

## “RELIGION, SO-CALLED NEUTRAL CONCEPTION OF IDEOLOGY”

*Din ve ideoloji*, İletişim Yayınları, Ankara, p. 118, ISBN: 9789754700480

The topic of religion and ideology is deeply examined in Mardin's book entitled as *Din ve İdeoloji*. Mardin was outlined his work mainly into five parts<sup>1</sup>. These are religion and ideology, religious sociology and religious behavior, Islam in terms of religious sociology, structure and culture in Ottoman Empire, and Volk Islam in republican era. Here it is apparent that Mardin in his book was not only concentrated on the 20<sup>th</sup> century point of view but in order to be more reliable he was also turned historical pages up to Ottoman Empire. In his work Mardin was inspired from the most political thinkers in patches with different standing point on this subject. However he did not insist on one specific thinker by saying that his or her epistemology is entirely stands on truth or reality.

The most important and prominent part of Mardin's work in order to be able to understand his implementation is the first chapter of book that is religion and ideology. Significantly, in 1960s the domination of normative thinking in Turkey came from the word; behavioral. Therefore behavioral sciences tended to review community events as its natural form rather than as it must be<sup>2</sup>. However Mardin criticizes this and he was believe that this way of thinking led to construct religion as ideology as dense sense in 20<sup>th</sup>. As a result of these Mardin claims that we are witnessing the loss of hard ideology and most of the social sciences started to treat problems of applying soft ideologies<sup>3</sup>. The term hard ideology was identified in Mardin's book as a structure which was applied systematically. Moreover Mardin supports the term hard ideology was not only limited by the elites' culture, but also based on the basic pure literature<sup>4</sup>.

The most crucial crux of studies on ideology is the beginning of the expressing soft ideologies. The soft ideologies are instead of hard ideologies consisted of the amorphous beliefs and cognitive systems which were based on masses<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand in the light of the explaining soft ideologies by saying they are based on cognitive systems, attitudes are also essential concept. Therefore, attitude was defined as organization of psychological processes in the face of a distinguished world view<sup>6</sup>. For this point from hard ideologies to soft ideologies,

1 Şerif Mardin, *Din ve ideoloji*. İletişim Yayınları, Ankara, 2016.

2 Ibid, p. 11.

3 Ibid, p. 13.

4 Ibid, p. 14.

5 Ibid.

6 Şerif Mardin, *Din ve ideoloji...* p. 14.

explanation of ideologies in broad sense became a continuous variable analyzing process<sup>7</sup>. Gradually, attitudes in this process had role to give direction to the human activities as in the case of ideologies<sup>8</sup>.

Furthermore, in the second chapter for the subject of religious sociology and religious behavior Mardin was stressed on the Marx hermeneutic of religion. According to Marx religion is the opium of the people. In other words, religion is ideological sense is the suspiration of the oppressed people as well as the heart of the heartless world and the soul of the soulless world. Thus Marx describes religion as opium of the people<sup>9</sup>. Here it is vital to deal of course there is a strong relationship between religion and ideology, however according to Marx, religion for this sense instead of tool of domination was used recovery tool as opium<sup>10</sup>.

In addition to that in his book second chapter Mardin suggests that culture also is helpful while providing information about religious position in the society. As it is accepted that religion is the important part of the culture, for Mardin religion is the apparatus that could prevent the absence of structure of community images. On the other hand, culture is the apparatus that plays role in the process of investigation of inner meaning and consistency of commune<sup>11</sup>. To argue that when one look the self-continuity of the culture regardless of which system dominated shows that culture with its all component attaches the importance of existing sense of ideology<sup>12</sup>.

Contrary to previous two chapter, Mardin in chapter three of his book turned their attention from the one specific religion which was criticized by almost all Western thinkers; Islam. Islam in terms of religious sociology would be proportionally exemplified by Weberian view of relationship between religion and ideology. Here, Weber's concept herrschaft is appropriate to comprehend Islam with regards to religious sociology. The term Herrschaft in Max Weber divided into two comprehensive groups which are political group and hierocratic group. For the political group Weber refers that a kind of special/private staff threats with physical forces in order to sustain existing system. On the other hand hierocratic group refers to reactionary group that resorts to psychological coercion in order to sustain existing system for recover the religious opportunities<sup>13</sup>.

Both the fourth and fifth chapter of Mardin's book underlines the subject in term of the period of Ottoman Empire and Republican era with Volk Islam. In the fourth chapter Mardin mainly focused on the patrimonialism and feudalism<sup>14</sup>.

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7 Ibid.

8 Ibid, p. 15.

9 Ibid, p. 42.

10 Ibid, p. 43.

11 Ibid, p. 51.

12 Ibid, p. 53.

13 Ibid, p. 69.

14 Ibid, p. 104.

Here one can argue that Mardin by saying status as the dominant form of power distribution should be called as civil society, he is tended to have orientalist view of structure and culture. Besides, for the final chapter Mardin emphasized the distinction between popular culture and intellectuals' culture in order to argue the idea of ummah. Therefore Mardin believes that even though intellectuals are adopted the religion as a result of the gap between popular culture and intellectual culture they ignored Islam as marked community beliefs<sup>15</sup>. For the thesis statement, Mardin argued that religion as a soft ideology expanded its effects not only in all Islamic countries but also in Turkey<sup>16</sup>.

To start with, Philip Converse who is referred in Mardin's book indicates the importance of belief system ideologies are categorized by the most shaped ideologies and the least shaped ideologies<sup>17</sup>. Here Converse's division of ideology is helpful because by saying the most shaped ideologies he meant the hard ideologies. For this point hard ideologies as Mardin's term or the most shaped ideologies as Converse's term would be accepted as neutral conception of ideology. Since the category of conceptualization of neutral ideology there is a strong tendency to construct fixed ideas which hard ideologies shaped around this inclination.

Despite the fact that they are fixed ideas ideology is inevitable specular that collects the people under the spindle of political sciences. Mardin believes that as a result of the improved behavioral political sciences frames in the 20<sup>th</sup> century mass beliefs and attitudes became an inherent part of the political process<sup>18</sup>. To remember Althusser, although religion as an ideology has dogmatic features in order to achieve mass beliefs and attitudes the experiences that have been emerged are inevitably effected the 20<sup>th</sup> ideology. Mardin mentioned this situation that ideology was originated by different understanding. Thus one can combine these differences with the Althusser's idea of falsity of ideology is inevitable as well as essential<sup>19</sup>. The normative characteristic of political sciences had influenced the ipso facto politics. In other words, with the classical political science the things that could not be put into whole system picked out the ipso facto politics<sup>20</sup>. Here we are shown the neutral meanings of ideology that refers to ideological frameworks that affects the world.

In addition, from the history of political thoughts ideologies are described as something that persuaded people with anomalous agents such as; Marx, Locke and Rousseau. For them ideology is the crossbred and degenerated symbols in society. For example, Sabine's exemplification of fascism is understood by Mardin

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15 Ibid, p. 145.

16 Ibid, p. 145.

17 Ibid, p. 15.

18 Ibid, p. 17.

19 Ibid, p. 16.

20 Ibid, p. 20.

as thoughts of Hegel and Nietzsche that were degenerated and crossbred. From this explanation ideology favors to be conceptualize as negative ideology with the idea of camera obscura men social reality. The most important argumentation of Mardin implies that the history of political thoughts seek to combine all ideas under the general title, however ideologies are not systematic that they do not have idea consistency<sup>21</sup>. Therefore, while we have descriptive and analytical system in history of political thoughts as in the case of Locke, Rousseau, ideologies have not any consistency in their systematic construction.

In spite of the fact that ideologies are not analytical and descriptive it has the flexibility of thoughts as well as implementations. Compare with the modern political apparatus with classical ones, it is apparent that in modern political sciences the incorporations of the ideas is more flexible than the classical political sciences. As a result of this modern social sciences tried to achieve integrated various ideas of significant thinkers which are still valid today's literature. To extend that ideology with their flexibility ensured benefits for the modern social sciences. Mardin in his book explained this reality with a successful example.

In his example Mardin used three base, which are Merihli Alim (scholars), bank and revolution. Here, Merihli Alim indicates the researcher that watches humans' movements, but he can't talk and hear. When he investigates a bank for a day, he can have an idea about the changes in the balance sheet by noticing the cluster people. If he recognized the population differences in bank for a particular time he would foretell for the next year. However one day he was witnessing the extreme population within the bank and he realized that balance sheets changed abruptly. Besides, Mardin argued that Merihli Alim will never be apprehend this situation, however the remaining part of the society as informed about revolution would know the ups and downs of the system in relation to special meaning of the revolution in the society. To put more emphasis on here, if we considered about the Merihli Alim as any kind of ideology such as socialism, ideology now refers to neutral conception, whereas by generalization as Merihli Alim did in his comprehension Mardin tried to emphasize the negativity within the neutral conception of ideology. In other words, ideologies as a meaning set (anlam kümesi) are precedence of societal strategic functions. Since ideologies are maps to give directions for comprehension<sup>22</sup>.

Furthermore, in terms of the psychology base, ideology poses the compliance functions; the most crucial compliance function is religious function<sup>23</sup>. Lane manages the religious function in the sense of ideology as a subcategory which according to him religion has the strategic importance. Since religion similar to other components of ideology is the alternative way to maintain psychological

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21 Ibid, p. 21.

22 Ibid, p. 25.

23 Ibid, p. 29.

stability for the inevitably going of system<sup>24</sup>. Moreover religion displays role in not only understanding the world but also provide self-intromission function. For this point religion as an ideology is identified by the understanding social life. To remind Althusser's ideological state apparatus religion is the one components of the social formation that shaped the understanding of social life. In spite of the understanding is related to the class position, Althusser believe that ideology is the inevitable as well as essential results of the lived experiences.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 30.

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