romanticism on "identity-orientation" and "localism" was shown in the philosophical discourse of 1960s. The influence of Marxism on discourse of leftist philosophers of 70s, the effect of Heidegger on traditional intellectuals such as Davari Ardakani in 80s and 90s and finally the effect of German idealism, especially Hegel philosophy, on thought oriented intellectuals such as Tabatabaee and Doustdar in 1990s and 2000s, confirms this claim. The body of Iranian Intellectualism neglected the social and pragmatic analysis of society and philosophical interpretation based on abstract and complex discussions dominated the secular intellectual discourse in Iran, which did not fit needs and problems of Iranian urban society. So, they could not find any audience in the society. However, religious intellectuals have experienced paying attention to social understanding and pragmatic approach that was followed by public interest.

REFERENCES

Aazad Armaki, T., 2005. Stamping ground and Iranian modernity Loh-e-Fekr, Tehran.
Ashoori, D., 1994. Two notes. Negah-e- nou, 22:151.
Boroujerdi, M., 1998. Iranian and the west intellectuals. Translated by J. Shirazi, FarzanRouz, Tehran.
Boroujerdi, M., 2012. The end of intellectual-hero. Mehrname monthly, 20: 36.
Davari Ardakani, R., 1994. Post-modern, recess era. Mashregh, 1: 1-119.
Dabagh, S., 2011.The distinction of religious and cultural intellectualism.Mehrname, 2nd year, 16:43.
Dabagh, S., 2011.The harmonic singing of sorrow.Kavir, Tehran.
Doustdar, A., 2004. Refusal of thinking in religious culture. Khavaran, Paris.
Kazemi, A., 2003. The sociology of religious intellectualism. Tarh-e-Nou, Tehran.

Journal of Applied Science and Agriculture, 9(4) April 2014, Pages: 2027-2032

Mirsepasi, A., 2002. Democracy or Truth.Tarh-e-Nou, Tehran.

Mirsepasi, A., 2005. A contemplation in Iranian modernity. Translated by J. Tvakolian, Tarh-e-Nou, Tehran.

Mokhtari, M., 2010.Rationalism in the practical philosophy of Richard Rorty.Zehn Quarterly, 41:91.

Nasr, S.H., 2011. Modernity is poison and traditionalism is antidote. Mehrname, 2: 11-32.

Pedram, M., 2003.Religious intellectualism and modernity in post- revolution Iran.Gaam-nou, Tehran.

Pric, R., C.R. Smith, 1998. "Dangerous Liaisons Critical International Theory and Constructivism, European Journal Of International Relations, 4: 3-267.

Rorty, R., 1998. Truth And Progress, Philosophical Paper, Cambridge University Press, 3:78.

Rorty, R., 2000. "Universality And Truth" In Rorty and His Crittics, ed By Brandom. Black Well.

Rorty, R., 2007. Philosophy and social expectancy. Translated by A. Aazarang, N. Naaderi, Nashr-e-nei

D. Shayegan, 1992. Asia versus the West.Bagh-e- Ayene, Tehran.

Soroush, A., 1991. Theoretical contraction and expansion of Sharia.Seraat, Tehran.

Tabatabaee, S.J., 1998. IbnKhaldun and social science.Negah-e-Moaser, Tehran.