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"A STUDY OF THE PSYCHIC STRUGGLE IN THE MODERN BRITISH DRAMA."



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ABSTRACT

The lamentation of the present common men is that they are struck down not only by the villainy of society but also by their own mistakes, rooted in their own characters, in the inner realms of their mind. And it is an attempt on the part of the author of this research paper to reveal this 'inner darkness' of the human soul for the vision of modern man cannot see anything beyond that thus the 'psychic' condition becomes predominant. The 'inner disparity' of the fundamental cause in shaping their ultimate destiny. Nevertheless, the suffering or solitude results from the interaction of the private guilt of the character and the hostile conditions of the public life in which they are planted. But before we actually enter into the examination of the 'intra-psychic' struggle, we shall see far the living conditions of modern man could be responsible in deciding his present state.

KEYWORDS: *Psychic Struggle, Modern British Drama, society.*

INTRODUCTION:

The history of social evolution shows that consequent upon incessant advancement in civilization, culture has always been under constant strain to adjust and cope with the latest conditions of life, and hence the 'cultural lag'. The technological sociological and psychological discoveries highlighted the incompatibility of the new civilization and the old culture. One by one all cultural values stood discarded necessitating a cultural reorientation of an almost radical nature. But though the old culture has been discarded, the new one is yet to be born. Consequently modern man's society has become one-dimensional, a civilization without culture. Then it should not be a wonder man has been feeling alienated sickly, scared of the future and, therefore, becomes very weak in his choice of schools. Spiritually he is not capable of faith in anything because it is a 'godless universe'; morally and emotionally he is an outsider, alienated and rootless. And herein lies the root cause of all the confusion. Fearful of future, modern man is suffering from a nightmarish anxiety. The more unbearable the anxiety, the more thorough the protective means have to be. Karen Horney believes that there are in our culture four principal ways in which a person tries to protect himself against the basic anxiety: affection, submissiveness, power and withdrawal(1). And this is how an inner disparity arises between his basic need and the protective measures he adopts which ultimately give rise to "irrecoverable conflicts in modern man". It must be noted that the protective measures are prompted not by a wish to satisfy a desire for pleasure or happiness, but by a need for reassurance which is lacking in the modern world and consequently in the irreconcilable conflicts. In this inner-conflicting stage the common men becomes passive in action and meekly surrenders to the pressures of private schools- a choice without any logic behind it.

Horney sees man as capable of creating his own destiny. Later, she proceeds to explain the compulsive drives that are specifically neurotic-"... They are born of feeling of isolation, helplessness, fear an hostility, and

represent ways of coping with world despite these feelings. Their aim is primarily not at satisfaction but at safety; their compulsive character is due to the anxiety lurking behind them" (2). The work of neo-freudians, the most effective school of modern psychology, both reflects and illuminates the pattern of human behaviour which the author presents from his own observation and experience. Thus present living conditions are responsible for the decline and downfall of our culture. The breakdown of human relationships, loss of faith and even the meaninglessness of life as the root cause of such conditions. A sense of isolation, helplessness, fear and hostility lurking beneath their action. Still paradoxically they seem to have been driven by an irresistible passion to live, a will to live.

In fact, the contradictions embedded in our culture are precisely the conflicts which the common men struggles to reconcile. They are his tendencies towards aggressiveness and his tendencies towards submission; his excessive demands and his fear of never getting anything; his striving towards self-aggrandizement and his feeling of personal helplessness. And the difference from the normal is only quantitative. While the normal is able to cope with the difficulties without damage to his personality, in the common men all conflicts are intensified to a degree that makes any satisfactory solution impossible. They are caught in the 'vicious circle' formed partly by the society and partly by themselves.

Reviewing all these considerations, let us try to examine the nature of neurosis. Even though a well-rounded definition is not given, we can come to an understanding of neurosis as Horney describes it: "A neurosis is a psychic disturbance brought about by fears and defences against these fears, and by attempts to find compromise solutions for conflicting tendencies" (3). Conflicts born of incompatible attitudes constitute the core of neurosis, the dynamic center from which neurosis emanates. And the character of this type attempt to solve these conflicts or, more precisely, to dispose them off by following two principal ways. One of these consists in repressing certain aspects of the force; the other is to put such a distance between oneself and one's fellows that the conflicts are set out of operation. Both processes induce a feeling of unity that permits the individual to function, even at considerable cost to himself. A further attempt to be described here is the creation of an image of what the character believes himself to be, or of what, he feels he can or ought to be. Usually unconscious, this idealized image is always in large degree removed from reality, though the influence it exerts on the person's life is very real indeed. Now if the focus is laid on the realistic self, which by comparison which the idealizes image is highly despicable, self derogatory criticism is in the foreground. Since the picture of the self that results from such disparagement is just as far removed from reality as is the idealized image, it could appropriately be called as the despised image. If, finally, the focus is upon the discrepancy between the idealized image and the actual self, then all the character is aware of and all we can observe in his action is his incessant attempts to bridge the gap and whip himself into perfection. In this event he keeps reiterating the word 'should' with a considerable frequency. They are in a world of people with enemies ready to humiliate, enslave and defeat them. They must, therefore, constantly measure and compare themselves with others, not for reasons of vanity or caprice but by bitter necessity. And since at bottom they feel weak and contemptible they must search for something that make them feel better, more worthy than others. Whether it takes the form of feeling more saintly or more ruthless, more loving or more cynical, they must in their own mind feel superior in some way regardless of any particulars drive to excel. For the most part such a need contains elements of wanting to triumph over others, because, as Horney said it "...there is always vulnerability and a readiness to feel looked down on and humiliated. The need for vindictive triumph as an antidote to feeling humiliated may be acted upon or may exist mainly in the neurotic's mind(4). The desire for success itself becomes a driving force in the neurotic need for superiority. In this manner, the competitive spirit of our modern civilization is not only conducive to fostering mental pressure in general through the disturbances in human relationships it creates, but it also specifically feeds this need for preeminence. Hence a great majority of common men and the working class parents are choosing private school education for their children that provides them at least pseudo-status in their surrounding society.

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