



THE BURNING EXISTENTIAL CONCERN OF MAN IN THE PRESENT WORLD

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ABSTRACT

If we closely examine the Greek and modern concepts of the universe, we can find that there is a great deal of difference between the two kinds. The difference could be due to a great change in the outlook of the tragedy itself. Well, the causes that led to the 'shift' involve many features as due to the difference between Greek culture and modern culture, between the Greek concept of the Universe and that of the modern world.

KEYWORDS: *Modernism , scientific, utilitarian, materialistic, practical.*

INTRODUCTION

By modernism we imply neither contemporaneity nor modernity which means a drift from the past. Every age has 'modernity' of its own, as serving the evolutionary process, it adds something to subtract something from, or reinterprets, whatever it has inherited from the preceding age. In this sense, modernity denotes the values. In the early Twentieth Century this transitional mood acquired the permanent temper of revolution, shattering, and even reversing, the foundation of the traditional values. This age claimed the traditionlessness as the new tradition, which came to be called 'Modernism'. Thus conceived, 'modern' refers to the quality of experience and an attitude characteristic of this period.

As regards the nature of the modern temper, our age has earned for itself numerous charges like the age of Anxiety, of Nightmare, of Neurosis, of Disillusionment, of Illness, of Disintegration, of Unreason and so on. Perhaps all these labels are valid as each one describes one symptom of Modernism or the other. The history of the social evolution shows that consequent upon incessant advancement in civilization, culture has always been under constant strain to adjust and to cope with the latest condition. Modernity, thus usually brings what is called 'cultural lag'. In other words, the modernity of every age necessitates adjustment and normally that is effected within the basic framework of the current culture.

Now we have to recall the Nineteenth Century to visualize the extent and momentum of the metamorphosis that has marked the tenor of our century. Indeed, it has been a big change. Paradoxically enough, every new discovery of science has made living more comfortable but human life equally meaningless. Even the philosophy of the age, accommodating the scientific spirit, has ousted man and his ideals. The bases of Marxism, Pragmatism, Evolutionism are scientific, utilitarian, materialistic, practical and realistic attitudes - all of which deny idealism which hitherto have been the very foundation of all humanistic thought. Modern Psychology too, has revealed the irrationality of human institutions. Besides, by showing the inevitability of psychological drives, it has brought about a cataclysmic change in modern man's attitudes, especially towards sex and crime. Similarly, explorations in the field of anthropology and social sciences have



further indicated the absurdity of considering any human convention as immutable.

Thus the technological, sociological and psychological discoveries at the turn of the last century, highlighted the incompatibility of new civilization and 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 been One Dimensional, a civilization without culture. No wonder, at the zenith of civilization and the nadir of culture, modern man has been feeling alienated, sickly, fearful of future, and therefore, neurotic. He is bewildered by the forces around him and does not know what he is. The technological progress flatters him into believing that he is an omniscient god, but all else points to his insignificance. Evolutionary forces predict onward progress but the nuclear inventions equally threaten his existence. Modern psychology underlines his irrationalism in an age when he claims to have acquired rational outlook, existentialism renders him free to choose at a time when he has lost control over his own microcosm. Both communism and capitalism highlight the importance of economic, materialistic values when his parched soul cries for spiritual balm.

Consequent upon this dissociation of culture and civilization modern man has been passing through a sort of emotional, intellectual, moral and spiritual dilemma. Emotionally, modern man is an outsider, an alienated, rootless neurotic, suffering from nightmarish anxiety; morally, he is an empirical other-directed; spiritually, he is not capable of faith in anything - not even in his own self or identity. To put it differently, as a civilized man he is secular, cosmopolitan genius, but culturally he has nothing heroic about himself. Hence the 'modern' malaise, variously called nausea, alienation, loss of faith, loss of identity, traditionlessness, other-directedness and spiritual nihilism. What could cure him of his MALAISE is a cultural elixir, but that is precisely what he has lost in the explosion of knowledge. In this manner, modern man stands utterly bewildered at the sight of staggering technological progress on the one hand, and man's spiritual denudation on the other.

All this panoramic view of this present condition not only essentially colours the mood of the modern man but it also reveals the crisis mentality and the absurdities of our existential world in a general way. What is the most burning concern is an existential one in terms of the 'crisis'. Crisis means not only the sense of doom and despair and the sense of the socio-economic and political insecurity but also the complex of inner disharmony, the anxious incertitude and spiritual despair that lie at the basis of human consciousness. This diagnosis not only exposes the present pathetic human situation but it emphasizes the human predicament itself. All this study ultimately shows the condition of souls who are always in a state of fear psychosis and irredeemable crisis.

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