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ATHEISM AND MODERNITY FINDING CORRELATION

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ABSTRACT: Modernity is a subject of discussion in humanities and social sciences which has to do with cultural norms, behaviors and some actions that emerged in the Renaissance and the Age of Rationalism. The term modernity is very broad and is applied to every sphere of life. Arts and sciences, social behavior and research in modern science and social sciences are all included in it. Modernity also covers the social attitudes that came into being with the rise of capitalism, including secularization, liberalization, modernization, and the details of post-industrial life. Among the effects of modernity is an extraordinary insistence on scientific progress and a rejection of the teachings of religion. Politically, modernity begins with Machiavelli, who prioritized the practical realities of politics over theoretical principles. The concepts presented by Rousseau in which he raised many questions about the nature and sociality of man also played an important role in the formation of modernity. As a result of the philosophical ideas of modernity, the element of faith in modern man has been lost and the realization prevailed that no permanent and eternal certainty can be attained in any respect in life. Max Weber has explained that the process of

rationalization under modernity has greatly increased frustration and disgust in the modern man. Freedom from religion is the result of modernity and especially Christianity and Roman Catholicism came to an end. The result is secularization. Modernity rejects the belief in Judo-Christian God and considers him only a vestige and relic of distant superstitions.

KEYWORDS: Modernity, Atheism, Positive atheism, Humanities, Social Sciences

Modernity is one of the few major trends of the modern era that has affected almost every aspect of individual and collective life today. The positive impacts of modernity are the advancement in science and extraordinary influence of technology in human life. But at the same time, modernity has separated today's man from transcendence. The questioning of the permanent foundation for high moral values and the denial of the transcendental aspect of the human being are some of the main consequences of modernity. The reason for this is the foundation of atheism from which modernity developed. The movement of atheism in the West has led to the path of modernity that the human consciousness has taken. Therefore, all the intellectual and practical effects and consequences generated by modernity are not devoid of atheism.

MEANING AND INTRODUCTION OF MODERNITY

In the humanities and social sciences, modernity is both a historical period and a set of sociocultural norms, attitudes and practices that appeared in the Renaissance, i.e. in the era of rationalism of the 17th century and of 18th century. Some scholars argue that the era of modernity ended in the 1930s or at most with World War II in 1945 or between the 1980s and 1990s.

The entire period after that is the period of post-modernity. Contemporary history or the present age is also considered separate from modernity. That is, contemporary history refers to the period after 1945, in which the modern or postmodern era is not mentioned. Modernity is a broad term that is being applied to every sphere of life. In historiography, the period from the 16th century to the 18th century is called the modern period. Similarly, the era of the nineteenth century is called modern history. There are many interrelated

historical factors and cultural patterns which also include everything from fashion to modern lifestyle.

Similarly, various experiences and conditions arising from these phenomena, which have an impact on human culture, institutions and even politics, are included in Modernity. As a normative and analytical concept, modernity is also applied to modern philosophical and aesthetic trends and political and intellectual attitudes that emerged as a result of Enlightenment. These include existentialism, modern art, social sciences and various anti-religious ideologies such as Marxism. The term capitalism also covers the social relations that came into existence with the rise of capitalism and also the attitudes that came into existence as a result of secularization, liberalization, modernization and post-industrial life (Berman, 2010:173).

When modernity made social issues the subject of debate, a new discipline, sociology, emerged. The term sociology is used to describe the social conditions, social processes and debates that emerged during the Enlightenment (Harriss, 2000: 325–42). The sociologists of this period also expressed their views on modernity. Defining modernity, Anthony Giddens writes that it is a term coined to refer to modern society or industrial civilization. If we look more closely at its details, it expresses a particular worldview: the concept of changing the world through scientific and industrial human intervention. It is a combination of economic institutions based on industrial production and a market economy, and also includes a specific structure of political institutions consisting of nation-states and popular democracies. These characteristics make modernity as a whole more efficient and effective than any previous social system. In other words, the modern world, unlike previous cultures, is a society that lives in the future rather than the past, and is a complex of institutions (Giddens, 1998:201).

Many scholars have disagreed with this definition of modernity and other such definitions as they consider these points to be included in the factors of modernity rather than the definition of modernity. According to them, modernity exists as an ontological formation in the western domination of the world, so it should be defined by putting more basic and elementary concepts heading forth from the factors. According to them, modernity refers to the weakening of the grip of various values on social life that already existed and the reconstruction of various elements of this grip, such as time, place, values and concepts and their related sciences, which changed the shape of social life (James, 2015: 31–54).

Today, when many scholars use the terms end of history, postmodernity, second modernity and sur-modernity, it is meant to describe the extraordinary changes in human lifestyles and social conditions under which life now moves. It has reached its natural limit of ultimate speed. Power now moves at the speed of an electric signal, so the time required for its essential components to move is so reduced that it is limited to the present moment. For all practical purposes, power has become externalized to such an extent that it is no longer bound by any internal limits, nor can it be slowed down by the resistance of space. That is, now the process of using or transferring power is completely freed from the compulsion of space. Its prime example is cellular telephones (Eisenstadt, 2003:197). This change in the status of power in material matters is not limited to the material domain of life but its impact extends to social and political matters of life. In the absence of a consistent system of values, its unrestrained activity is leading to many problems that could not be imagined before this era (Bauman, 2000:166).

The concept of “multiple modernities” was introduced by Shmuel Eisenstadt after discussion about

economic globalization, the comparative analysis of civilizations, and the post-colonial perspective of “alternative modernities”. The definition of “modernity” is enhanced when modernity is taken as a “plural condition” and as a central concept of the sociologic approach, and it also elaborates that it is not exclusively denoting the Western European culture and is not a culturally relativistic concept. After this explanation the modernity is not Westernization but its key processes and dynamics are found in all societies (Delanty, 2007:144).

MODERNITY DEFINED

Among the humanities, sociology defines modernity through an accessible conceptual framework in which modernity is “characterized and defined by a concern with ‘evidence,’ visual culture, and the visibility of the individual.” (Leppert, 2004: 19-35). Modernity usually represents a large-scale social integration consisting of:

- Excessive movement of goods, capital, people, and information between previously isolated peoples. This has implications across borders.
- Such excessive migration not only strengthens the formal social organization of mobile populations, but also the development and influence of 'modes' of migration. Therefore, greater social standardization is needed to foster this socio-economic mobility.
- Fragmentation of society due to increased specialization such as division of labor and regional interdependence.
- Unnecessary stratification of the rapidly growing social life of modern people.

- Dehumanization, dehumanity, and unionization. People become disillusioned with negative events, and their anger and fear increase.
- Vicitimization of modern under the pressure of circumstances created by the modern world
- A culture of unhealthy competition between people in a society with a survival of the fittest mentality

IMPACT AND CONSEQUENCES OF MODERNITY

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, modern art, politics, science, and culture influenced not only Western Europe and North America, but also large parts of the world. Many movements that were considered anti-Western and anti-globalization did not escape the impact of modernity. The main trends of the modern era are the emergence of individualism (Hroch et al, 1998:201), capitalism (Goody, 2013:67), urbanization (Hroch et al, 1998: 76) and the belief in the possibilities created by advances in technology and politics (Almond et al, 1982:127; Ihde, 2009:133-7). Many problems have arisen in the modern era which are the result of these rapid changes which have come as a result of weakening of the influence and power of traditional religions on society and the decline of moral values. Due to these problems, there has also been a reaction against modern developments (Kenneth, 1995:294). Post-modernism has also criticized the over emphasized urge of progress and to fulfill desires through science and technology. Similarly, the tendency of Western Europe and Anglo-America to occupy and dominate the rest of the world has also been criticized under postcolonial concepts. The impact of modernity on art in historical context is quite limited. The period of modern art is defined as the period between 1860 and 1970. Charles Baudelaire first used this term in relation

to art in 1863 in his essay *The painter of modern life* (Baudelaire, 1964:29). Accordingly, it refers to the experience of a fast-paced life in modern urban life, which is far from nature and is subordinated to modern industrial and technological influences (William, 2005: 454). It is the art created in a certain period that has lost its historical continuity and moves forward with hope from the unexpected possibilities of the future. It has also suffered from unusual sensitivity about its present (Kompridis, 2006:315).

The term “modernity” is also used for the cultural and academic movements between 1436 and 1789 (O'Donnell, 1979:23-5; Hartmann, 1974: 21–39; Delanty, 2007: 97). These cultural and academic movements continued until the 1970s (Toulmin, 1992:83). According to Marshall Berman, modernity is generally divided into three traditional periods: early modernity, classical modernity and late modernity (Berman, 1988: 94). This division is also described by Peter Osborne (Osborne, 1992:98). Early modernity covers the period from 1500 to 1789 and this is the period of traditional historiography. It is the period when people began to experience the modern way of life. Classical modernity covers the period from 1789 to 1900 which, according to Hobsbawm, corresponds to the long period of the nineteenth century. In this period, newspapers, telegraphs, telephones and other forms of mass media started and flourished, which greatly affected the development of mass media. It consists of the trends and attitudes of globalization of modern life. According to Berman, the second age consists of modern technology such as newspapers, telegraphs and other such mass media resources. A huge shift towards modernizing life took place during this period in the name of industrial capitalism. In the third period of modernity, modern arts, arts and individual creative trends and the modern era of individual creativity began.

It created tendencies to fight authoritarian politics, economy and other antagonistic social forces (Laughey, 2007:101; Bauman, 1989:55-59; Giddens, 1998:101-5).

Politically modernity began with the writings of Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527). He rejected the idea of viewing and analyzing political affairs according to the medieval and Aristotelian concepts of politics. Instead, he started analyzing political issues based on political ground realities. He wrote that the main purpose of politics is to create opportunities for oneself and improve one's political destiny. Political evils are born by sitting just relying on circumstances or destiny. Machiavelli wrote in his argument that sharp division between political classes is inevitable but sometimes this division becomes a source of power, so legislators and political leaders should encourage such political division in various ways (Strauss, 1987: 296–317). Machiavelli's concepts influenced the kings and princes, but ultimately these concepts were used in favor of the establishment of independent republics instead of monarchies (Rahe, 2006:201). Machiavelli had also a great impact on Francis Bacon (Kennington, 2004:111), Marciamont Needham (Rahe, 2006:121), James Harrington (Rahe, 2006: 135), John Milton (Bock et al., 1990:117), and David Hume (Rahe, 2006:98) and many other thinkers (Strauss, 1958:37).

The new realism of Machiavelli gave birth to many important modern political concepts. For example, one of his most influential political statements is that the individual faults and vices of a skilled statesman's flawed management are sometimes transformed into public interests. This is the last sentence of his work *Fable of the Beast*. Similarly, there is the matter of constitutional distribution of power and authority among governments, which was first articulated by Montesquieu. Both these principles have been integrated into the constitutions of modern democracies. That is, on the basis of

Machiavelli's political realism, political violence and conflict were changed into political struggle and economic conflict into independent and private economic activities (Rahe, 2006: Ch5; Mansfield, 1989:117-9).

Application of the methods and principles of modern physical sciences to humanities and politics is also one of the important trends of modernity. It started with Thomas Hobbes and later Francis Bacon and Descartes advanced this trend (Berns, 1987: 369–420). Scholars who played important roles in the development of Thomas Hobbes' methodological approach include John Locke (Goldwyn, 1987: 476-512), Spinoza (Rosen, 1987: 456-475), and Giambattista Vico (Vico, 1984: 149), and Rousseau (Rousseau, 1997:118-9). The first effective attempt to apply Bacon's scientific method to political problems was made by David Hume (Hume, 1896:201-5). Modernist republicanism had influence on foundation of republics during the Dutch Rebellion (1568–1609) (Bock, 1990:56), the English Civil War (1642–1651) (Rahe, 2006:67), the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783) (Rahe, 2006: Ch. 6–11) the French Revolution (1789–1799), the French Revolution (1789-1799) and Haitian Revolution (1791-1804). (Owin, 1997:55-7)

The second phase of modern political thought begins with Rousseau, who raised many questions about the natural rationality and sociality of man. He said that human nature is much weaker than it was previously believed. That is, human nature can be bent in any direction under the pressure of circumstances and events. He not only shed light on the factors that make a political system or good social persons, but changed its dimension saying that the establishment of a good political system or society of a nation depends on the fact that how did a nation use the opportunities available in history?

Rousseau's thought influenced the political and aesthetic thought of Immanuel Kant, Edmund Berg and many other thinkers. Thus many new trends were added in modern political thought. However, it gave rise to many new ambitious movements in human culture and societies, among which early Romanticism and Historicism can be mentioned. An extreme form of the modern forms of nationalism that emerged under the influence of Karl Marx's Communism and the French Revolution is the Nazi movement in Germany. (Orwin, 1997:131-5) One of the grounds on which the concept of modernity was opposed is its Euro-centricity. Although the people of the West in the non-Western world oppose Western democratic values, democracy, social discipline and the West (Regilme, 2012: 94–117) but this opinion has not been considered fair and only reason to disagree with modernity.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, the discoveries made by Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and other scientists in physics and astronomy changed the way people thought about the universe. The solar system given by Copernicus no longer had the Earth as its center. Kepler discussed the concepts of physics in light of the laws of mathematics and described the routines of nature. In the same way, Galileo presented the proof of uniform acceleration in free fall in the light of mathematical principles, forcing the coming human consciousness to be limited to the constant laws of nature instead of an unseen extraterrestrial being (Kennington, 2004:119). Francis Bacon introduced a new methodological approach in his book *Novam Organim*. It is an approach in science to the recognition of facts based on experience. Thus there was no longer any scope for a formal or final cause, but he had not yet emerged as a fully materialist thinker. He also spoke about God's two books, namely God's Word i.e. Scripture and God's work i.e. Nature (Bacon, 1828:121).

He presented the view that science should gain authority over nature only for the welfare of humanity, not knowledge for knowledge's sake. Machiavelli's objections to schoolism had a strong influence on Francis Bacon, and so did Machiavelli's view that political leaders should formulate their own strategy in order to gain control over their destiny. (Davies, 2004: 131-42) Galileo views on Physics were influenced by Bacon's ideas and concepts. Descartes argued that scientific knowledge could be structured according to the laws of mathematics and geometry, and that even man himself could be treated as a machine under the same principles. (Kennington, 2004:135) Isaac Newton, influenced by Descartes' theories and Bacon's experimental methods, described how Cartesian mathematics, geometry, theoretical deduction, Bacon's experimental observations, and induction made progress toward a practical understanding of the regularities in nature. (d'Alembert, 2009:118; Henry, 2016:201-5)

One aspect of modernity, which changed the life style, is the appearance of movable type devices and printing press (Pius, 1864: 36-9) in Europe after the fifteenth century. The age of modernity is the age of industrialization and division of labor. The modern society of the West is the result of several important events and scientific developments that emerged in a discontinuous manner. (Smith, 2003:158-9)

At prominent philosophical and theological level, the result of modernity is the loss of faith and the prevailing feeling that certainty in any aspect of life cannot be achieved permanently and forever. (Delanty, 2007:89) The social, cultural and intellectual trends of modernity permanently deprived life of its basis of belief. Today, a new socio-philosophical situation poses new challenges to humanity. In the 19th century, various intellectuals, from Auguste Comte to Karl Marx to Sigmund Freud, presented a variety of scientific and

political ideas, but their common value was secularization. Modernity is therefore characterized as an age of ideology (Calinescu, 1987:133-5).

As an ideology it is gradually secularizing life. Different thinkers have understood and broadened the scope of modernity according to their respective academic backgrounds. For Karl Marx, the basis of modernity was capitalism and the revolutionary bourgeoisie, which led to the extraordinary expansion of the productive forces and the world market. Industrialization was seen by Durkheim in a completely different way. Although he initially followed the approach of Karl Marx, later he placed less emphasis on capitalism as a modern mode of production and the bourgeoisie as a revolutionary class. In Max Weber's mention of modernity, there is a lot of emphasis on the process of rationalization and the presence of despair and disgust in the modern world. (Larrain, 2000: 154-7)

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MODERNITY AND ATHEISM

According to thinkers critical of modernity such as Theodor Adorno and Zygmunt Bauman, modernity or industrialization is a sinister process of separation and alienation from the central principles of the Enlightenment that forces us away from tradition and commit many new acts, for example commodity fetishism. (Adorno, 1973:169-70) The rationalization of modernity is described in a more negative way by contemporary social critics than as it was described by Max Weber. According to the critical theory, the process of rationalization or the process of development for the sake of development is a negative approach that has de-humanized the modern society (Bauman, 1989:89-90) Earlier, Enlightenment was being described as such an intellectual development (Bauman, 2000:113-4) which was intended to free humanity from all kinds of fear and make it master of its own affairs, but under modernity it

is spreading across the globe as a conqueror who only holds the title of destruction (Adorno, 1973:189-90).

The main characteristic of modernity is the freedom from religion, especially the end of the dominance of Christianity and Roman Catholicism, which results in secularization (Eisenstadt, 2003:144). The modernity considers it only a sign and relics of the era of superstitions. Fackenheim states that there is a great discrepancy between modern thought and the doctrine given in the Bible. Where modern science and philosophy agree against the revelation, revelation must be rejected as merely a vestige of superstitious times. ... [to a modern philosopher] the God of the Bible ... was a mere myth of the past (Fackenheim, 1957: 272-73) and, according to Husserl, religious belief became an inanimate object with the dawn of the modern age. So scholars presented an independent philosophy and belief in science as a new faith. (Husserl, 1931:77)

It started with Descartes' methodic doubt and gradually reached the modern concept of reality and certainty where the basis of ultimate certainty is not the belief in God or the authority of the church but man's own subjective judgment.

Among those trying to combat modernism are theologians. During the last two hundred years, liberal theology has tried to counter the skepticism of traditionalist Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and fundamentalist Protestants about Christian inspiration under modernity through scholarly endeavors or attitudes of tolerance. Thus the representatives of the Church struggled to reject all doubts and suspicions that arose under modernity (Davies, 2004: 133; Davies, 2004:133; Cassirer, 1992:13-14; Cassirer, 1992:13-14).

According to Kilby (Kilby, 2004:256-68) the Roman Catholic Theology whose prominent representatives were Rahner and Balthasar also

developed a gradual adjustment with modernity. The claim of modernity is that its goal is such a progressive effort that as a result humanity will get rid of the attitudes of ignorance and anti-intellect (Rosenau 1992: 161). However, many thinkers cite extremist trends emerging outside Christendom, such as Hindu fundamentalism and Buddhist fundamentalism emerging in Burma, to support their view that intra-society conflicts are not unique to Christian society only.

The conservative Protestant theologian Thomas C. Oden defined modernity in the light of “four fundamental values”.

- a. Moral relativism: it means the right is not absolute but it is dictated by culture, social location, and situation
- b. Autonomous individualism: it means that the moral authority comes essentially from within
- c. Narcissistic hedonism: it means that egocentric personal pleasure is the primary objective
- d. Reductive naturalism: it means that the reliable knowledge is possible only through five senses and empirical investigation (Hall, 1990:165)

According to modernity only “novelty as a criterion for truth” is acceptable rather “old”. Resultantly it creates “phobic response to anything antiquarian”. In response to this approach of modernity “classical Christian consciousness” resisted the “novelty”. (Hall, 1990:171)

When modernity flourished in Western society, Christianity saw it as a threat to its beliefs and thought system. Roman Catholic Popes Pius IX and Pope Pius X declared that modernism was a threat to the Christian faith. It is worth noting here that the Church coined a specific definition to describe the dangers of modernity, which was meant to highlight its sensitivity.

Pope Pius IX also compiled a *Syllabus of Errors* which was published on December 8, 1864. It covered the church's criticism and objections to modernity. (Pius 1864) Pope Pius X expressed his views in a circular letter entitled "Pascendi Dominici gregis" dated September 8, 1907, detailing the features and consequences of modernism that he considered a threat to the Church. (Pius, 1907:45) This circular was sent to all churches associated with the ancient Roman Church.

In this circular, while the Pope Pius X condemned modernity, he also condemned the movement of Catholic biblical scholars, philosophers, and theologians who believed that the Church could not ignore new historical and scientific research on the Bible. (Steinfels, 2007:63). Maud Petre expresses this while writing that the influence of historical criticism on the traditional teachings of the Church under the influence of modernity had been terrible. This criticism was very harsh, and it became a question of whether or not to save the very essence of the Christian faith from destruction. ” (Talar 2007: 1-12).

Now a tendency to support modernity began to develop from within the Church itself. Alfred Luzi, a French Roman Catholic priest, professor, theologian and critic of traditional views of biblical interpretation, stated that since only scientific exegesis is verifiable, so only it is reliable. Now the interpretation based on faith by ignoring the scientific research was denied by calling it a personal point of view. (Magister, 2007:87). The importance of revelation almost disappeared. Agnosticism or scientism presented concepts about the personality of Christ which resulted in denial of Christ and the historical details related to him (Pius, 1907:55).

Pope Pius X also wrote in Pascendi Dominici Gregis that the principles of modernity lead to radical atheism. The Roman Catholic Church took the threat of modernity so seriously that from 1910, until the directive

was revoked in 1967 in accordance with the instructions of the Second Vatican Council, all Roman Catholic priests, confessors, preachers, and religious leaders, and seminary professors were required to take an oath against modernity (Pius, 1910:57).

CONCLUSION

An examination of the impact of modernity in different periods of history highlights the fact that modernity has affected various streams of life including sociology, economy, politics, science and art in a very comprehensive way. The world society that was formed after the impact of modernity is completely different from the historical society of the past. Atheism is dominant in western society. In Western society, the Church at first resisted strongly to curb atheistic tendencies and later adopted an attitude of harmony with modernity. Despite these efforts of the church, the influence of atheism could not be stopped. Resultantly the church had to succumb to the penetrating influence of modernity. Today's western society is on the pattern of modernity, the foundation on which it has been raised is atheism. Now these effects and consequences are not only limited to the western society but are also clearly visible at the international level.

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