The Relationship between Religion and Culture in Cultural Policy-Making

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Abstract

Despite the development of cultural policy-making, issues such as the definitions and interpretations of culture, its role in policy-making, and its relationship with other social institutions such as religion are of great significance. Given the centrality of religion in Iranian culture and cultural policies in Iran, an important and fundamental issue is the relationship between religion and culture in social and sociological theories. This important relationship has central significance in cultural policy-making. Classical thinkers in social sciences have all tried to answer this question. The present article tries to consider this issue by analyzing the theories of some sociological thinkers who have carried out extensive studies on religion and culture. The key point is that all these theorists have considered religion in the society and as a social phenomenon; thus religion is a part of culture and society and is positioned under these concepts. Therefore, a deliberate generalization of religion to different cultural areas and policies not only results in fattening up the religion, but also leads to inefficiency of cultural systems.

Keywords: religion, culture, sociology, cultural policy-making
Introduction

An important and highly influential factor in the cultural policy-making of Iran is the role of religion and its relationship with culture. Today many decision-makers of development in different fields agree on the point that culture has an impact on whether and how the objectives of development are gained; and the activities of world organizations, on the one hand, and the cultural shift in the language and texts of the humanities and social science, on the other hand, attest to this claim (Fazeli & Qelich 2013: 14). It seems that, despite the development of cultural policy-making discussions, different definitions and perceptions of culture, its role in policy-making and its relationship with other social institutions such as religion, have created different attitudes and numerous outcomes that accordingly follow from them. The policies and policy-making of the state can be practically successful only when they enjoy scientific support and their process of development is based on scientific foundations and viewpoints. Policy-making constantly adopts a rational approach to the systematic study of social issues and problems. In the course of cultural planning and development, the necessity of the alignment of policy-making with religion and culture, and securing the status and relationship of religion and culture at different levels and stages of policy-making, can be among the priorities of cultural policy-making.

The relationship between religion and culture and the way it is analyzed in cultural policy-making, affects the courses of cultural planning, execution and development. In fact, in the process of cultural policy-making, determining policies and macro cultural strategies for attaining the quadruple objectives of cultural development is necessary (Ejlali, 2000: 2). The identity of policy-making as a subject is all at the same time connected with values, and its duty is to try to create a better society. There should be a commitment to objectivity, on the one hand, and to personal and political values, on the other hand (see Blakemore, 2006: 10). Therefore, cultural policy-making and the status of religion in it cannot be regarded as a neutral viewpoint; neither can it be examined detached from the objective concept of culture. Religion constantly presents a kind of ideology, which can develop a value framework; also, in other respects, religion has objectified cultural manifestations. Therefore, considering the double functions of religion is among the necessities of social planning and reforms.

It appears that to deal with this issue we need to start with the basic definition of each of these two concepts. The definitions and concepts of religion and culture and their domains can be among the most important issues that contribute to the explanation and analysis of the relationship between religion and culture, both as a theoretical issue and as theoretical support for cultural policy-making. Any ambiguity in the definition of religion or culture can lead to different interpretations in state policies and social domain on the part of policy-makers. This can be of great importance since different definitions of religion and culture have been proposed by thinkers in these fields.

Identifying the status of religion in the cultural policy-making of the country and its role in the process of culture-making and sociability in the relationship between religion and culture is of great significance. Given the challenging nature of this issue in our country,
discussions in this regard can bring about a better understanding of this relationship and its effects, systematize this relationship and, to some extent, reduce the harm resulting from any imbalance in this relationship. In dealing with these concepts and understanding the relationship between religion and culture, two relationships can be envisaged: religion as a meta-cultural and meta-social issue, and religion as a social and cultural issue. The first case is more or less rejected in social science theories; that is, religion cannot be considered as a non-social and non-cultural phenomenon or institution or a meta-institutional issue, in other words. But, in the second case, religion has a significant relationship with culture and society. On the one hand, religion can be deemed as a product of culture, i.e. religion, as a social institution, is regarded as the outcome of culture and the manifestation of the human needs and actions society. On the other hand, religion can be assumed as the origin of culture and the center and semantic source of the cultural system (see, Hamilton, 1998; Fenn, 2001: 135). In the definitions of religious sociology, the essential and functional definitions can be pointed out in this regard (Hamilton, 2008: 36). The essential definitions generally deal with the essence of religion, and the functionalist definitions focus on examining the effects of religion on the social life of societies. In the study of the relationship between religion and culture this double division can be considered and the above approaches in relation to culture can be also studied in the writings of theorists. Since most definitions of culture have been proposed in the fields of anthropology and sociology, the functional and systematistic definitions of culture can be highlighted. Considering religion’s totalitarian aspect and its claim to absolutism and finding truth, and also given the centrality of religion in all material and spiritual human domains, in the present article attempt is made to study and analyze this relationship by examining the theories of five social thinkers who have conducted more or less extensive studies on religion. First, the definitions of religion and culture in works of these thinkers are studied and then by determining the framework of these concepts and the extent to which they intervene in each other’s domain, their relationship will be illustrated.

The Sociological Foundations of the Concepts and Theories of Religion and Culture
As already mentioned, there are different theories in sociology about the origin of religions and faiths. Numerous theorists have been engaged in explaining religion, its role in society and its developments. Despite all these discussions, defining religion is far from easy and can be controversial. Many of the definitions of religion are essential definitions and some of them are functionalist ones. The broadness of discussions in this domain and our attempt to highlight different perception of religion, which is aimed at improving our understanding of religion and culture, have made us touch on the sociological religious theories in three domains of thought, and the try to infer the relationship between religion and culture from these discussions. For the same reason, some scholars disagree with an a priori definition of religion, and maintain that the definitions should be a posteriori, based on a comprehensive study and with implicit significance. Considering the share of Marx, Durkheim and Weber in sociological
thinking, first we study their ideas, and then by touching on the combined theories of Parsons and the Geertz’s paradigm for the study of religion, we sum up our discussion.

**Religion and Culture from the Viewpoint of Marx**

Although Marx had reflections on religion, in the field of the sociology of religion his influence is not substantial. In this regard, he has mostly dealt with the cultural and functional similarities of religion, ideology and politics. Freud and Marx are among thinkers who do not consider religion as a fundamental part of human society and life, placing them at the opposite pole to functionalist theories. According to Marx, religion is basically the outcome of the class society. Religion is both a protest against oppression and a kind of consolation and submission to oppression. He finds social order to have been created by man. To him, religion is basically an ideological phenomenon and religious feeling is a social product (Hamilton, 2008: 141-147). Morality, religion, metaphysics and all the rest of ideology and their corresponding form of consciousness seem to be no longer independent. They have no history or development. Men who develop their material production and their material relationships, alter their thinking and the products of their thinking along with their real existence. Consciousness does not determine life, but it is life that determines consciousness (Singer, 2014: 73). However, this general formula was later replaced by two more specific ideas. First, the ideas of the ruling class are the dominant ideas, and second, economic infrastructure determines the cultural superstructure to some extent. This means that the social class that materially dominates the society has an intellectual domination over society as well. Therefore, Marx believes that the dominant cultural ideas are the mental embodiments of the dominant material relationships. In Marx’s arguments, culture is analogous to ideology, i.e. it is determined by material realities (Milner & Browitt, 2012: 89-90). What Marx means by consciousness is not just the capacity of human beings for thinking, but organizing and modeling thinking and other human activities in the collective sense, that is, the relationship between consciousness and the material life. Therefore, culture is created by the material activities of human beings. Culture and ideology are the reflections of the class relationships whose content is determined by the beliefs and ideas of those in power. He considers culture to be solid and homogenous, which cannot have an influence per se (Billington, 2001: 59-62).

In other words, according to Marx, religion is a part of culture, and both of them result from the ideology of the society and are the products of class society. Or, to put it differently, religion and culture express the interests of the dominant classes. The key point is that from the viewpoint of Marx, religion is a social product and a reflection of society and its class structures; as a result, religion cannot be considered beyond these structures and their historical and class contexts. Any account of religion, is an account of the structure and class interests, and consequently, the criticism of religion is the criticism of these structures and interests. Therefore, the presence of religion in any sphere can by no means be considered neutral.
Religion and Culture from the Viewpoint of Durkheim

Durkheim is another theorist in this field. According to him, religion can only be defined in light of the features that constantly accompany it. To anyone who views religion as merely a natural expression of human activity, all religions without exception, are instructive: they all express man in their own way, and can therefore help us reach a better understanding of this aspect of our nature (Durkheim, 2004: 31). Durkheim’s view in analyzing religious phenomena is functionalist and the largest part of his functionalism is focused on social solidarity, order and cohesion; and society will always be moving toward logical thinking in favor of positive social functions.

From his viewpoint, beliefs and rites are two basic categories of religious phenomenon, and between these two categories is the realm of the difference that separates thought from movement. Religious beliefs all have common features and designated by two distinct terms: the profane and sacred, and this is the hallmark that distinguishes religious thought from other thoughts (ibid: 48). Durkheim eventually defines religion as “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred thing, that is to say, things set apart and surrounded by prohibitions – beliefs and practices that unite its adherents a single moral community called a religious community (church)”.

Demonstrating that the idea of religion is inseparable from the idea of community (church) suggests that religion should be eminently collective (Durkheim, 2004: 63). Although in his definition of religion Durkheim emphasized the collective role and society, he does not explain the social roots of the thoughts influencing the actions and relationships dominating the society. Durkheim considers the similarities in religious rites to be the cause of common activities connecting people, and stresses that the systems that enjoy organic solidarity should be based on a common faith or collective conscience if they do not want to disintegrate collectively (Coser, 2010: 188-191). About the function of religious rites and rituals he believes that “there can be no society that does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas which makes its unity and its personality. Now this remaking cannot be achieved except by the means of reunions, assemblies and meetings where the individuals, being closely reunited with one another, reaffirm in common their common sentiments.” (Durkheim, 2004: 591-592). In fact, it can be inferred that he emphasizes the connecting power of religious beliefs in culture as a factor influencing moral solidarity. If we accept the replacement of religious forms that Durkheim had in mind, in this sense, the religious beliefs based on the power of God will be reduced to phenomena created by man. Therefore, according to Durkheim, cultural concepts are objectified in society and based on human and social experiences in the course of social life, and are a social product. Religion, like the objective forms of culture, in a moral form, is the product of society.

Relying on Kant, Durkheim states that acting morally involves the meaning that one can go beyond its own attitude and become aware of the impersonal necessities of life and act on them; in fact, there is no doubt that this is a characteristic common to all forms of thought and action. Durkheim believes that there is something impersonal in us because there is something social in all of us, and since social life embraces at once both
representations and practices, this impersonality naturally extends to ideas as well as to acts (Durkheim, 2004: 617-618). Durkheim’s solution to the antithesis between science and religion is that religious interests are merely the symbolic forms of social and moral interests (Aron, 2005: 392). In other words, Durkheim regards religion as the product of society and a symbol of it. Religion develops and acts in the social context. Therefore, religious formulations originate from and are affected by social and cultural formulations. On the other hand, he places religion under culture. Religion is the sacred part of the content of culture and society, but its nature and existence are not independent of them.

**Religion and Culture from the Viewpoint of Max Weber**

Max Weber is an important theorist in the field of the sociology of religion and culture. According to Weber, the sociology of religion tries to examine the outcomes of religious orientations for history and human society, and establish the effects of these orientations on the lifestyle, approaches and behavior of man (Hamilton, 2008: 236). In his theories, Max Weber repeatedly stresses the role of individual actors and their subjective meanings. The behavior of individuals can be justified under the influence of all kinds of rationality. He does not find the actions of individuals to follow any natural law and holds that in the historical course of societies, motivations are the cause of human actions and these actions, because of their presence in the domain of the mind and human understanding, are not generalizable. Therefore, due to his reliance on meaning in understanding human actions, he regards sociology as understanding human actions. With regard to the subjects of religious sociology, Weber does not directly deal with the origins of religious mentality or the cause of beliefs and religious behavior. He does not explain religion itself, but instead looks into the bonds between different kinds of religion and special social groups and the effect of different religious views on the other aspects of social life, especially economic behavior (Hamilton, 2008: 233). In fact, the sociological causality of Weber and the relationship between the thinking and mentality of people and structures are represented in the religious ideas of Weber.

According to Weber, the science of culture is a causal science which aims at gaining a subjective meaning, that is, the meaning that humans eventually accept for their existence. Human life is made up of a set of choices through which human beings have established a system of values. The science of culture is remaking and understanding human choices. In Weber’s philosophy the main distinction between the facts and values is the introduction to any kind of thinking. Values are developed through human decisions and the essence of value is free choice and approval, and no one can be persuaded through argument and reasoning to approve of a value that he does not cherish (Aron, 2005: 592-593). Therefore, as we see, Weber deems the creation of values to be a social and historical phenomenon. Also, our individual and collective values are the outcome of our choice, and what we have received from society is what we have received from the past until now.

What Weber stresses is that the Protestant beliefs played a great role in the social process of the emergence of capitalism. He aimed to show the extent to which religious forces
participated in the qualitative formulation and quantitative development of the spirit of capitalism. Weber, by highlighting legitimate authority, that is, a type of imperative control based on the acceptance by the subordinates of the right of superordinates to give orders, considered the main kind of authority in modernity to be rational/legal authority. Legitimate authority is unopposed everywhere (Milner & Browitt, 2011: 92-94). Clearly, since Weber did not agree with Marx, who considered economic relations to be the origin of power, he viewed legitimate authority and collective abiding by it to be imperative, efficient and effective. But he was not very optimistic about the future. In fact, Weber highlights the active role and effect of religious thinking on the mental content of people and, consequently, on depicting culture as an independent sphere. He regards the “iron cage” to be the outcome of the goal-oriented rational actions. However, it should be acknowledged that that, leaving aside Weber’s skepticism toward the future of culture, the rationality of human beings in showing tendency toward meaning and also understanding the meaning of value-oriented actions in the abstract system of Weber can help us in understanding the religious.

Max Weber, also, mentions the morality of responsibility and the morality of conviction in justifying human actions and its relationship with values. The morality of responsibility interprets action by the means of “instruments-objectives” criterion, and the morality of conviction urges us to act according to our feelings, without explicit or implicit reference to its outcomes. Here, the actor invokes no judge except for his conscience. Although the morality of responsibility is, to put it simply, a morality whose main objective is efficiency, every morality of responsibility is rooted in some conditions; and it is quite clear that a morality of conviction cannot be the morality of the state and morality of a human being who enters the domain of politics. A morality that is solely inspired by conviction is of a superior type to which people should get close to the extent that it is not in contradiction with the necessary restrictions for a rational behavior (Aron, 2005: 595-598).

In the thinking of Weber, the morality of conviction is one possible religious state and the analysis of this morality in his ideas gets involved in the sociology of religion. Understanding the beliefs and convictions of people requires an overall understanding of being, which encourages the individual into action and results in the experiences of life. Considering Weber’s sociological causality and understanding the point that a cause is not necessarily a reason for a social change or transformation, it can be concluded that, according to Weber, an incomplete understanding of a social concept will render its social outcomes vulnerable.

Talcott Parsons rightfully draws attention to the main subject in Weber’s dealing with religion and, consequently, to the importance of belief in divine justice. In this respect, religious convictions are attempts to give meaning to life and get involved in the incongruities between the actual experience and expectations. Weber did not aim to analyze religion in terms of what religion is, but he intended to look into the conditions and effects of belief in divine justice in different cultures (Turner, 2012: 78). According to Weber, human behavior gains a social quality when the agents consider a meaning for
what they do and orient their behavior toward behavior similar to that of others (Max Weber, 2013: 17).

Weber believes that the nature and degree of the impact of religious and cultural values on the behavior of individuals and society cannot be a primary issue; what is important is to know how and to what extent these values affect behavior and how they themselves are influenced by other variables (Weber, 1992: 12). In fact, there is a mutual relationship between culture as a social force and social behavior. Social behaviors are rooted in the cultural mentality of individuals proportional to the extent the mental culture of people forms their social behaviors. Behaviors are the tangible objective aspects that can serve as a criterion for the mentality of actors, and vice versa. Religion as a factor that gives meaning to human action and behaviors is objectified through the mind of individuals, and the objective behavior of individuals can be a factor in understanding their mentality. According to Weber, what is important is to understand the interaction between different elements of human behavior, without reducing all factors to one of them (Freund, 2004: 199).

Weber has studied the impact of religious behavior on morality and economy and, specifically, on politics and education. To him, religious behavior is at least relatively rational, not in terms of the relationship between instrument and goal, but in connection with belief in the general rules of experience (Freund, 2004: 168). What is clear is that these tensions result from the essence of the rationality hidden one way or another in each social behavior. Therefore, considering the relative rationality in the religious behavior from the viewpoint of Weber, the religious behaviors and formulations cannot be taken out of the ordinary goal-oriented behavior altogether, even if, as Weber has put it, we trust in the general rules of experience. According to Durkheim, people do not necessarily live completely in the religious world, and everyday life undermines the authority of collective conscience in religion (Rahmani: 2004).

According to Weber, “the development of religions all over the world is determined through the presence of a real truth” and religious forces are among the cultural constitutive factors which, because of the legitimacy resulting from them, can change the present situation. Overall, according to Weber, understanding religion as a semantic system is influenced by the choices of human beings and the members of groups. He pays no attention to the origins of beliefs, and the main point is that the religious tradition in each society is proportional to the contextual social conditions of the groups in that society. For the same reason, religion is formed under society and culture and through the process of the sociological choices of society members (Weber, 1970: 122).

Religion and Culture from the Viewpoint of Parsons

Parsons has tried to combine and explain the relationship between social and cultural systems. He is among the thinkers who draw a distinction between social systems and cultural systems. According to him, cultural systems are common meaningful symbols through which actors communicate with each other; and a social system is a set of actions and reactions of a group of individuals. The importance of culture for Parsons is in the
social values, norms and order that are achieved through the unconscious adaptation of individuals to formal and informal cultural patterns of social life (R. Hall & Jo Neitz). Influenced by Durkheim, he observed the role of morality in the formation of individual behavior through collective conscience (Smith, 2004: 48). According to him, agreement about common values is at the heart of social system. Although he talks about the independence of systems, he places more importance on cultural system (Smith, 2004: 48).

From the viewpoint of Parsons, an institution is an established state of similar and organized behaviors, which are at the same time responsible for social control and the realization of the basic needs of society. He believes that to have an objective perception of institution we should consider it as a construct (subsidiary system) of society that has a specific duty in social life and relatively obligatory norms which are accepted by society or imposed by it. Also, Malinowski views each institution as a part of the whole culture of society. Therefore, the collection of the social institutions of a society shapes the culture of that society (Rouholamini, 1993: 42). However, the difference in the extent to which individuals accept the principles of the social and cultural institutions can be considered relative in society due to the differences in individuals’ threshold of acceptance, approval and satisfaction based on what Weber considers as the interpretation of individuals of situations.

Drawing on Durkheim’s cultural perceptions shaped by the formation of individual behavior by collective conscience and Weber’s sociology of religion and the concept of the action based on value rationality, Parsons believes that in human action, motivation is internal and patterned, making people voluntarily move toward particular common goals. Therefore, from the discussion on the relationship between religion, culture and society, it can be concluded that cultural phenomena cannot be separated from social phenomena. Human beings perform actions on the basis of the experiences of living in the framework of determined and sometimes voluntary cultural phenomena, which have been gained from society and act as a stimulus for behavior. Thus, by assuming the independence of the concept of society from culture, we can see that neither of them can have organized and efficient existence without the other. If we assume religion to be independent from culture and society, once again their efficiency and effectiveness would be undermined when we consider each of them without the other two. Therefore, drawing on Parsons and assuming the independence of social institution, we can explain the necessity of their mutual relationship.

**The Relationship between Religion and Culture**

As pointed out earlier, studying the relationship between religion and culture in policy-making is important in that considering any relationship between these two can influence the structure and formulations of cultural policy-making and consequently their social reproduction in the social field and the resulting outcomes. Understanding the relationship between religion and culture in the ideas of social thinkers depends on the meaning we assign to religion. Most challenges concerning this issue
follow from the fact that theorists have various perceptions of religion and culture. But what most theorists agree on is the fact that religion has retained its transcendental character in the society.

Some critics of modern life attribute many modern behaviors to the diminishing religious values; some others, instead of focusing attention of the declining religious values, attach importance to the increase in membership in religious organizations and the revival of religious activities in societies. To assess which set of discussions deserves more attention, a clear understanding of religion is needed (Scott & Schwartz, 2000: 372).

Geertz developed a new paradigm for religious studies by creating ideas about religion. Overall, by highlighting symbols as the main carriers of religion, he examined their role in the religiosity of human beings. To him rites are the most important realm for the creation and strengthening of the religious life of religious people and an appropriate context to for religious studies. He is engaged in explaining religious rites and their interpretive analysis in most of his works (Rahmani, 2004). Religious symbols show a fundamental correlation between a particular lifestyle and metaphysics, and each one maintains it through the power they receive from each other (Geertz, 1993: 90). Religious concepts develop to introduce a general idea, beyond special metaphysical contexts, in a situation where a broad range of intellectual, emotional and moral experiences can give them a meaningful form (ibid: 123). Human behaviors are conducted on the basis of cognitive and metacognitive mechanisms, a great part of which is religion. Religion, as a social issue, is closely connected with the process of socialization, which can be seen in all societies. We deal, not with linear relationship between social behavior and religion, but with a cyclic and dialectic relationship, making it impossible to separate them from each other (Fakouhi, 2012: 193). Geertz considers the concept of culture as a historical pattern transmitted through meanings hidden in symbols, a system of inherited concepts which is expressed in symbolic forms through the meanings of the relationships between individuals, the continuation and development of their knowledge in this relationship and finally their attitude toward life (Geertz, 1993: 89).

As can be seen in Geertz’s theories, the role of religion in the life of people, especially its signifying function, cannot be easily overlooked. Religion is one of the most important sources of meaning in the everyday life of people. However, as Geertz has stressed, people do not necessarily have to lead a religious life, because having a religious mentality and living a religious life are not necessarily the same. And the people’s lives have their own discursive diversity and plurality, one of the most important of which is religious discourse (Rahmani: 1383).

Thus, in different theories, culture is the product of material and non-material factors. An important point to be highlighted is that in the social history of societies, culture and religion have always accompanied each other, and in the ideas of social theorists this relationship has been clearly established. Marx does not consider religion neutral, and Durkheim views culture as a positive and functional issue; also, Weber emphasizes the independence of culture.
It seems that we cannot illustrate a rational relationship by assuming the centrality of religion or culture and the major and unilateral impact of each one on social policy-making. What is clear is that religion exists in the social life of individuals as a meaning-producing truth, and culture has penetrated different aspects of human life as a subjective and also objective issue. The social behavior of individuals is always the social constructs of human thinking. Understanding the lived experiences of human beings with the aim of achieving a balance in the relationship between religion and culture is essential. By restricting the meaning of each one and considering their meanings to be interdependent one is only reducing one to the other. It appears that the most appropriate definitions of culture for the purpose of explaining the relationship between religion, culture and policy-making are those that present religion as a social institution with functions, and culture as different ways of life. In cultural planning this pragmatic principle should be taken as the basis, according to which culture is something that is regarded as culture from the viewpoint of those acting in it. This definition of culture by anthropologists, who believe that culture is the way of living, is closer to cultural planning than to the aesthetic definitions that considers culture form the viewpoint of arts (Fazeli & Qelich, 2014: 376).

What is clear in the previous discussions concerning this relationship is that in the ideas of Marx we find an equal relationship in this regard. This is because he considers both culture and ideology to be reflections of the class relationships and the ideas and convictions of the ruling class, and from his point of view there is no neutral aspect in these two concepts. Durkheim stresses the efficiency of religious rites in society, and believes that social discipline, solidarity and unity, the revival of values and finally a feeling happiness and ecstasy are among the functions of religious rites in society (R. Hall & Jo Neitz, 2012: 88). Therefore, according to Durkheim, as already mentioned, religion is positioned under culture, and culture plays a greater part than religion in social life. Since Weber emphasizes the necessity of the stabilization of collective ideas by religion, he does not envision for religion a life independent of culture. Weber found understanding religion to be a semantic system influenced by the choices of human beings. And Parsons, by making a distinction between the cultural system and social system and stressing order, morality and agreement on common values, attaches more importance to the cultural system.

The discussions above indicate that sociological theories highlight the centrality of culture and its role in the social life of human beings; also they do not consider human beings passive in this regard and identify a highly conscious role for them. Moreover, they all regard religion as a part of culture and define and analyze it under it. It should be noted that the necessity of analyzing these relationship in cultural policy-making and their part in the kind of planning can be explained and interpreted.

Religion, Culture and Cultural Policy-making
Hamilton believes that “if religious attitudes toward life adjust or modify their teachings, they do not necessarily weaken” (Hamilton, 2008: 295). However, it should be pointed
out that no institution acts in vacuum. One can understand a social institution only if he studies its relationships with other institutions. Religion, governance, trade, education and family are always interacting with one another. Education created outlooks that can affect the acceptance or rejection of religious rules, and religion, in its turn, praises education. All institutions feel the necessity of constant adjustment in society, and changes in one institution impose changes in other institutions (Horton & Hunt, 1972: 183). Norms and values are transmitted from one generation to another generation and cultural reproduction is a mechanism by which cultural experience continues and is preserved through time. The processes of education in modern societies are among the main mechanisms of reproduction which do not act just through what is taught in the formal courses of education. Cultural reproduction occurs through curriculums and the aspects of behavior individual learn informally at schools in a hidden way (Giddens, 1989: 725). According to Giddens, in the process of sociability, society invokes a feeling of compliance, and since society has a particular nature, which is different from our nature, it pursues its own goals; and as society cannot attain these goals except through us, it relies on our help. Society imposes all pressures, deprivations and sacrifices, without which social life would be impossible, on us. In fact, the domination of society on our individual conscience concerns the moral authority that society possesses rather than the physical domination of society; and our submission to society is, first and foremost, due to the fact that society is the subject of real respect on our part (Aron, 2005: 400-401). However, understanding religion as a social phenomenon, like any other social phenomenon, is made possible through understanding social categories, concepts and the lived experience of human beings in different societies, which can be as diverse as the number of human beings and societies (Fakouhi, 2012: 202).

Social policy is a part of the process of production, distribution and exercise of power in society. Thus, cultural policy is connected with all social and political aspects of society. Cultural policy is the body of decisions, programs, procedures and measures that are employed by organizations, including civil, nonprofit, public and state organizations and governments in an organized and institutional way to develop a symbolic order through intervention in cultural processes. The most important function expected from cultural policy is establishing a kind of cultural agreement and adjustment in society through creating common and accepted values and beliefs. Cultural policy is a domain in which social order is established and maintained through culture rather than violence or force. It denotes planning and management in the field of culture and is oriented toward the ultimate goals governing the procedures, programs and policies in a society or political or social system. In fact, cultural policy is more general than cultural policy-making (Fazeli & Qelich 2013: 314-316). Ideology is an important concept in gaining a clear and tangible understanding of the kind and way of the intervention of the state in the domain of culture. Ideology can be considered as the most prominent and at the same time most hidden aspect of planning and cultural policy; moreover, ideology, in the sense of the ideas, beliefs and thinking about human, society and the world, is not a problematic issue,
and reference to the official documents of the cultural policies of governments indicates that ideologies embody the spirit of the cultural policy of most countries (Fazeli & Qelich 2013: 135-159). Therefore, the discussions and challenges concerning religion, culture and policy-making in different theories highlight the point that religion and culture are two intertwined identities, and in all definitions of religion and culture and their relationship with each other, their nature, function and influential structure and adjustment to each other have been discussed. In the following we deal with the consequences of different situations in the relationship between religion and culture in policy-making.

The Consequences of the Centrality of Religion or Culture in Cultural Policy-making

Two different states can be assumed regarding the consequences of the centrality of religion or culture in cultural policy-making. In the first state, religion dominates culture in cultural policy-making. In addition to bringing up the functional aspects of religion from the viewpoint of social thinkers and the necessity of considering the interconnectedness of religion and culture, it should be remembered that changes can, to a degree, result from the autonomous character of culture; but on the other hand, collective conscience and belief in ideology as a true consciousness will reduce cultural vulnerability.

There is a mutual relationship between ideology and culture, in a way that ideology creates culture and culture is fashioned by religion. Regarding culture, as a constant, steady element, and foundations of ideology as a dynamic element, there is a mutual necessity; no absolute ideology can exist without having a bond with a culture, because ideology devoid of culture denotes a subjective intellectual and mental system that has not been put into practice in society. Culture without an ideological movement is an established and organized culture in which no movement exists. Therefore, keeping the ideological foundation alive and creating culture in the sense of healthy human relationships and proper social behavior, and the formation of the true character of human, that is, creating consistent organizations and establishing a creative artistic and scientific culture along with and in connection with it, are of great importance (Tavassoli, 2007: 69-70). On the other hand, ideological states constantly try to provide a completely new and different definition and framework for life and create a new identity and personality for people in society. However, in the modern world, a part of human identity is formed through interaction with other cultures. Governments should host culture and beliefs, and exercise its norms rather than act as the producer of meanings and norms. In this state, religion cannot set goals and impose ways and methods for movement in the domain of society and politics. This viewpoint can result in a reduction in the attraction of religious messages, double treatment of values and sacred things, providing religious structures with authenticity, the marginalization of the content of religion, undermining religion’s role in giving motivations and stimulus, religion’s transformation into an obstacle to development and finally turning religious institutions and organizations into multi-functional bodies (Nazari, 2003). Religion plays a part in worldly reactions and has
contributed positively to “civil society”; in fact, it can make social and political difference in two respects. First, at macro level, different religious institutions and organization can play a direct part in the public arena by calling into question governmental shortcomings. Second, at micro level, religion can create a feeling of social capital by creating motivations for its participants and employing them in socio-political spheres (Dillon, 2003: 348).

In the second state, culture takes precedence over religion in policy-making. Durkheim believes that in the process of the sociability of individuals and reproduction of values, the key concept of religion is the concept of anonymous and dispersed power and in fact the subject of worship (Aron, 2005: 400). To Durkheim, religion is the outcome of society and a symbol of it and is formed in the social context under the influence of social and cultural processes. Therefore, society sanctifies religion on the one hand, while on the other hand, due to the independence of religion from society, people find themselves responsible for following the sacred things. Thompson, by adopting a structural definition of culture, considers the purpose of the study of culture to be contextualizing and structuralizing culture. He finds it necessary in the study of culture to pay attention to the structures and contexts in which meanings and symbols are formed. According to him, ideology gains its importance due to the facts that contexts produce forms of meaning. But in his criticism of Geertz, he holds that social and historical contexts are never neutral and involve the conflicts and disagreements of different groups; these conflicts and disagreement play a great part in culture (Fazeli & Qelich 2013: 175).

In societies where norms are constantly undermined, governments, to control people socially and prevent social disruption, turn norms into laws so that they are legally sanctioned. This results in an increase in the number of rules and regulations in society, making it harder to control such a society. Therefore, it can be said that some of the problems and threats faced by the cultural system of Iran follows from the increasing intervention of the state in cultural issues, which can pave the way for other problems (Nazari, 2003).

According to N. J. Demerath, in a world replete with violence, oppression and corruption, it is little wonder that religion should be considered as solution. Whether as prayer, theology or revelation, religion is the first and last hope of human beings to rely on in confronting social ills (Dillon, 2003: 348). Clifford Geertz, unlike in the Marxist approaches, does not regard ideology to be false; he defines ideology as the system of beliefs, conditions or a set of ideas with determined characteristics or functions. He believes that among the functions of ideology are, its being common among members of a particular group and its capacity to justify the social position of that group; therefore, ideology is a kind of collective, rather than individual, consciousness (Fazeli & Qelich 2013: 162).

It is true that if we have narrow interpretations of religion, its perspectives for making changes in the secular world will be restricted, but is untrue to say that religion has become useless. When its cultural and structural potentials are combined, it can still be very powerful (Dillon, 2003: 358). McIntyre convincingly argues that moral arguments
are meaningful to people only when demands are made in a narrative form. Narratives link actors and community, intentions and acts (R. Hall & Jo Neitz, 2012: 67). It can be said that in most countries, more or less, there is a kind of official, either overt or covert, control over religion and culture. Also, cultural events do not always have a complete cause and different grounds can be highlighted in this regard. Therefore, it should be stressed that religion and culture should in a balanced relationship with each other rather that a unilateral, authoritarian relationship. Official control over either of them can be destructive. Ignoring religion in the cultural affairs can attract strong social reactions, which can have a devastating effect on culture. Therefore, our understanding of realities would be more comprehensive if we consider a balanced relationship between religion, ideology and culture. What is clear is that in cultural policy-making, the lives of citizens should not be forgotten (Farasatkhah: 2013). Thus, coming up with a logical and balanced relationship between culture and religion is one of the most important duties of religious and cultural representatives and policy-makers in society.
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