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Intellectuals, Ideology and Politics: A Critical Review of the Intellectuals' Role in Society

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Abstract:

Evaluating the intellectual streams concerning politics, we can see the ideological categorizations that have affected politics. How intellectual groups can be categorized in terms of politics - intellect relation? And to what extent their role has been negative or defendable? The twentieth century has witnessed three types of intellectual; dogmatic, nihilist, and 'universal explorer'. Since the intellectual has been constantly striving to provide the utopia and its realization, from Plato to Rousseau and Marx, we can imagine that the least mistake in theoretical calculations could have left the intellectual to the abyss of obscurantism and dark-mindedness. As the century witnessed the proximity and surrender of some intellectuals to oppressive, totalitarian ideologies, some analysts refer to the ideological trap of intellectuals as the 'Syracuse Charm'; a situation in which reckless concern of intellectuals without calculating the practical connotations, leads them to the trap of politics and the temptation of ideologies.

Keywords: Intellectuals, politics, totalitarianism, ideology, Habermas

1. Introduction

Intellectuals have something to do that may be more important than politics.

And that is, seeking the truth. Raymond Aron; The Opium of the Intellectuals.

Although the intellectuals form 'a heterogeneous and dissimilar group of people' (Boudon, 2003), a continuation could be seen in the history of intellectuality from 'Dreyfus to Edward Said'. The intellectual work is concentrated on the thoughts and actions of people who are generally engaged in intellectual activity and writing. From the dawn of the modern era till the age of 'posts', these people have tried to fulfill their instinctive abilities- intellectual practice, deal with their local and universal issues and challenges and if needed, engage with the politics. Some of these people always consider themselves responsible to their society but others, with an essentialist point of view, define intellectuals according to their critical approaches. In this framework, an intellectual, critically observes society and tries to build the critical culture of modern society. In the present study, we intend to examine 20th-century intellectuals' practice, in the context of the political background of that era.

In other words, we try to find out what types of intellectuals could have appeared as a result of the confluence of politics and intellectual work? To answer this question, we hypothesize three occasions, as if each of them, within the framework of the epistemic order, based on Skinner's contextual approach, are indebted to the contexts and conditions of their political affairs.

In this light, we classify intellectuals into three categories: 'Ideologue intellectuals' who define and pursue intellectual work as 'political engagement'. The second type, which we define as 'Nihilists', refers to intellectuals who have reacted to the politics by various forms of 'political insouciance'. And finally, 'Universal Inquiring intellectuals' who, we believe could be considered, as an appropriate alternative to the last two types. These intellectuals, while thinking about the basis of politics, keep their commitment to democratic political responsibility. Naturally, after examining the disadvantages of the two aforementioned categories, we will discuss the necessity of reconstructing intellectual work to realize Universal intellectuals. Before that, we should develop our methodology.

2. Theoretical Framework

One might think of Anatole France as one of those who gave the first definition of intellectual work. He considered intellectuals as a group of elites who interfere in the social events ..., without being assigned any political responsibility. In this sense, intellectuals and the intellectual class are results of the modernity. In his essay 'What is Enlightenment?' Emmanuel Kant considered 'the courage of asking and knowing' as the most important characteristic of intellectuals (Cahoone, 1996). In the early part of the Enlightenment, they have started to criticize the foundations of the old social and political life and became advocates of principles like freedom, equality, and development. Rising of the Modern State, developments of civil society and the role of culture, provide a basis for a sociological definition of intellectuality, which sees social criticism as the main responsibility of the intellectuals (Rashidi, 2012). According to Ramon Budan, 'the main art of this community is to criticize. Their main role is to find social anomalies and find ways to fix them. So ... people who

are concerned with humanity and politics could be considered as the producers of thoughts and theory in the Modern Society. In other words, an intellectual is someone who criticizes the foundational issues of society, using critical wisdom' (Bahrami, 2014).

In his famous book *Opium of the Intellectuals* (1955), Ramon Aaron provides an extensive as well as a narrow definition for intellectuals. The most extensive definition includes all the white collars. The narrow definition, though, just includes the experts and the scholars. According to him, the 18th century France and the 'companions of enlightenment' are the best examples of the intellectuals (Aron, 1955; Aron, 2018). In the early modern era, with good faith to reason, science, and progress, most of the intellectuals were optimistic about the future of human society. They believed that public education and the state's support led to the development process faster and easier. While, the next generation of intellectuals, affected by de-constructivist thinkers like Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, and Parté had a different outlook. This group of thinkers, facing the disasters of their age, as political action, have rejected the essentiality of reason and started bitter criticism of life and the world, wisdom and values, ethics, religion and philosophy (Jaspers, 1961). Ironically some intellectuals have joined ideological systems.

The extensive definition of the term 'intellectual' goes back to the end of the 19th century, but the definition of intellectual as critical writers who challenged the existing structures and try to affect the public opinion goes back to a century earlier. Voltaire played an important role in clarifying the role and responsibilities of intellectuals (Muller, 2003). Since the late 18th century, two developments led to facilitate intellectual work and empowered their role in society. First: changing the economical foundation of literature from patronage to market economy; and, development of a new kind of politics which was based on knowledgeable people or public opinion rather than the will of governments.

Along with Voltaire, Condorcet also talked about the emergence of a new era after the French Revolution, in which new moral and political sciences would lead human beings to light and progress. So, in this age of faith and hope, the responsibility of intellectuals is obvious: to recognize the faults, prejudices, superstitions and at the same time expose illegitimate interests that lean on these three evils.

Less than two centuries later, however, all the optimism and certainty of people like Voltaire and Condorcet were replaced by skepticism. While the intellectuals of the enlightenment era gave way to the modern political systems to use legitimate power and lead the human society to prosperity and peace, the result was different from what they had in mind. This time, some critical intellectuals have shown how the authoritarian regimes abused language, wisdom, science, and progress to established death camps in different parts of the world.

Criticizing the role of intellectuals in 20th-century politics, Edward Said notes: 'An intellectual is neither a pacifist nor a common consensus builder. The whole of his/ her existence is dependent on a critical distinction and recognition' (Said, 1996). Looking for the truth, he/she should be ready for all kinds of passions. All intellectuals, from rational to romantic, idealist to nihilist have one thing in common: 'being disobedient' (Said, 1996). Said believes that the intellectual's search for the truth is eternal and he/she always has to quarrel with dogmatists who defend their insight or holy books. According to him, the most important component of the universal realm of an intellectual is his/her unconditioned freedom of belief and speech.

Now the question is, if social engagement and political activism are the founding components of an intellectual's character, what are the results of these on his position and behavior? What are the characteristics of different and/or contradictory epistemic-political structure? And at last, what kind of political action and theorizing can reflect the role and responsibility of an intellectual?

3. Ideology and Political Engagement

In the introduction of his book, *The intellectuals and politics* (2001), Mark Lilla notes that many intellectuals of the 20th century have supported ideological regimes like Fascism and Communism. The same thing happened, he continues, to national liberation movements of the 1960s which immediately transformed into traditional authoritarianism and brought misery to people across the world. (Lilla, 2001).

In line with Lilla, we can ask how ideologies make some intellectuals, against their reasonability toward critical thinking, to act in a mythical romantic framework and accompany fascist and communist regimes. It is not clear enough what was the role of their intellectual-political mentality in this historical- ethical slippage. In a critical approach, these intellectuals could be categorized as people who are influenced by anti-modern ideas of late 19th century philosophers like Nietzsche, who have reached to an appreciation of heroic and racist discourse of people like Goebbels. Karl Levitt, once a student of Heidegger, notes that his pro-Nazi ideology was with the principles outlined in the book *Being and Time* (Beisegui, 1997).

Considering these facts, intellectuals who were caught up in Hannah Arendt's interpretation of 'ideological storms' (Arendt, 2013) have already been preoccupied with an epistemological problem which is called epistemological fault and false awareness. The history of ideological theory highlights different aspects of this concept including epistemological, sociological as well as psycho-cultural aspects. Here we define it as a complex of political beliefs that, according to Dotrasey, the founder of this concept in 1797 was based on scientific theories of cognition.

McLellan clearly notes that Ideology is a consequence of the French enlightenment movement (McLellan, 1995). People like Dotrasi sought to continue the materialist and scientific intellectual tradition of Francis Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke. They also accelerate the transition from dogmatic concepts and thoughts to correct reasonable wisdom. The critical approach of Marx and Engels to the 19th century capitalism has changed Ideology as an originally progressive and modern concept to a negative one. Marx considered Ideology as 'false consciousness' which in its idealistic form stands against

materialism and objectivism or is used as an instrument for economic power to justify the economic and political inequalities.

According to Marx and Engels's historical materialism, Ideological thoughts and manipulation of reasoning is an instrument to distort facts either consciously or unconsciously. It is also recognized to justify the position of the ruling class. In other words, 'in each era, the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas' (Rajaie, 2006). Considering early 20th century's developments, including First World War, Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and Nazis' dominance in Germany, the devastating consequences of the 'superior race' and 'upper class' ideas as well as the threats of communism and Fascism for democracy and freedom convinced many people to think of ideology as the source of dangerous ideas. On that occasion, ideology could be considered a negative term, which intellectually and epistemologically is against reasonability and politically is in affiliation with authoritarian systems.

Isaiah Berlin, who witnessed the horrific experiences of the past century, has elaborated on the important influence of thoughts and philosophies on the real-life scene. He illustrates how these groups of thinkers have caused unseen and partial disasters, by forming dogmatic intellectual systems (Berlin, 2002). According to people like Berlin, Popper, and Arendt, ideologies are the product of extreme romanticism. In Edward Shils's view, romanticism arises from ideological politics, and thus from the very heart of intellectual rituals and derision of the realities. (Shils, 1972)

Ideologies are beliefs that justify and to some extent, guide the actions of groups. Both the ideological intellectual community and dogmatic political systems have contributed to the political application of this concept to persuade the masses either to 'make great sacrifices for the aspirations of leaders, to expand the power of government or to expand their dominance in society' (Plamenatz, 1992). In this sense, ideology is a phenomenon that departs from the socio-scientific objectivity and transforms ideas into social levers of power to make thought and theory functional. According to Daniel Bell, 'Ideologies are weapons'. Ideology is their language. Ideology is even more than that. It is the belief in the consequences of thoughts and ideas. For the ideologue, the truth is merely the act, and the experience of the moment of transformation takes on meaning. The ideologues don't live by contemplation; this is the action that makes them alive. (Bell, 1960)

Experiences of the 20th century reflect the fact that some of the intellectuals have been responsible for the emergence of some inhumane catastrophes, by the renunciation of their moral responsibilities. In his book *Freedom and its Betrayal*, Berlin correctly warns about the great influence of some thinkers on our modern-day thoughts, ideas, and practices (Berlin, 2002). Mark Lilla calls this kind of engagement to politics as 'the charm of Syracuse', a situation in which the reckless and unconcerned engagement, led intellectuals to be politicized, or tempted by ideologies. The charm of Syracuse and the attempt to build an earthly paradise with the help of ideological systems aroused the thoughtful minds and inevitably led to political catastrophes. 'Communism and Fascism, Marxism in all its transformations and Third Worldism, were often inspired by the hatred of dogmatism, but they inspired great leaders and made the intellectuals turn a blind eye to their crimes' (Lilla, 2001).

To tie ideology with politics means to adopt or understand a faith-based politics that leads to political blindness, which is what most people mean when they speak of people's indoctrination. Ideology and ideological thought give a mythical character to ideas and destroy the intellectual nature of concepts. It destroys the power of analysis and leads to political catastrophes. In ideology nothing is scientific; and like the mythological nature, adheres to a dogmatic principle and adopts its primarily presumptions, as 'a priori truth'. Accordingly, the ideologue is accustomed to talking about things that tend to be unquestionable and anti-empirical. (Qasemi, 2017)

After World War II, when some thinkers, such as Ramon Aaron, sought to examine the relationship between politics and intellectuals, mythical thinking had become prevalent. As Levi-Strauss wrote in an essay almost concurrent with the publication of Aaron's *Opium of intellectuals*, nothing is more like mythical thinking than political ideology. It can be argued that in contemporary societies, ideology has taken the place of mythical thinking. Aaron also tried to explore the myth of 'left' and committed intellectuals. He shows how in that years, because of the ideological desires of some intellectuals, three myths of 'left', 'revolution', and 'proletariat', have replaced three principles of 'progress', 'reason' and 'public' and considered as a secular religion (Aron, 1955). These groups of intellectuals claimed to have a full interpretation of the world.

In his research, referring to the theories of two left thinkers, Sartre and Maurice MerleauPonty, Aaron explains how these two ideological and faith-based thinkers, in the name of historical necessity denied the existence of labor camps and cruelties of Stalin regime and called these phenomena as minor realities and inevitable consequences of revolutionary transformative action. Merle-Ponty, for example, justified the Moscow trials, and Sartre at some point in his intellectual life saw the Soviet regime as an embodiment of the revolutionary ideals. As a result, he believed that none of the intellectual communities of the world were harmed by fanatical and ideological prejudices, like France (Aron, 1955).

Aaron, inspired by the nineteenth-century thinker, Alexi de Tocqueville, who had spoken of the negative role of the 'literary' in politics, now comes to look at the ideological nature of the intellectuals' point of view. In his work, Aron shows how this community with features such as 'scarification', 'irreconcilability', 'unconditional enthusiasm' and 'fanaticism' that have been aroused by some political doctrine in the twentieth century, transformed ideology into a religious discourse with the same functions. For this reason, ideological intellectuals cannot 'contemplate politics' (Entekhabi, 2001). They do not understand the proportionality between what is possible and what is desirable, what is and what should be. So, they often take their dreams for granted. Those intellectuals, who theorized per fascism and communism, have been the cause of the ideological controversy and have failed to deal with the practical tasks and ethical responsibilities to reestablish their thinking. Subsequently, they could be responsible for the post-war political and economic situation. Other thinkers such as Martin Heidegger and Karl Schmidt in Germany, in this sense, also advocated

faith-based politics and failed to show political and intellectual restraint, either against their intellectual rivals or in the context of time and space. For Plato, this was the border between noble philosophers and irresponsible intellectuals. Indeed, as Mark Lilla put it, the ideologization of thought and politics may be over, but as long as people think about politics, the temptation of being succumbed to the attraction of such ideas will continue. (Lilla, 2001)

4. Nihilism and Political Insouciance

If we define ideology as an engagement to politics and an attempt to spread awareness and persuasion in the uneven field of politics; Nihilists, by contrast, call for abstention from politics and support political uncertainty. Indeed, the history of this idea goes back to the late Eighteenth Century and Jacobian ideas, but the fact is that Nihilism originates from Nietzsche's thoughts. He supports the idea of the failure of the system of meaning. In Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* novel, one of the characters named Bazarov joked: 'We do what we find useful, and at this time, denial is more useful than everything. We deny. We deny everything' (Critchley, 2002).

Just a few years later, the modernist artists and Dadaist intellectuals of the twentieth century showed the same reaction: 'We don't want painters, we don't want sculptors, we don't want socialists, armies, homelands, workers, we don't want anything. We are for nothing'. (Ghezelsola, 2017). Modernist artists, Jean Arp also described the situation caused by this political insensitivity: We were painting while the sound of the cannons roared from afar. We read poetry. In those days we wanted art and literature to save man from political insanity and ignorance. But even this carelessness could not stand up to the magnitude of the political catastrophe of our century. As Ulysses, the protagonist of James Joyce's work says: 'history was a nightmare which we had to wake up from as soon as possible' (Childs, 2007).

Thus, Nihilism is the reflection of intellectual and scientific developments of the post-modern era. As with the surge of secularism and humanization of meaning and the world and the over-expansion of rationality, as Nietzsche put it: the modern human's life world has been inclined to believe that: 'the highest values become worthless. The purpose is obscured, and the question of why cannot be answered. According to André Malraux, 'there is an inherent absurdity in the institution of modern western man that overshadows all the great moments of his life' (Hinchliffe, 2017). Signs of these ideas could be found in the works of many 20th century artists and intellectuals like Henry James, Joseph Conrad, D.H. Lawrence, Marcel Proust, Andre Gide, Franz Kafka, James Joyce, Rainer Maria Rilke, Guillaume Apollinaire, Wallace Stevens, and Samuel Beckett.

Thinkers who lived in the difficult situation of political violence and the intensification of political obstruction caused by ideology and war became extremely impatient. Being disappointed with religion, reason, and logic they have retreated to their individuality. Thomas Mann, in his book *The Magic Mountain*, tried to remind intellectuals not to give up their mission and not to 'let death overshadow their thoughts'. He provided a classification for the intellectuals of his age, which could be useful for us. He symbolizes the intellectual character of the twentieth century in the face of two characters of his book, 'Settembrini', that symbolizes hope, the originality of human values, and progress; and 'Naphta' who is the symbol of the dark side of his age (Mann, 1950). When all the standards of civilization and humanity had collapsed, observing the turbulent state of civilization and humanity, people like Naphta either supported totalitarian regimes, or Nihilistic causes and the resulted passivity.

The artistic modernism of the century, from Dadaism and Cubism to Surrealism, exhibited aspects of this intellectual anarchy and political insouciance. During World War I, Dadaist intellectuals criticized the corruption of their society, the instrumental role of the church, and the radical nationalist forces. Describing this difficult situation, George Gross, a Dada artist, writes: 'Nothing was sacred to us anymore. Our movement was neither mystical nor communist nor chaotic. They all had some sort of plan for themselves, but ours was completely nihilistic. We would spit on everything even ourselves' (Zeimaran, 2014). It was a statement of frustration caused by the growing sense of absurdity and evasion of responsibility in politics. Philosophically speaking, this was the expression of collapse of reality, the complete silence of reason, and the abolition of traditional values and institutions. As Peter Childs correctly notes: 'This was the clear reflection of a fragmented world in which we witness dispersion, the collapse of symbols and cultural norms and the dominance of technology' (Childs, 2007).

Human's situation in this age of loneliness, anxiety, and wonder in the infinite extent of the universe is incomprehensible. An alien world, in which man is reduced to an object is heightened by a sense of alienation and paralyzes the mind. (Kia, 2000) A wandering intellectual who supports political insouciance is not in a better situation. Meursault, the pseudo-protagonist of Albert Camus's novel, *the stranger*, could be considered as the symbol of this kind of intellectuals. A man who expresses his rebellion against the irrationality of the world, and the perpetual irrationality of seemingly human society: he is neither good nor bad, neither moral nor antimoral. He is lost in the modern world and its problems. Such an intellectual who is seemingly free from all responsibilities forever is condemned to death, because for him 'everything is plausible, because there is no God, and man is mortal' (Camus 1991; Kamber, 2002). These intellectuals were not interested in political thinking. In fact, they had nothing to do with man and society, something like the reaction of Gustav Flaubert (1880-1821). For him, the contemporary world and its problems were so contemptible that complete ignorance was the only way to tolerate it. In a letter to Louise Cole, he writes: 'Please don't talk to me about what is going on in the world of politics. Don't send me any news. Exempt me from reading articles and newspapers' (Grimaldi, 2003).

5. Thinking about the Politics: The Universal Inquiring Intellectuals

As mentioned above, the purpose of this study is to critically examine the confrontation of intellectuals with politics. We have already introduced two of three types of intellectuals: the ideologues (dogmatic) and the Nihilists. We have considered their reactions to the formation of opposing intellectual currents. Dogmatic intellectuals have gotten

close to ideological systems and have fallen into the temptation of ideologies. In other words, epistemic error and the false foundation of their consciousness are the grounds for their-voluntary or involuntary- presence in power relations. Accordingly, 'being engaged in politics is the main component of their identity' (Qasemi, 2017). The same kind of politicization or falling into the temptation of ideologies also forms the basis of their discussion of the epistemic field, which unfortunately turns into a closed, totalitarian, and revolutionary thinking aimed at eliminating the 'other'.

The Nihilists, also avoid politics and don't think about it. Without having a political-moral standard, they are abandoned in the circle of constant conflict between the natural and the supernatural, the individual and the whole, the general and the particular, the everyday life, and the catastrophic fate. While the third type, here referred to as the 'Universal Inquiring Intellectuals', defines themselves by criticizing the public sphere and active participation in the destiny of society and people.

The third type of intellectuals, unlike the other two, concerning politics, can assist us to get a better understanding of the turbulent condition and labyrinth of contemporary society. Decades ago, phenomenological theorist, Edmond Husserl has laid the foundation for these traits. He had done it when the intellectual environment was dominated by ideological or Nihilistic approaches. Philosophically, at a time when anti-scientific Heideggerian ideas (dogmatic intellectuals) and passive scientific ideas (Nihilist intellectual) had narrowed the vast field of critical theorizing and enlightenment, and simultaneously nourished 'all sorts of extremist Marxist and Fascist thoughts and movements' (Moini, 2015) The attempt to move the field of political theory to the 'Third Way' was very risky.

With this philosophical assumption, Jaspers refers to the Universal Inquiring Intellectual as someone who has a critical mission in a critical state of society. He is not a teacher and an all-knowing man of his nation. Thus, 'if they want to suggest something to the people, they must join in the democratic process of the public sphere, as citizens' (Habermas, 1986).

On the other hand, inquiring intellectuals believe in what Alfred Schutz referred to as 'informed people'. Those whose theories and practices are reasonable and modest, and unlike ordinary people, are less likely to be caught in false emotions. At the same time, like Edward Said and Habermas, they are actively involved in politics and follow their critical approach. Leslie Johnson, who studies the work of British intellectuals, cites George Orwell's life and thoughts in support of his claim that Orwell was influenced by the devastating effects of Western imperialism on Burma, the working-class poverty and sufferings of Spanish people in the Spanish civil war. He had a sympathetic approach toward socialism, but despite the danger of communist and fascist ideologies, he had bitterly criticized the ideological intellectuals and totalitarian systems in novels like *Animal Farm* (1945) and *1984* (1949).

The curious intellectual does not try to conform to a particular cult or party. Instead, he/she attempts to preserve his /her individual image and independence in the pursuit of justice in any situation. According to Edward Said, the intellectual, who tries to keep his/her critical distance from the politics, is not living in the ivory tower, but rather is an active, energetic, and a vigorous individual whose actions are socially recognizable and echoed. He/she is involved in many debates, all of which ultimately relate to a combination of enlightenment, emancipation, and freedom. As long as the critique of the status quo and the presentation of a reasonable image or plan for the future exist, the concept of intellectualism will not be over. He/she must be an active component of the experience of society and the world. He/she must be the voice of the voiceless, and represent powerless people who don't have any representatives.

The curious intellectual should not overlook another important point as an intellectual trait. He should always have the courage to rethink his/her worldview and be brave enough to confess to his/her mistakes and/or shortcomings. Innovation is always based on a critical approach. Critical wisdom shows the obstacles in the path of progress. So, the intellectual must admit his/her mistakes and be the first one who criticizes himself/herself. At the same time, he/ she shouldn't lose the culture of resisting injustice at every opportunity. This action requires 'being in the world' and being concerned about the global public sphere.

The third types of intellectuals have also a lifestyle character, that is, speech action. This lifestyle helps them to practice consciously and not to become incompetent. Intellectual action is a speech act that aims to arouse resistance against forgetfulness and silence. In one of her latest conversations, Hannah Arendt cites Carl Jaspers as the true symbol of such intellectuals. According to her, 'Jaspers has taught us that humanity and freedom happen only under the condition of not being isolated as well as being entrusted to the public. Only one can attain that who has dedicated himself and his life to attend in society and accept the risk of being exposed to the public sphere' (Arendt, 2013).

In a lifestyle sense, being a Universal Inquiring Intellectual means 'live in the society as a responsible subject and being in contact with others' (Baynes, 2005). Accordingly, a Universal Inquiring Intellectual is someone present in the public sphere, always acts, sees and hears consciously and possesses a sense of sublime self-awareness of how to deal with the mind, the nature, and necessity of ideas and thoughts. The intellectual who desires this character and identity, without ethical aspirations and thinking in politics, will be nothing more than the embodiment of short-sightedness and amusement of the position of 'the philosopher'.

A curious intellectual life in a hermeneutical sphere and is ready to explore every corner with his universal curiosity. He is ready to transfer from Hemingway to Proust, to Marx, to Foucault, to contemporary Middle-East and Gandhi and perhaps Shariati. He always refers to different great thinkers to show a set of descriptions, a system of symbols and points of view.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of intellectuality from this regard is to clearly express what an intellectual has in his/her mind without being adopted to an institution or become a mechanical person who acts and thinks according to the direction of a system, ideology or media. It can be achieved as a result of a direct confrontation with society and people.

Admittedly, intellectual work and practice is a collective and participatory type of practice in the context of the public sphere, not a selfish or individual action, an ideological trap, or a never-ending absurd cycle of thoughts.

6. Conclusion

Postmodern relativism in one hand, and emergence of national and religious fundamentalism in the other, makes it more important to pay attention to the Universal Inquiring Intellectual and his/ her role in the public sphere; in spite of the fact that present world, is less likely than four-five decades ago to allow emergence of ideologue and nihilist intellectuals. According to Aaron and his critical survey of 20th century intellectuals' political experience, curious intellectuals with two characteristics can evade challenges that have troubled the other two types of intellectuals. These characteristics can also define their relationship with politics. First: in the context of ethical responsibility, keeping the position of a 'committed observer' which means eternal research and criticism. Second: open support of democratic rationality against ideological prejudices.

The latter could simultaneously help the intellectual to deal with the anti-rational mentality and the relativist world, which is under the influence of media frenzy. It also helps the intellectual to concentrate on values like democracy, civil society and other basic freedoms that are the foundations of balanced social, cultural and economic growth. If we consider the courage of knowing and democratic wisdom as the components of intellectuality, political and ethical irresponsibility could be considered a professional betrayal to the intellectual work.

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