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Contesting Modernity: Fundamentalism and Postmodernism as Emerging Paradigms

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the emergence of fundamentalism and postmodernism and the fall of modernist hegemony, assessing the effects on intellectual discourse and societal ideals. By utilising qualitative research of philosophical writings and sociopolitical theories, the article investigates how these new ideologies contest and alter the fundamental frameworks that modernism has previously controlled. The results show that there has been a substantial change in the intellectual landscape, with fundamentalism and postmodernism both challenging and changing the dynamics of global culture. According to the research, to comprehend and negotiate the changing cultural landscape more effectively, future academic investigations and policy decisions ought to welcome this ideological variety. This strategy will enable a more thorough discussion between opposing viewpoints, guaranteeing strong intellectual and cultural advancement.

Introduction

As the twenty-first century comes to an end, modernist ideologies are losing their sway over the intellectual and cultural landscapes of the world, while postmodernism and fundamentalism are rising in their place. These new paradigms are powerful forces that are changing how civilizations perceive and navigate the world, not just theoretical constructions. This study examines the complex ties between these ideologies, looking at their historical roots, contemporary expressions, and significant influence on intellectual debate and societal ideals.

The future intellectual battlefield, according to Ernest Gellner (1992), would be fought between three main ideologies: the postmodern relativism's challenging viewpoints, religious fundamentalism's steadfast belief systems, and the enduring but declining influence of Enlightenment rationalism. The given investigation, which looks at how these ideas have changed and interacted over time, is framed by this prediction.

Compared to the binary battles of the past, the current environment is noticeably more complicated and diverse. The ascendancy of postmodernism and fundamentalism poses a direct threat to modernist thought's previously unquestioned hegemony, which is defined by its belief in universal truths, objective knowledge, and linear development. This study seeks to explain the subtle nuances and overt changes brought about by these ideological shifts through qualitative research that synthesises a wide range of philosophical texts and sociopolitical views.

This debate is applicable not only in scholarly settings but also in the real-world contexts of policy formation and social governance. The piece not only draws attention to the shrinking space that modernism formerly occupied, but it also brings to the forefront the various, sometimes contradictory, philosophies that are competing to determine the direction that society will take on a worldwide scale.

Literature Review

In *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age* (1989) Bruce Lawrence contends that a widespread rejection of modernity and its perceived dangers to traditional beliefs are the driving forces behind the global phenomena of fundamentalism. Lawrence notes that literal reading of sacred texts and a desire for purity are among the traits shared by fundamentalist movements.

The Czech philosopher and a member of American Philosophical Society, Ernest Gellner (1992), also called 'one-man crusader for critical rationalism' by the Independent, forecasted the global scenario for the dominant worldviews. He predicted that unlike the past, where the intellectual and political conflicts were usually binary, there are three contestants for the coming future; religious fundamentalism, postmodern relativism, and enlightenment rationalism. Though Gellner himself is an adherent of enlightenment rationalism (Marty, 1998), he considers the other two contenders challenging in the near future.

Through the perspective of comparative political theory, Roxanne L. Euben's *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism* (1999) offers an insightful examination of Islamic fundamentalism. In contrast to popular Western perceptions, Euben's work argues that Islamic fundamentalism is a Refined and subtle critique of modern rationalism rather than a primitive or irrational response to modernity.

In her 2004 analysis, *Civil Democratic Islam: Partners, Resources, and Strategies*, Cheryl Benard of the RAND Corporation categorised Muslim responses to the demands of global modernity, highlighting the four approaches such as Fundamentalists, Traditionalists, Modernists, and Secularists taken by Muslims to deal with these ideological changes. Among these approaches, fundamentalism stands out as a strong rival in the ideological sphere as well as a reaction to the problems of modernity.

The complex relationships that Muslim intellectuals had with empire, modernity, and tradition are shown in Seema Alavi's *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire* (2015), highlighting the cosmopolitan character of Islamic thought at this time. Alavi's work invites a re-evaluation of the presumptions underlying current debates on Islam and modernity by examining the intellectual history of this age.

Material and Methods

This study investigates the ideological movements shifting away from modernist hegemony and towards fundamentalism and postmodernism using a qualitative integration. It synthesizes theoretical and empirical material through thematic analysis to identify significant themes that highlight the relationships and ascent of various ideologies within the context of modernism's downfall. An in-depth comprehension of the intricate processes of today's intellectual landscapes is made possible by this method.

Theoretical Understanding

The underlying ideas of the growth of fundamentalism and postmodern thought must be understood as we move from the conceptual overview to a focused investigation of certain ideologies. These frameworks impact not only the global socio-political dynamics but also the cognitive settings of the individual and the group.

The Militant Fundamentalists

This article, which goes beyond theoretical debates, concentrates on the applications of fundamentalism, especially in manifestations. Al-Qaida is more of an ideology than an

organization. Fundamentally, 'Al-Qaeda' is an Arabic word which means 'foundation' or 'base of operation', in addition, it can be translated as 'method' or 'percept'. It has been observed that Islamic militants comprehend this term in the latter sense. Back in 1987, one of the familiar ideologues for Sunni Muslim radical activists Abdullah Azzam created the demand for Al-Qaeda al-sulbah (a vanguard for the strong).

He envisioned a man who would be an epitome for the entire Islamic world and would spur them into one ummah (global community of believers of one God) against persecutors. Also, in 1998 when the FBI investigated bombing on the US Embassy in East Africa, it labelled the activist's group as 'al-Qaeda' which was formed by Osama bin Laden along with its aides (Burke, 2009).

Albeit, Osama bin Laden with his supporters succeeded in creating a structure in Afghanistan which later amplified its links amid already existing militant groups as well as recruited new activists; yet they were unable to create a network of terrorist. Despite this, Al-Qaeda was able to operate as venture capital organization which provided funding, contacts, as well as expert advice for varied militant groups including individuals spanning across the Islamic world.

However, in the contemporary epoch, the structure created in Afghanistan has been diminished, in addition, bin Laden and his aides either have been arrested, killed or scattered. Thus, there subsists no hub of Islamic militancy. Nonetheless, the worldview of al-Qaedaism has become omnipresent which is continually being growing. Furthermore, this internationalist radical ideology which is sustained by anti-Zionist, anti-western, and antisemitic rhetoric is found to have numerous adherents, amongst them, few are still affiliated either with bin Laden or his allies. These are the individuals who follow his model, precepts, and his introduced methods. Based on this premise, they follow principles of al-Qaeda, however, in actuality, such a group is merely a constituent of Al-Qaeda in a very loosest sense.

For the sustainability of movement against an enemy, it is not sufficient to have terrorist attacks against them. It also requires ideas that should prevail within the minds of the militants, keeping them enthusiastic and determined about their revolutionary activities. J. Bowyer Bell calls it "the dream" (Bell, 1998). By this term, he meant what that keeps the militants convinced that they are on the right and just path and leading the history. Their way of life, i.e., accepting danger to their bodies, staying apart from family and friends, and living with psychological stress, these characteristics come when they are persuaded by the ideology.

Some terrorist can pervade with a faith in the cause, but others demand a rationale, objective and beliefs to pursue the militant goals. They require an ideology, which involves an explanation of the past, justification for the present and clarification of the future. Ideology within a violent underground organization drives to fulfil other objectives as well. Donatella Della Porta purports that the presence of ideology mitigates the militants' psychological cost and suffering. While Donatella was writing this about the left-wing terrorism in Italy, but appropriately fits in explaining the ideology of the militant group, Al-Qaeda. Ideologies portray the political foes as pigs and apparatus of the capitalist system and hence the enemies have to be treated severely, violently and harshly. Under this worldview-friend-enemy, victims of the aggression are taken as symbols and not as a living human species.

Similar characteristics can be found in the worldview of Al-Qaeda. It attempts to frame the local conflicts on to the spectrum of the globe, as a fight against apostasy (as considered by Bin Laden and his followers). Hence, their ideology is internationalist. Their world view has been described as "apocalyptic" and "pan-Islamic," "millenarian and ultra-conservative," "neo-fundamentalist," "Wahhabi," "profoundly hostile to the West" and

"counter-hegemonic." In true spirit, nevertheless, Al-Qaeda is, as claimed by Gilles Kepel, a form of "jihadist-Salafism", which gives, in its actual essence, respect to the holy book, along with a total pledge to perform jihad (Rabasa et al., 2006).

The dogma of Al-Qaeda to some extent incorporates and holds origins from the European notions of nihilism and the revolutionary socialist thought of the West. The conception of the world being changed in terror is not unusually Islamic eccentricity. In the words of John Grey, the modern West has come up with movements and ideologies approves the usage of terror, from Jacobins... to the Baader-Meinhof gang, to make the world better than before. Not even recently but also in the past Nazis were also thinking to create a grander species of human being. But all these movements and their notions had an underline feature that the better world could be acquired through using the violence systematically. Al-Qaeda has most in common with these experiments in terror by the West compared to its commonality with the traditions of Islam (Rabasa et al., 2006).

Ironically, Al-Qaeda has common characteristics of Marxism-Leninism, although Bin Laden and the followers of the jihadist movement ideology have hatred for communism. They both are vividly similar on many grounds. These include the conspiratorial habit of mind, the emphasis on internationalism, the focus on universal statements, the certainty that the world is divided into two opposing factions, and most importantly, the radical attitude towards the pervading social, political and economic order. Nevertheless, these ideas root from the educational background of the extremist members of Al-Qaeda, which peculiarly have begun from the secular educational institutions and not are the output of the religious institutions.

In this sense, the world view of Al-Qaeda is in an unembellished and conflicting contradiction- between the forces of Islamist and non-Islamist belief, and not between the capitalist and communist ideologies, Bin Laden fulfilling the role of the operational Leninist leader of the jihadist –internationalist revolutionary on the frontline. Ladan Boroumand and Roya Boroumand precisely write, "This was Leninism in Islamist dress" (Boroumand & Boroumand, 2002, p.8).

The primary goal of this Islamic militant group is not conquest, but to crush down the aggressive West which is thought to be demeaning, disintegrating and humiliating Islam as done in the pasts by the Crusades and the Colonialists. The secondary objective, additionally, is to found a caliphate, or a unilateral Islamic state or empire, on the geographical areas wherein the late first and early second centuries the Islamic empire had been established.

The Islamic disciplinarians, as they called themselves, desire for the comeback of the ideal seventh century, however, they have a negligible qualm about the acceptance of tools of modernity. Their longing for medievalism has not held back the use of the Internet and video cassettes to organize their faithful members.

A document declared to come from Bin Laden criticizes the United States of America to not being able to ratify the climate change agreement- Kyoto Protocol. Aymen al-Zawahiri, Egyptian militant leader, berates the international and multinational firms as major evils. One of the September 11, hijackers, Mohammad Atta, decried the world economic system with anger that Egyptian farmers grew cash crops like strawberries for the West, meanwhile its own citizens remain in dire famine and cannot even afford bread.

These Islamic hard-liners, in all cases, have modern political worries that encompass social justice defined under the framework of religious orientation. Intrinsically they do not cast-off modernization, but have resentment that they could not take the maximum profit out of it.

Despite lack of academic authorizations by the forefront leaders like Bin Laden and Al-Zawahiri, these Sunni militants are not called as a traditionalist but as a radical reformist, even though they fall within the milieu of Islamic observance. This is because they defy the presently established authority and ask for the right to construe the doctrine themselves.

Often with prolonged histories, their agenda is fundamentally determined by local grievances. Take for example, although Bin Laden called for a boycott of U.S. goods and products to show his support for Israel in the late 1980s, not until recently has he been involved in an attack on an Israeli target. His basic purpose was to overthrow the regime in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In the same way, Knights Under the Prophet's Banner-a mixture of autobiography and militant manifesto, written by Zawahiri (2002), focuses on native Egypt (Zimmerman, 2017).

The war on terror, its military constituents, has had a noticeable amount of success. A great number of militants associated with Bin Laden, in the years 1996 to 2001, are either dead or in jails now. His own capacity to stimulate and direct a terror attack has been shortened through effective technology and intelligence emancipated in the globe, along with the accelerated spending on security has made it harder for the terrorist to mobilize successfully across borders in order to commission and organize attacks.

Bin Laden knew how to efficiently propagandize those who have shunned his extremist message formerly. Since the time he has had initiated his campaigning fifteen years ago, it has started to receive a tremendous amount of support across the globe. The goal of the West was to mitigate the threat of terror, or at the least manage it to curtail the intrusion of terror attacks on the daily lives of the citizens. Laden, on the other hand, aimed to mobilize and radicalize. Although bin Laden is no longer alive, the ideological clash between the West and extremist groups continues, with the threat of terrorism remaining a pressing global concern.

Almost twenty years after 9/11, experts are still debating Al-Qaeda's present situation. Al-Qaeda is still a serious threat to national security, despite claims to the contrary from some in Washington. Al-Qaeda's core leadership has not been as strong since 2001, but its network still has a lot of influence and its ideology still fuels jihadist organisations around the world. The affiliates and allies of the group have changed and grown, adopting decentralisation and flexibility in their workings. Furthermore, domestic militants have been effectively recruited and radicalised by Al-Qaeda, so sustaining the threat of terrorism (Jenkins, 2012). The West is still fighting an ideological war against the narrative of Al-Qaeda, which has shown to be flexible and resilient.

One group of analysts purported that Al-Qaeda would weaken the power of the USA, which already has weakening economic autonomy, via continuing its low-level attacks, as it did the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Some outlined its resilience, that though AL-Qaeda itself may be declining but American troops drawing back from Afghanistan and Iraq will provide an inevitable vacuum for Al-Qaeda to set in that space.

The authoritarian rule over the countries in the Middle East, like Egypt, Yemen, Tunisia and Libya, collapsed as a result of the clashes and social protests in the Arab Spring in 2011 and generated confidence in the establishment of democratic governments, economic enhancement and social stability. However, parallel to that, Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Salafist groups have triumphed successively during the elections in democratic Tunisia, Libya and Yemen, and also, the role of Islamist insurgencies in Syria has reinforced the status of political Islam in these areas.

The devastating impact of the Arab revolution was manifested in Syria. It turned peace talks, political agreements and peaceful demonstrations into accelerated violence and enlarged new forms of jihadism led by Al Nusra Front and the Islamic State of Iraq and al-

Sham, also called as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which has affiliations with Al-Qaeda. Recently, ISIL has been renamed as Islamic State (IS). Just as Afghanistan's grounds were used to train and recruit the foreign volunteers during Soviet invasion in 1980, Syria is transformed for like purposes. Hundreds of militants from Europe, Australia, Asia and Africa are fighting in Syria with ISI and other jihadist groups. For instance, under the spearhead of Omar Gorgashvili, Abu Omar Shishani and Magomed Abdurakhmarov, the group called Jaish al- Muhajirin walAnsar- 'The Army of Immigrants and Mohammad's Supporters' gather Caucasian fighters.

In 2014, IS was capable to appeal 27,000 to 30,000 participants from around 86 countries (2015), through its attractive propaganda strategies and military successes, to come and live in the Levant and fight for the caliphate (Jenkins, 2012). From West Africa and Southeast Asia, inclusive of vulnerable Muslims in the West, it has victoriously influenced many Muslims militant groups, received allegiance to IS and commission terrorist attacks. IS has used effective tools of communication and recruitment, through the internet and social media, and successfully succumbed many participants. IS has published online treatises like An-Naba, Dabiq and Rumiyah which offer theological rationale and justifications, as they call it, to form a Khilafah through jihad.

In vain these propagandas go, as IS could not establish the Khilafah that has been modelled after the Rightly Guided Caliphs- the 30 years rule of the first four caliphs after the demise of Prophet Muhammad. Over 120 Grand Muftis, scholars and jurists defied the IS caliphate, in an open letter to AL-Baghdadi in 2014, rejected the interpretations that IS provide for the Islamic texts and condemned their atrocities and militant practices.

In 2017, the IS failed in material terms, and as the year passed. The borders and areas under their proto-state collapsed, its power haemorrhaged, and reserves of money crumbled. Not only that, but key areas under their stronghold like Raqqah, Mayadin and Mosul, which were conquered under the caliphate project were purged and recaptured. On the bases of these incidents, the policymakers and commentators confess the defeat of the IS, and claim that fate of Islamic State is to fade into obscurity anytime like a candle extinguishing after being kindled.

Yet, the Muslim communities of Southeast Asia and other areas, are under potential threat from the ideology of the IS terrorist group. Although it has lost the territories of

Syria and Iraq it continues to vend its jihadist and caliphate ideologies. An only minute fraction of Muslims resonates and inspire them to attack for them and provide support for them in their movements.

The Islamic State has profoundly and manifestly beaten Al-Qaeda becoming a more potent force in jihadism around the globe and stretched greater in Islamism. Moreover, Shadi Hamid (2017) has argued that the Islamic State looks to be a zenith of trends in Islamism. Unlike the Muslim Brotherhood that chased the political power through means of democracy, Al-Qaeda rejected these means claiming these to be Western and secular therefore out of the boundaries of Islam, and hence, pursued the political power through jihad. But, positive program of Al-Qaeda stays vague, and its agenda originally is demonstrated as negative. On the contrary, Islamic State puts Islamic means, so-called jihad, at the end when it talks about the restoration of the caliphate under the principles of Shariah to establish an Islamic political community, which are unaffected by the modern thinning and corruption. As Wood's interview portrays, the Islamic State's appeal is the promise to establish an untainted restoration of the caliphate. In Iraq and Syria, its influence and autonomy have been destroyed, the effect of which is still unknown on its broader appeal, but it has made ways to permeate in Asia and Africa. It would be a foolish inference that recent failure and defeat of Islamic State in military marks an end to it.

IS has a global appeal. Its predominance is in the Muslim countries but has spread its ideas in the West, who are born and grown up in Western liberal democracies. Its rules and norm are based on the rejection of the rules and norms of liberal democracy. It encounters the individuals with modern ideology, not only those in particular who take the benefits of liberal pluralism, democracy, toleration and secular ideas of justice, but the modern world in comparison to the unenlightened past. The modernity is in the stake, in this sense, to its core if not in every particular aspect (Such as bureaucratic companies and technology, which the Islamic state has not rejected but embraced) (Jung and Shapiro, 2016).

ISIS members have rejected the liberal-democratic ideas and work to erase them completely. They have rejected democracies, in the same way as others have rejected them: calling them as cruel, perverse, and those standing opposite to the development of humanity toward equity, justice and freedom from oppression. The rejection is inferred as defending, if not participating in, modern curses like sex slavery, the execution of apostates and infidels and the stoning of adulterers. Islamic State attracts those who are aware of the vulnerable conditions of Western democracy, which clearly means a rise of right-wing populism. But the threat is viewed as external by the right-wing populist.

Anticipating the Future

Mark Juergensmeyer (1993) argue that fundamentalism, or religious nationalism, has defeated the secularism around the globe. It is emerging as a powerful "ideology of order" in the post-cold war era. This is because the widespread perception that all the secular systems, may it be socialism, democracy, fascism, proved to be nothing but 'empty and unsatisfying form of social organization' (Fukuyama, 1993).

Juergensmeyer writes: "What is striking is how unanimously religious politicians—be they Christians in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Latin America; Muslims and Jews in the Middle East and Central Asia; or Sikhs, Hindus, and Buddhists in South and Southeast Asia—reject Western-style secular political ideologies, in part because they reject their claims of universality" (p. 144).

These fundamentalists have attracted all classes and have a promising future among the rich and the poor. Fundamentalists have their futures in all those areas where they have their power centres, or places where they hope to destabilize current government structures, or where they can influence policies by their numbers and pressure blocs or where in future coming generations will face problems like identity crisis (Marty, 1998). However, it is hard to anticipate scientifically what form will this fundamentalism develop in the future since "they do not fit the conventions of diplomacy, "take no prisoners," make no compromises, and may resort to forms of terrorism that transcend boundaries or subvert conventions of warfare (Marty, 1998, p.373)".

It is anticipated that they will challenge and try to destabilize and replace the secular, pluralist or nominally religious states and governments with active religious regimes with absolute and authoritarian controls. They are more likely to get strengthen in the areas where the "separation of church and state" has not yet occurred theologically, ideologically or practically. Few scholars while explaining the difference of pattern of secularizing between the US and Europe theorize that due to state-sponsored churches in Europe the secularization process accelerated. The religious scholars and missionaries, paid regularly by the state, found no motivation to find new ways to attract the public towards religion. With the lack of entrepreneurial innovations, religion became an outmoded commodity. In America, the religious professionals had to struggle to keep the public intact with religion. Following this line of argument religion has a promising future in the modern world. Fundamentalists are very active in the field of communication technology. They are far better than other religious competitors in exploiting the new technologies for their propaganda. They infiltrate their message by these means into the places of worship,

schools, members of the movements and even in families. Some analysts have linked the waves of fundamentalism with the emergence of new technologies; first wave with the invention of radio, second wave with the coming of television and third with the development of world wide web of internet.

Shrinking Island: The Postmodern Assault on Modernism

The promise of modernism that displayed an optimistic and inspiring worldview, became corrupt and oppressive. The whole façade which was erected by the notions of progress and freedom started cracking with the growing doubt about the viability of these notions. As a result, the conservative and fundamentalist forces started a crackdown against the domination of modernity and rushed from every crevice they could find in the cracking wall of modernity filling the gaps with their own versions of world views

Along with these conservatives and fundamentalists, a more intellectual and comparatively more effective contributor in demolishing the façade of modernity was postmodernism. The "post" in postmodern suggests "after". The scholars who worked on postmodernism used this term to point the inception of a new era in the modern academic history. It was approximately the same time when the global fundamentalism saw a rise, the 1980's, postmodernism also became a dominant discourse all over the world.

Some argue against postmodernism being a new phenomenon. They describe postmodernism in either of three possibilities; (i) a protraction of modernism in some way or another or (ii) as a collapse of modernism supplanting it while living in its shadow or even (iii) as a desperate tussle against modernism which is both persistent and resilient. In this way postmodernism becomes closely associated with modernism itself or nothing new. The biggest analyst of postmodernity, the French philosopher, Jean-François Lyotard considered that the although postmodernism must be distinguished from modernism, however, it can be separated from it, and that postmodernism potentially existed from the very beginning in modernism and progressively it became more and more evident.

However, carefully observing the impacts postmodernism is making on modernity and the threats it poses to it reveals that it, in fact, is shrinking the boundaries of modernism. Postmodernism can be considered as a challenge to the ideas and values associated with modernism. The biggest empirical dent modernity experienced was because the presupposed belief of modernity that the adoption of the values and principles of modernism in the same process will always improve the condition of human beings, had failed in many instances.

Postmodern emerged as a critical project, unveiling the previously constructed structures modernity had designated as truth and aligning itself along several marginalized entities whose histories in the modern period was repressed, such as women and colonized. They revealed the face of modernity as a project of patriarchal, white supremacist colonials which was indeed very horrid. Resultantly, one of the most discoursed themes of postmodernism was the cultural identity. The project to establish modernism as norm of universal character failed consequently.

The basic feature of postmodernity was to deconstruct the assumptions and presuppositions of modernity on which the whole edifice of modernism stood. Postmodernism 'unpacks' the worldview of modernity and decomposes the very tenets and values it is based upon. This characteristic of postmodernity to deconstruct the complete worldview has become a legacy of opposition of metanarratives. Lyotard defines the postmodern condition as "incredulity towards metanarratives". This loss of faith hits all the metanarratives of modernity including science. Marcel Kuntz (2013) in his essay 'The postmodern assault on science' describes how postmodernism has shattered the basis of

scientific worldview; the necklace of modernity. Modernist scholars have considered this tendency as "anything goes" pluralism and fragmentation.

Having such deconstructing capabilities, postmodernism is a variegated and irregularly broad ideology that along with its vastness fail to arrive at any solid judgment and conclusion; which it is proud of. The universal and transcendent foundations of reason and rationality which were boasted by modernism and which perished the foundations of traditional religions were smashed by the postmodern assault. Postmodernism challenged the supremacy of reason claiming it to be a social construct and culturally variable created by men, and the possibility of creating a better society based on the truth derived by such reason. Critics began to question the modernist ideals such as liberty, progress and equality, probing the etiological and teleological basis of them from their origin. Moreover, the historically absolute ideas such as truth, self, meaning, and purpose were also deprived off their absoluteness.

Lester Faigley (1992), in his work *Fragments of Rationality: Postmodernity and the Subject of Composition* wrote, "there is nothing outside contingent discourses to which a discourse of values can be grounded" (p. 8). He mentioned various ideas such as eternal truths, universal human experience, human rights, the notion of human progress, etc. American literary critic Mary Poovey (1990) summarizes in her essay 'Cultural Criticism: Past and Present', the function of postmodernism as it targets the "language as a system of relations, the instability of meaning, the artificiality of truth, the contradictory nature of identity, the generative capacity of language, and the de-cantered subject".

From Certainty to Contingency

American philosopher, Richard Rorty (1989) has elaborated on the topics, that Poovey has summarized in her sentence, in his famous work 'Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity'.

Rorty diagnosed the ailment of our modern society as our 'deep metaphysical need' (p. 46). He proposed the solution of this disease in freedom which he describes as 'the recognition of contingency'. In this recognition, he says, exists the cure for this ailment. Richard Rorty's work is based on his conclusion that there is no way, no neutral standpoint, based on which different metaphysical views or metanarratives can be evaluated. He argues that all of this is based on 'vocabularies', and these vocabularies are themselves contingent. A simplest of whose example is that a person speaking only German can't prove an Englishman correct or wrong. These both languages are different vocabularies, hence, can't be analysed on the basis of any other. In the same way, the ideologies are contingent. He gives alternative examples of the vocabularies in different ideas of human sciences; the political vocabulary of Athens vs Jefferson's, moral vocabulary of Saint Paul vs Freud's, natural science's vocabulary of Aristotle vs Newton's and the jargon used by Blake vs the Idiom of Dryden in linguistics.

Considering the example of Newton's and Aristotle's description of the natural world; if the vocabulary of newton predicts the natural world easily doesn't imply that the world speaks Newton's language. As a result, we must at least integrate the idea of romanticism that truths are created, not found. This process of redescribing the entities of truth, was acknowledged at the end of eighteenth-century romanticism that anything could be redescribed to look bad or good, important or useless. The most profound example of this transformation could be seen in the redescribing of human beings independent of nonhuman powers, transformed them into a new kind of human beings after romanticism, French revolution and German Idealism.

Rorty based his postmodernist views on the basis of lingual epistemology and raised it to the political philosophy. He hits on the conception of 'truth' by claiming that truths are

just based on some sentences we, the humans, formulate and if there are no sentences to formulate such truth, there is no truth. Moreover, these sentences are the elements of language that human use, and that language is itself a human creation. And since sentences cannot exist independent of human mind, truth can't too. The world out there doesn't contain truth or false, independent of human descriptions. Consequently, he declares truths as mere human creations. Hence for him the truth does not lie outside in the natural world objective to ourselves, rather, as he formulates: "The world does not speak. Only we do." (p. 6) Rorty quotes famous literary critic Davidson that "we have erased the boundary between knowing a language and knowing our way around the world generally." (p. 15)

In this way he just declares all the claims of truth and falsity as irrelevant and nonsensical. Criticizing the modern academic heap of ideas, he says that this contest of ideas in the modern world is merely a race between a fixated language or a set of vocabulary which has become a stagnant slug and a nebulously promising nascent vocabulary. Even in the ideologies, resisting modernism, the problem of vocabularies arises. The trouble is that the arguments used against the prevailing ideologies are themselves constructed in the vocabularies of that time. To show that the central elements of that idea are inconsistent and incoherent is to be showed in their very own terms. This means that it has to be shown that they deconstruct themselves.

Rorty expands the realm of contingency to the conception of self and assaults the traditional conception of self in the same manner. He declares that our selfhood is set of our communicative beliefs which we take for granted. He names it as 'final vocabulary' (p. 68). Basing on the contingency of language, and claiming that it has no essential task of representing or expressing something greater than it (for example, truth, reality, self), it can be said that language has no intrinsic purpose. Presuming this evolutionary nature of language itself, it is evident that strong poets, authors, or philosophers impose new ways of talking day by day. Continuing the same process, pretty soon, some new strong men of language will come along, changing yet again our vocabularies and hence our set of beliefs and identities of our selves. Where do these beliefs come from? Rorty says that the world causes us to set some beliefs when we have programmed our minds with a certain set of vocabularies; language.

Owing to the conception of self of Freud, that there were no general standards against which to measure the development of the self, Rorty rendered the self and identity as contingent. Those who criticize someone's beliefs they criticize it assuming that it doesn't correspond to the reality. Similarly, those who criticize someone's desires, they do it presuming that they are against the essential human nature. Though, actually there is no such fixed reality or fixed human self against which some idea could be measured. With such contingent selves the breakthroughs in history, masterpieces of literature and art, inventions and discoveries in science are mere idiosyncrasies. As a result, all the celebrated progresses in the domains of poetry, art, literature, philosophy and science were merely the private obsessions of those 'great people' which accidently coincided with some public needs.

Having talked about the contingency of language, reality, truth and self, Rorty moves towards describing his utopian society; a contingent community. A community where all realize that the vocabularies, they use are not the only ones, and not closer to reality, to God, or to nature than the others that may be available. Hence, according to Richard J. Arneson (1992), Rorty "imagines a liberal culture that has abandoned any search for 'foundations' or 'rational justifications' of its practices". He criticizes the enlightenment tendency of enforcing the discourse of reason by mentioning the need of a thorough redescription of the liberal ideology from the attempt to rationalize and scientize the society and culture to poeticize it. In this way he declares the very hope to modify the passions and fantasies with reason and science as a fulfilment of idiosyncratic fantasy.

Rorty credits this process of realizing this contingency on different levels to the predecessors like Hegel, Nietzsche, Freud, Kuhn, Davidson and Rawls. He suggests that to continue this trajectory, we must "substitute Freedom for Truth as the goal of thinking and of social progress." (p. xiii) Finally, as mentioned before, freedom for him is the "the recognition of contingency." (p. 25)

Conclusion

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter about the prediction of Gellner (1992) about the future contest of ideas, it is clear that the hegemonic domination of the modernity is on a decline. From our description of the rise of fundamentalism and the postmodern phenomenon, it is evident that the academic, as well as public, arena is going to be replaced by fundamentalism and postmodern ideologies. Apart from the opinions, as mentioned before in the chapter that fundamentalism and postmodernism themselves are considered to be the continuation or at least consequences of modernity, whatever may we consider about them, it is obvious that the island of modernity is shrinking day by day. The emergence of postmodernism and fundamentalism indicates a significant change in the intellectual and cultural landscape. As modernity's hegemony shrinks, new perspectives and ideas are rising to take its place. This change has a major impact on our perceptions of the world, our role in it, and the values that direct our behaviour.

Recommendations

It is necessary to comprehend the depth of the collapse of modernist hegemony in this age of radical ideological changes and to evaluate the substitutes that are occupying the space. Predicting and influencing the future course of human societies requires a deep comprehension of these opposing ideologies, fundamentalism and postmodernism. Policymakers, researchers, and thought leaders can discern the advantages and disadvantages of these developing paradigms by carefully examining each one.

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