

Representation of Personal Identity in the Contemporary Iranian Painters' Works

Sara Nazarbeigi ^a, Javad Alimohammadi Ardakani ^{b*}

^a Bachelor of Painting from University of Science and Culture in Tehran, Tehran, Iran.

^b Assistant Professor of Painting from University of Science and Culture in Tehran, Tehran, Iran.

Article History: Received: 5 April 2021; Accepted: 14 May 2021; Published online: 22 June 2021

Abstract: This study concerns a philosophical and social approach and investigates personal identity and its aspects as a cultural topic. Nature is the essence of identity; nature returns to the heart but identity is obtained by spiritual progress. So there is no sign, we cannot speak of the nature and identity of art. All the works have an identity. It does not matter what is identity. Every work has an identity. Self-scrutiny is one of human concerns and existentialism is one of the most important topics in wisdom. From Nietzsche's perspective, personal identity is not a basic and cooperated topic, but has a cultural structure formed based on the social situation and has no stability and nature. This principle is presented beyond Good of Nietzsche in the works by Yourcenar with a permanent doubt of existence value of the subject of "I". Nietzsche breaks down philosophy in the foreword to present a new concept for the subject of "I". According to Nietzsche, the existence of the subject of "I" is derived from Descartes' Theory "Cogito, ergo sum" I Think, Therefore, I am". Nietzsche defines this belief as a grammar game without any base "beyond the Good and evil of Nietzsche, this principle is explained in the logic book that a thought comes when "it" wants to and not when "I" wish.

Keywords: Identity, Nature, Culture, Nietzsche

1. Introduction

At first, the term "personal identity" was used by Erickson in 1968; he believed identity as an emotion is developed at early adolescence age and distinguishes his/her self from others and make integrity and knows her/his self like others imagination. Therefore, the function of identity is coordinating self-imagination as a stable individual and others' imagination. Erikson seeks identity development at adolescence age which can be cultural identity, etc. (Rober, 1993, Page 1258)

Identify theories have been emerged from stable theories and led to recent theories about identity which know it as a set of representation changing constantly and there are less stable elements. There is a middle degree between these two identity definitions; identity is a multilayer topic. According to this definition, stable elements in hidden layers and unstable and deep layers are placed together in other layers. Identity is a phenomenon developed from the subject of "I" and ended to "we" and extended from individual independence feeling to social feeling (Hayati et al, 12: 2007). Identity is a perception a person has from her/his self or collective identity. Identity is a response to "who am I" or "what am I". Identity includes the sense of inner and external perception and this is very important (Ameli, 2007, 469).

There are two important features related to identity: continuity and differentiability. According to psychology, someone who losses the subject of "I", suffers from forgetfulness and this is because of a non-continuous internal identity. Certainly, identity has a unique feature. Until linguistic, ethnic, and racial differences make nations distinguished, mental features can be distinguished too (Ameli, 2017: 470)

Giddens seeks mental reality in self-awareness and objective reality in social actions. Accordingly, he defines identity as awareness of person, group, and society which is formed in social actions gradually (Giddens, 1998: 81)

As mentioned earlier, identity includes several layers and per human solely has several identities. Personal identity, the social identity which include cultural identity and national identity, etc. the most important element of identity for art is cultural identity and as clear is derived from the social identity of each person about his/her self (conceptual network of mind and other is social and cultural and structural identity. Most of the scholars defined national and cultural identity in the same way and believe there are no separation definitions. While other scholars believe that cultural identity is beyond national identity.

Identity is a phenomenon that included an area of most private personal representations to most public social areas derived from self or other dialectic and is among a wide area of conceptual networks of mind and cultural and social structures and obtain a field between these two areas. This area is not stable and may be changed at any time. This change not only derives from self (conceptual network of mind) but others (social structure (Ashena et al., 2010: 157). The link between culture and identity is sometimes derived from this dialectic relationship; since, most scholars define an independent status for culture because of its unique role among self and others and define identity as a cultural phenomenon (Biro, 1991: 77). As mentioned earlier, this study aims to examine the representation of personal identity in the works of contemporary Iranian painters.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Research

Identity and Nature

According to Nietzsche, identity has no absolute concept and theologically we can give an absolute concept of religion. But in the social area, identity is completely involved in relativity and is periodic and this is very important (Ameli, 2007: 469). Identity can be considered as resulting of the dialectic of the mental, social and cultural system. This approach makes identity beside otherness and therefore highlights analysis by self and others about identity (Ashena et al, 2010: 157). Identity makes meaning to the active area of society and active area of society are presented in identity (Ameli, 2007: 470)

Lukman and Berger consider identity from other perspectives. They believe identity including all personal roles and intend which are internalized during the socialization. Therefore, identity is formed, remained, changed, or even reformed during the socialization process. According to this approach, identity can be considered as a dialectic of mental and objective reality that is reacted to certain social structures and cause maintaining, changing, or reforming of social structures (Lukman and Berger, 1996: 236). Essentialism is one of the most important challenges of identity policy that emerged at the beginning and can be defined in other ways. This term originally refers to the opinion which relates certain qualities to the phenomena to define its "essence" beyond the time and place (Fuss, 1990). In this case, identities are in form of undue generalizations. accordingly, some features such as circular shapes, curves, pink or red, and some other features as elements determined by the work of female artists are deemed to be signs indicating that their sexual characteristics.

Identity of Iranian Art at Revolution Time

Not long after the revolution and in early 1981 to 1985, various issues about "identities of Iran", "Islamic art", "religious art" and issues about morality in art and spiritual artists sporadically in circles art and culture of the country was discussed. The core of the formation of such discussions with religious forces of the revolution is divided into three groups:

a group was researchers and theorists who explained the principles and purposes of revolution titled left and right religious intellectuals and were invited by official invitation officials or artists and discussed the art. They mainly discussed the origin of artwork and its context and spiritual doctrine of artists and the reason for their distance to the art was that they could not approach the fact of art. The above theories indicted art and literature together. They tried to match literature and art and generalize their knowledge about literature to art. This could affect the concerns of artists in that time to find solutions to approach the world of these theorists.

Others were more traditional religious group is mostly about clergy and many of them were originally clergy. The group is also because the world of art and artists ahead of other social classes are subject to sensual risks and talked about the art of soothing, the world of artists and pests and commitment of artist and literally, they invited artists to self-cultivation and mystical care.

There were other groups and most of them were painters or movie makers and discussed art while studying at an Art University inside the country or abroad for their evolutionary-religious tendency. This group in some cases discussed work art in their theories, their speech and writing were more tangible and near to reality for artists and youth.

Someone active in the revolution administration in addition to policymaker of cultural position emphasized on position and necessity of art in the society. Art in Islamic revolution is an art which responses to revolution thoughts and basic. In this kind of art, artists should accept the absolute sovereignty of God and orient the art in this way "Allah is the only origin and resource of artist values in Islamic society and is the origin of the world"¹.

While less than one decade after the revolution, other policymakers in a speech emphasized the necessity of religious-political issues in art: if each artwork in our era in the third world don't have political effect make as a tool for dominant governments². Islamic art has political and spiritual aspects and involves a position in the world today³. Some subjects with religious Islamic art in some way to the need to revive this art form topics such as art spiritual wisdom and mysticism in art and building spiritual-religious art. "Imagination of Islamic Art is responsible for inventing the light of God's beauty and excellence of Imitation"⁴, "in Islamic art, repetition of themes and forms

¹ Allah is the source of artistic values ", meeting with Haddad Adel, Soroush, No. 76, (15 November 1980), p. 26.

² Allah is the source of artistic values ", meeting with Haddad Adel, Soroush, No. 76, (15 November 1980), p. 26.

³Speech by Mr. Mirhossein Mosavi, Prime Minister, the record (24), (1 May 1085), pp. 28- 32

⁴ Mohammad Madadpur, spiritual wisdom, making art (Department of Islamic Art), (Tehran: Cultural Institute caller Education, 2002), pp. 387-402.

goes to the same principle. Artists in these themes discuss eternal models rather than tangible forms, so there is a connection between imagery and heaven portray.

One or two years after the Islamic revolution until the second decade, some books such as Islamic art introduction⁵, Art in the school realm⁶, Opening to the Garden of Eden (art towards Islamic Revolution)⁷, ten years with painters of the Islamic Revolution⁸, cultural and artistic identity⁹, sacred art¹⁰ and Islamic spirituality¹¹, mostly by collecting papers and writings in magazines such as chapters, journal of art and cultural writings. In all the decades, it was tried to provide art based on Islamic revolution and its necessity in culture and art area or "the art can move toward purposes of Islamic revolution and acts according to other roles.

There are thoughtful points observed by discussing the published work based on theories endeavor and situation of the country. Except for a little one which is discussed, most of the discussions are about Islamic-religious art. The main part of all discussions takes a nostalgic approach to Islamic art and the shining period with emphasizing the positive tone that has not been realized yet. The main clients of these discussions were artists and youth.

It can be said that the closest and perhaps only source of written works and attitudes about the importance of merit lies in the art of revolution, a material that has been published in the book of Tajdid Misaq. The book is the chosen articles, lectures, and debates by experts, professors, and artists of the paintings of revolution on the occasion of the exhibition entitled "20 Years of Islamic Revolution in Iran Contemporary Painting" at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tehran¹² was published. The contents of this book almost all the ideas, desires, aspirations, and grievances artists, and sayings of Imam Khomeini and officials of the regime authorities.

Most explicit content on the art of revolution (the origin of art) in the writings of Morteza Avini in explaining the Imam (Khomeini) and the closest votes of paintings of revolution in the works of Dr. Zahra Ranavard is visible, he explained and interpreted the message of Imam to artists that he the "Tajdid -e- Ahd-e-Honar" called, writes: in term of imam perspective, art is the custodian fight the enemies of religion ... and what others are doubtful, where he said: "Clean and beautiful art that modern capitalism and communism the vampire and destroy Islam luxury Islam eclecticism, compromise and baseness Islam, Islam painless and American Islam..."¹³

He emphasized imam speech and quoted by imam: our artists when realizing their responsibly that uses their people can obtain in the framework of their school lonely. He mentioned: in terms of imam perspective: art is like pain and this makes a beautiful spirit in art¹⁴. He emphasized "imams interpretation and emphasize on art responsibility to fight Islam enemies is more clear and any more interpretation is not needed.

Mirhossein Mosavi gave ethical advice to artists and reminded spiritual traditions and ways and emphasized on art critics and said: "Islamic art is that which has a political aspect in its spiritual and soft aspects"¹⁵.

The thoughts and opinions of artists and theorists who desire art revolution have stated this in writings and interviews, the art of perfection indicates right not the role, and why the same commitment and indicates eternal existence of the universe and humans are innately born witness to it. From such a perspective, engagement freedom is an illusion; Art is a spiritual revelation by the imagination of the artist's eternal covenant in the intellectual renewal and frees removing west though. The reviews stances, in many cases, can be seen as almost politico-social statements to design an artistic manifesto.

Seeking Identity

1- Seeking In Form Realm

The issue of "making ironing" of art or making an Iranian or national school which was discussed by Iranian painters was highlighted gradually. Actions such as changing the form of Qajar painting using Cubism by Naser Oveisi and religious art and Iranian religious context have been started. Most of the main elements in Oveisi painting were horses and eastern women. He also used the first line of Khaym and Hafez poems in their pictures. Sometimes,

⁵ Mohsen Makhmalbaf, introduction to Islamic art (Tehran: the realm of thought and Islamic Art, 1982).

⁶ Javad, Mohadesi, Art in the school realm (Tehran: Iranian Revolutionary Guards Islamic Revolution, 1985).

⁷ Rajab Ali Mazlumi, opening to the Garden of Eden (each in line with the Islamic Revolution), (Tehran: 1986).

⁸ Ten years with Islamic Revolution painters (Tehran: artistic field of Islamic Propagation Organization, 1988).

⁹ Cultural and artistic identity, (Tehran: visual arts, 1993)

¹⁰ Sacred art, (Tehran: Visual Arts, 1994)

¹¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Islamic art and spirituality, (Tehran: Office of Religious Studies Arts, 1996)

¹² Tajdid -e- Ahd-e-Honar ", Morteza Avini, Tajdid Misaq Book

¹³ Tajdid-e- Misaq, (Tehran: Center for Visual Arts, Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, 1998), p. 20.

¹⁴ Tajdid-e- Misaq, (Tehran: Center for Visual Arts, Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, 1998), p. 20.

¹⁵ Softness and spirituality of Art, Mirhossein Mosavi, Tajdid-e-Misaq, Page 39

his writings became meaningless. He and other painters mean to use writing in the pictures was to complete combination, making Iranian and making traditional.

Zhaze Tabatabaei (1930, Tehran) was a new artist tied to Iranian traditional art for painting, poems, literature, Sculpture, and director. He selected Iranian traditional art sooner than other painters. Tabatabaei selected national and ethnic identity in her work and intend to familiar and local elements. Like Naser Oveisi, she used some writing in addition to figurative elements and using new poems and traditional Folklore Poems. His work is full of familiar elements of traditional painting and drawing Qajar Iran, especially demon, sun, pomegranate, horses with big eyes, and women with interconnected eyebrows that are resting or playing music.

Sadegh Tabrizi was another painter who used figurative works and created a series of often colorful pictures with brown color. He started to create more abstract works of Persian letters, which are novel compounds applies. Other decorative elements, like seals, chains, jewel, and the like, are used in his collages.

Mansour Ghandriz (1935- 1965) was another artist in the late 30s with a wave of "National Art" and "traditionalists" in shaping "Saqakhaneh". He graduated from the School of Decorative Arts. Ghandriz after experiencing the field of naturalism, impressionism, and cubism, and surrealism selected the art of ancient Iran. Local and national identity has always been his concern that tries to prevent and combining traditional motifs to create a new space. His short life stopped the opportunity to make their art more perfect.

Another famous Iranian painter and sculptors were Parviz Tanavoli (1937- Tehran). Tanavoli was famous for his statue, but he is considered one of the founders of the group and the "Saqakhaneh". Tanavoli chose traditional art tools as modern artists and following the requirements of the times and the modern world the traditional elements translate into the language of his era. Of course, by ignoring the west and selecting the east, don't accept traditionalists in form of old orientation and experience fresh issues to achieve a combination of traditional the West and the East.

Another painter who started classic painting from Kamal Al-Molk Conservatory and then tried to learn carpet and tile designing and miniature was Ali Asqar Masoumi. The works of Masoumi have affected Ale Ahmad's thought and intended from naturalistic to Iranian painting¹⁶. Removing naturalistic painting and selecting Iranian painting especially Qajar and tradition is observed in all Masoumi works¹⁷.

Another artist who tried to form Iranian-eastern work was Aidin Aghdashloo. He was interested in European fifteen and sixteen-century paintings and Surrealism. He started to prefigure the collapse and confusion¹⁸. Aghdashloo changed this form and tried to show it in artwork: Miniature paintings torn or burned. In each case, he used previous calligraphers and continued torn or burned miniature.

Mohsen Vaziri (1934, Tehran) is a leading abstract painter in Iran in an era of artistic activity - While in Italy tried to create works by following Qajar era miniatures and paintings¹⁹. Among other modernist painters, Homayoun Salimi (1948) can be noted. He used traditional motifs. He used geometric abstract painting and tried to use the traditional elements of the Iranian space in their works.

After the Islamic revolution, national, cultural, and traditional art were observed in culture and art and young painters were interested in Iranian traditional arts and sometimes in "fashion" form. Some of the painters like Ali Rajabi selected Iranian common traditional painting such as Qajar and Miniature with oil paint and sometimes three-dimensional. Others also make some works using the elements available in Iranian ancient painting and traditional art. Some other selected traditional arts and linked with an ancient period.

They believed Iranian traditional painting is resulted by Iranian special worldview; this worldview cannot represent the objective and natural world and in fact, targets the global picture. Real and imaginary through the use of flat colors, vivid, diverse, and symbolically, the lay perspective and shades, picture contour lines, and forms can be shaped.

This group of painters believes that if this way of seeing, with some of the achievements of modern art of the West in terms of form, color, line, and texture on the one hand and painting the Far East in the context of integrating [native] are met, the process of the painting will be the, on one hand, the general view taken from Iranian culture; And on the other hand, the new language of visual arts today's world and draws links.

¹⁶ Mahmoudi Hussein. "Nature is always the first teacher" (interview with Ali Asghar Masoumi), the world of words, number 53, Tehran, February and March 1997 P. 104 to 107

¹⁷ Aghdashloo, Aydin. "Painting", thought and art, No. 1, Tehran, February 1963, pp. 96 and 100.

¹⁸ Aghdashloo, Aydin. "Joy and regret" of contemporary culture Publishing, Printing, Tehran, 1991, p. 355.

¹⁹ Interview with Mohsen Vaziri-Moghaddam, modernist painters, No. 9, May 1968, pp 510 to 514

2- Search Through Theme and Subject

From around the 1930s, a group of Iranian artists adopted a manner in which the issue of Iran or boards often religious or a combination of them. This indicates the interest of these painters in traditional and national identity, without attaching to certain technical limitations and forced to exploit popular images. In the meantime, interested painting influenced by traditional identity and ethnic different forms, including the choice of themes Iranian, to this end, and many of them works of ancient, architecture, elements and objects that Iranian identity, such as carpets and porcelain, ancient Iranian legends, celebrations and mourning, rural landscapes and even put his face Iranian markets to mites creation.

The first modernist painting WAS Marco Grigorian who used Iranian identity and Iranian traditional elements. In this work, he was interested in expressionism and even tried a lot to promote it in contemporary Iranian artists²⁰. For his interest in Iranian traditional works, he provided two painters coffee houses like Gholer Aghasi and Hossein Modaber in the collection of paintings at the Metropolitan Museum. Some believe that he make known more in the world by doing this.

Kalantari is one of the Iranian painters with a continuous approach in his work. He should be noted as an independent painter. In 1960, he graduated from the Faculty of Arts Tehran University, and from 1974 started painting such as thatch painting. Kalantari started thatch painting. He used brown, yellow, and gold colors and makes an abstract image from the architectural margin of the desert²¹. Most of Kalantari's work is for the Iran desert. Besides these works which have a large scale, he painted the life of Iranian nomads. In these works, traditional roles and colors have been created. In recent years, Kalantari started to paint traditional tiles.

Hooshang Seihoon was one of the painters who graduated from Architecture major; therefore, he selected Iranian architectural views. At first, his interest in Iranian architecture was shown for axis architecture but gradually made prominent and independent shapes. in his work, the forests and desert spaces are shown.

Reza Jamion Bangiz (born in 1937 in Tehran) is one of the painters who prorate women religious funeral tent and his work was noticed and mites. The painting of Bangiz was in white and black color and this makes a meaningful image. This was done after political, social, and cultural evolution in Iran after the revolution. Tradition and values of culture and Iranian theme has been started at the 1950s was increased. In addition to architecture and its component elements, Iranian youth artists use elements such as fabric, carpet products, containers, and objects, each a kind of manifestation of the tradition and culture of Iran showed interest.

This group of artists seeking an identity subject showed interest in Iran is Ali Akbar Sadeghi (1937- Tehran). Sadeghi graduated from the Faculty of Arts of Tehran University and painters Erie Surrealism. In addition to painting, he was interested in painting for books stories, and filmmaking as well. Sadeghi is honest in his watercolor Persian mythology, namely, his eternal elements, to demonstrate the color as a kind of poetic elegance

3. Painting at Islamic Revolution and Religious and National Identity

In 1978, after years of waiting and struggle, and sacrifice, the Islamic revolution in Iran and the rise of a people and the leadership of cloth was won. Since then, many of the cultural values of society before the revolution were manifested in the form of anti-values. Like political, social, and cultural matters, art has been changed. Paining was more influenced and the works have been changed. In the first month after the revolution, the works of students interested in Islamic basics have been provided in Hosseinieh Ershad.

The painters interested in revolution motivation have been gathered and tried to provide some painting in open-minded mode and in form of a message to communicate people. this interest and target need a certain form and language, in another word, the painting should be figurative and artist should use familiar elements and motifs which can be understood by people. This kind of painting doesn't have the limitation of abstract art or Special mystical Iranian traditional painting and is not restricted to neutralism and realism framework.

After the Islamic revolution, painters with social, religious, and revolution have been divided generally into two groups. Experienced painters or young painters who started their works years before the revolution, but they have their artistic language and the kind of revolutionary events and were affected, by the Iran-Iraq war. From this group, someone showed stable interest. The second group was young painters who started their works after the revolution. This group who are working yet called revolution painter. They are the same group that has been gathered in the sphere of thought and Islamic art.

²⁰ Special aesthetics of the shadows, talks with Parviz Kalantari, "Rastakhiz, No. 253, March 1975, p. 6.

Paintings of revolution initially started to record and recall and display symbols on analysis of issues and events of the revolution, feudalism, rebellion and martyrdom, and revolutionary ideals. Later, during the war, they make their works based on the ideals of self-defense and defense of religion and the country and sacred subject.

3. Conclusion

Identity is one of the most complex concepts in the field of humanities and social sciences and psychology. This is a multi-faceted phenomenon that many thinkers and theorists have focused on the definition and discussion. According to these definitions, identity has different aspects and only one of them cannot be relied on.

According to investigations, identity in contemporary paintings is a phenomenon that ranges from the most intimate representation of the individual to the social sphere, reflecting the public can see works of contemporary painters. The relationship between cultures, identity is also influenced by the dialectical relationship; then, most experts define a privileged role for culture in the relationship between self and other and know an independent status in respect of identity.

References

1. Aghdashloo, Aydin. "Joy and regret" of contemporary culture Publishing, Printing, Tehran, 1991, p. 355.
2. Aghdashloo, Aydin. "Painting", thought and art, No. 1, Tehran, February 1963, pp. 96 and 100.
3. Avini, Morteza, Tajdid-e-Honar by Misaq Tajdid. (Tehran: Center for Visual Arts, Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, 1999), p. 20.
4. Haddad Adel; Allah is the source of values artist, meeting with Haddad Adel, S., No. 76, (1980), p. 26.
5. Kalantari, Parviz. Special aesthetics of the shadows, Rastakhiz, No. 253, March 1975, p. 6
6. Mahmoudi Hussein. "Nature is always the first teacher" (interview with Ali Asghar Masoumi), the world of words, number 53, Tehran, February, and March 1997 P. 104 to 107
7. Mazloun, Rajab Ali, an opening to heaven Garden (all in line with the Islamic Revolution), (Tehran: University Jihad, 1987).
8. Mirhossein Mosavi, Prime Minister, Mystical and finest face of art, the record (24), (1 May 1085), pp. 28- 32
9. Mohadisi, Javad., in the realm of art Maktab (Tehran: Iranian Revolutionary Guards Islamic Revolution, 1987).
10. Mohammad Madadpur, spiritual wisdom, making art (Department of Islamic Art), (Tehran: Cultural Institute caller Education, 2002), pp. 387- 402.
11. Mohsen Makhmalbaf, introduction to Islamic art (Tehran: the realm of thought and Islamic Art, 1982).
12. Molanorouzi, Majid, with revolution painters, (painting with eastern mysticism). Cultural universe, a special issue of thought, literature, and art of the revolution, February 1992, 166 to 169
13. Seif, Hadi. Marco Grigorian introduced the Expressionist. Rastakhiz, No. 739, Tehran 19, October 1977, p. 10
14. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Islamic art and spirituality, (Tehran: Office of Religious Studies Arts, 1996)
15. Vaziri-Moghaddam, modernist painters, No. 9, May 1968, 510 to 514.