

SHIFTING PARADIGM OF MAJOR LITERATURE IN PERSPECTIVE AND ORIENTATION OF SCIENCE, HISTORY, CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION

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Abstract: *The paper basically aims to analyse the beginning of the Christian era, the Classical heritage and tradition of the Greeks, Egyptians and Romans blended into what is known as the Ptolemaic view of the universe expanded and modified through adaptation to Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras and the Neo-Platonists. This chapter deals with the major changes and paradigm shifts in history, literature and radical changes in perspective and orientation in science, culture and civilization and religious points of view. The Christian myth of God and Satan, Good and Evil, the fall and redemption was filled out with the classical vision of the universe. This came to be known all across the Catholic world, as 'Thomism' which prevailed as a world-view until the Renaissance and its views spread around across Europe through travellers and set up as an emerging ethos. The paper also aims at the system, thought and views of English literature tracing changes from Renaissance to the Modern age. The holistic view of transition in literary approach touched many writings of the writers of different ages from renaissance to the modern. Changes in world view, paradigm shifts, are of momentous importance in the history of civilization and culture. At the height of civilization alienated for the earth and the cosmos the 'disconnect' quickly drains out what is vital to culture, as towns are to civilization. The conclusion of the paper aims in the orientation of Modern literature towards a paradigm.*

Keywords; *Paradigm shift, Christian era, myth, fall apart, reunion, culture.*

INTRODUCTION

Changes in world view, paradigm shifts, are of momentous importance in the history of civilization and culture. Before focussing on the palpable and noticeable symptoms of change beginning with the two world wars of the last century, it is necessary to establish the far-reaching implications of such changes in relation to history, civilization and culture in the past, specially to the Graeco-Roman and the radical Christian 'world-view' as earlier instances of 'paradigm-shift' in history, related to what this thesis focuses on. The literary sensibility one accepted as 'modern' expresses in diverse ways the paradigm-shift so notably exemplified by radical changes in perspective and orientation in science, history, culture and civilization and the 'religious' points of view.

It is one of the underlying patterns in modern philosophies of history, in Toynbee and Spengler, that such overlapping and conflicts between mutually exclusive world-views are characteristic of transition and changes in civilization and culture. The first hints of this paper of 'falling apart' are now seen to have been witnessed at the close of the Middle Ages, in lesser or greater degrees, by Chaucer, Shakespeare, Browne – substituted by single-minded thrust of Reason from Bacon down to Newton and Locke. Art and sensibility survived the levelling down by scientific temper and rationalism, and Blake is a majestic bulwark and milestone of this co-ordination, in his vision of innocence losing to experience. But, the incipient questionings – whether the same God made both the Lamb and the Tiger, the Rose and the Worm, the indispensable but antithetical roles of Man and Woman to each other,

underline the answer. According to all these, specifically Spengler, civilization follows culture as death follows life; Stone-cities follow mother earth; cosmopolitanism, rootlessness replaces roots in earth. 'A rose is a rose a rose is a rose' (Gertrude Stein) is all right, but a rose is not a cabbage, although both belong to vegetative growth. In Lawrence, Yeats and Eliot, - dark woods and fecund growth represent instinctive energy that sustains culture, tradition. 'Unity of Being' achieved by these is the perfection of this thrust, 'the force that through the green fuse drives the flower' (Dylan Thomas).

Spiritual culture has evolved through myths and rituals of agriculture: 'Cultivation of wild grasses and their development into cereals' has in it the process of acculturation, holding the vegetation symbol as a myth of human potential.

These are obvious symptoms of impending 'paradigm'-shift; it is remarkable that even Darwin and Frazer, regarded in their own times as promoters of the 'scientific method' and 'positivism' are potentially 'futuristic' in their correlation of 'data' relating to man's 'primitive' roots rather than propagating how far he has progressed. It is also necessary to see in Spengler's 'complete identity of results' the shift away from 'progress' and certainties of Newtonian science, towards 'uncertainty' – now a principle in modern physics; uncertainty forced on the world by the wars; uncertainty of the geological sub-structures of the earth and their effect; uncertainty about time-space, subject-object relationship in Relationship – not to mention the uncertainty about light being particles or waves : In the grand design of shifting paradigms Blake had seen the 'atoms of democritus' in Newton's 'particle of light'.

FROM UNSETTLING TO SETTLING

It was as the First war ended that its effect impacted Western Civilization beyond what the unsettling questions of War Poets implied, much beyond what the Georgians, Edwardians and Imagists undertook. Imagism, of course, precipitated a core-concern with the use of language in poetry just as Forster's 'Only Connect' (*Howard's End*) as the need of a fragmented society, ethos and culture was to merge with challenges to the survival of 'connected' culture and civilization. Above all, what happened to the use and value of literature was meshed up with seminal works on Historiography. Anthropology, depth psychology, Origin and decline of cultures and civilizations. What stands out clearly in this 'convergence' of systems of thought into an implicit and overall relativity of cyclical patterns and structures is 'uncertainty' as a defining principle of order; relativity rather than exclusiveness of dimensions and categories; 'indeterminacy' of time, space, matter and energy. It is not entirely beside the point that Keats had believed the 'fruitful uncertainties' of creative mind had more potential than the philosophers' quest for exclusive 'certainties'. Now, science itself which had no goal other than exclusive certainties sets up an 'Uncertainty' principle in a universe where Matter and Energy (Newton's Force exclusive of Mass) are interchangeable status conditioned by the critical quantum of the speed of light. $E = mc^2$ is an 'equation' of matter and energy and the determinant is 'Speed of Light'. The leading philosopher of the last century, Alfred North Whitehead, therefore defined Reality as 'Process', accepting change and movement as aspects of ultimate reality, shattering the earlier 'paradigm' of ultimate reality as changeless, unmoving and Eternal. Paradox is central to Reality, reconciling the changing and the changeless, the still and the moving.

It is necessary to take these factors into account right now, before encountering such eloquent paradoxes in modern poetry like Eliot's 'motion in stillness, stillness in motion'; Yeats' 'How can we know the dance from the dance?' or Graves' paradox of doing and being: 'Man does; woman is Incidentally, as an example of the comprehensiveness of this concern, central to

contemporary experiences, there is that existentialist theme of ‘being and becoming’, ‘being and nothingness.’ Certainly, the new ‘paradigm’ articulated in Relativity; Spengler’s and Toynbee’s *Cyclism in History*; Jung’s *Collective Unconscious* and its archetypes; and anthropological evidences of ‘connectivity’ man has always sought between ‘processes’ – natural, mythical, ritualistic and ‘biology’ of life insists on reality as process underlying all processes, unification of all fields and processes the one way of being a part of it. Quoting Spengler’s insight in this regard will lead to a holistic approach and proved right in one respect. Spengler’s is an outstanding piece of writing – interconnecting several fields of knowledge to project a ‘whole’ view of history in relation to existence-

“I saw the present — the approaching World War – in quite another light. It was... the type of historical change of phase occurring within a great historical organism of definable compass at the point pre-ordained for it hundreds of years ago”.

It is hardly surprising that the great American critic Northrop Frye starts his book on T.S. Eliot by observing: ‘All modern poets are Spenglerians.’ To be a Spenglerian is to perceive a consistent pattern of decline, dissociation setting in under the explosion of ideas related to progress and enlightenment ever since the Renaissance.

FROM PRE-HISTORY TO MODERN CIVILIZATION

Arnold. J Toynbee (1889-1975) a British historian, philosopher of history, research professor at the London School of Economics and authors of myriad books insists on ‘Challenge-and-Response’ as a principle of cyclical change right from the origin of the universe to evolution in Nature and History focuses on human history. Toynbee does expand on *Cosmos and History* in his first volume, but once he sets down to history of cultures and civilizations, he runs into as many volumes as the cultures he studies. Toynbee’s mass of historical evidence from prehistory to modern civilization has the historian’s ‘imperative’ of leaving no evidence unexamined. Toynbee tracks down ‘challenge and response’ in all available evidence of human settlements and migrations, whether they grow into a sustained challenge-and-response semblance of civilization, or abort themselves either because of the ‘responses’ overcome by hostile or insurmountable challenges such as intractable terrain, scarcity of fertile soil or rains or water as a resource for fertility or transport; excessive or scarce rainfall; forest cover not enough for supporting human survival. Obviously, river-valleys; sea-coasts; arable land favourable to agriculture; base of mountains with perennial water-resources for transport of wood from fallen trees, for flocks of animals or birds to gather for water and for humans to hunt for food; sea-coasts for cross-transporting and trading local produce: such settlements grow into community, society, fishing villages and commercial townships – with sustained support from within and from buying and selling, trade and transport. Toynbee’s 12-volume *A Study of History* (Later abridged by DC Somervell), in fact, begins with a parallel between Origin of the Universe and the Origins of Civilization throughout history.

The ‘Big Bang’ theory of the Origins of the Universe (not entirely abandoned even today) applies to history of civilizations as well. A passive state of our cosmos was challenged by a gigantic celestial body whose gravity shattered the placidity of the sun which fractured and the pieces (planets) constituted fields of gravity around their parent body and thus began our solar system. Such big bangs like the recurring floods or drought, or upheavals in the

geological structure of the earth shifting mountains, valleys and rivers are CHALLENGES on the cosmic model to which tribes, races, communities and settlements, RESPOND through migrations or regrouping – as Frazer's *The Golden Bough* amply illustrates. Availability of Water (rivers, oceans), fertile lands or forests, mountains and valleys – sometimes challenges and sometimes shelters – condition settlements or migrations of groups or communities. These are models of rise, growth and decline of human settlements or later civilizations and culture. Sir James Jeans' elucidation of 'Cyclical Universe' (expanding, contracting; condensation of energy into matter and expansion of matter into energy) and a host of other such perceptions of Space, Time, Relativity, Galactic Space by Einstein and others are not only compatible but the receding boundaries of the system Toynbee calls 'Challenge and Response'.

Toynbee's classifications of four phases are closer to man's relationship with Nature, his environment, himself and the Universe. 'Challenge-and-Response'- essence of all processes – in the universe, Nature, human community, culture and civilization, the key to renewal of processes. Four quarters of a culture-civilization cycle are —

1. primitive communities responding to local 'challenges' in terms of patterns of civic life; (1-500)
2. evolution of society, philosophy in consonance to this adaptation – to its peak at the end of the second quarter; (500-1000)
3. stabilization and organization at the peak level, civilization overtaking culture; (1000-1500)
4. decline : 'time of troubles'; fissions, disintegration, dissociation, fragmentation, strife-war-dissipation

In addition to this Eliot's "The Waste Land" focuses on sterility, fragmentation of human community, loneliness, and suffering. It might even be Moses on the hill-top seeking revival of his community. It is everyone, all primitive gods who died to seek rebirth: Osiris; Dionysus; Tammuz; Dionysus. To the pattern underlined by both Spengler and Toynbee, Eliot brought the unlimited eloquence of the 'dying and reborn' gods from Frazer and the anthropologist J.L. Weston. In literature, Eliot is at the focal point of a process that includes Joyce, Yeats and several others.

THE QUEST FOR LOST ROOTS AND CULTURE

It is interesting, and also imperative, to focus on aspects related to cycles of civilization and cultures. Besides the evidence of cycles of rebirth in W.B. Yeats's chapter in 'The Great Wheel' and 'Phases of the Moon', it is specifically in 'Dove or Swan' that he collates and interprets data of the cycles of classical (Annunciation of Swan-Zeus to Leda) and Christian (Annunciation of Dove to Mary) era, charting out the element of recurrence, periodicity and wondering about his sources. Joyce and his concern were very much in Eliot's mind during the writing of *The Waste Land*; he pointedly stated his heritage of the 'mythical method adumbrated by Mr. Yeats and Mr. Joyce as a way of ordering, controlling and giving shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history'.¹ In the myth of the Holy Grail used as structural base by Eliot in *The Waste Land*, the Quester's journey for the source of life. Eliot says, 'multiplying variety in a wilderness of

mirrors' – hardly a quest at all. Incidentally, the same image has been employed by Yeats for man's delusions in search of truth.

“Mirror on mirror mirrored is all the show”

Man's first establishment of an 'organic' relationship with his environment – generally, the earth – was his first step towards 'culture'. Thomas Mann, the great modern German classic, has put it succinctly in *Joseph and His Brothers*ⁱⁱ that 'wild grasses and their development into cereals' was one of the earliest versions of the 'dying God' myth. Spiritual culture has evolved through taming, shaping and patterning of primordial, wildness: 'cultivation of wild grasses and their development into cereals provided the basis of agriculture as patterned cyclical growth that epiphanised into growth and regeneration in spiritual and cultural terms. From man's roots in the earth to his sense of being a part of cosmic cycles, is one succinct line of acculturation. Agriculture is as vital to culture as towns are to civilization. The recession from civilization to primitism is amply demonstrated the works of Lawrence, Yeats, Eliot and others, compensatory to civilization receding to most artificial, stylized notions of structure and form.

Spengler lamented the alienating sequence of human settlements, the split from the earth, the split of masculine and feminine – thus splitting what is basically one:

“Man makes history; woman is history”

The waste barrenness in Eliot's poem is a lowest common denominator that almost all of modern literature – Forster, Joyce, Lawrence, Pound, Yeats, Eliot, Graves – seems to underscore as the malady of civilization. As for a summing up, no one could equal Spengler's sweep and penetration – Spengler's modern metropolis is characterized by 'unfruitfulness, extinction of great art, of great courtesy, ... of the great style in all things, but also quite 'carnally' in the childlessness and 'race-suicide' of the civilized and rootless strata'

ORIENTATION TOWARDS A PARADIGM: THE CONCLUSION

The compelling pattern of 'interweave between cross-sections of reality and experience in the last century – involving major shifts of perspective in the sciences, psychology, philosophy, history, literature and literary sensibility– establish a fairly consistent transition and orientation towards a consistently holistic paradigm. It includes, by necessity, 'uncertainty' as a mode or principle or value. This, in particular, is the thrust away from what to Spengler, Toynbee, Yeats, Eliot or Joyce is the linear-progress-certainty' syndrome of the last 2000 years, highlighted specially between 1500 and 1900 by dominating line running through Bacon, Newton, Locke to the logical positivism of Comte and the drumbeat of progress by the Victorians.

'Myth' certainly prevails as the modern fabric and network of creative imagination. It is there in evidence in major creative sources like Lawrence, Joyce, Yeats, Eliot, Graves and others. 'Myth' is also the key to the network of all life seen as 'holistic', interrelated and integrated – from Frazer to Jung, Spengler, Toynbee and socio-anthropological studies; the same 'myth' that was dismissed as contrary to Reason and Logical Positivism. History has a cyclical pattern of emerging and declining forms of culture and civilization, like the annual cycle of seasons and agriculture. This 'cyclism' has been engraved in world-history through countless rises and falls of civilization and World-Views. 'Progress' is a 'one-eyed' view of conquerors and first ventures into the unknown like Phlebas the Phoenician in *The Waste Land* – 'a fortnight dead... his body picked in Whispers' by sea-currents'.

Timed with these disaster and delusions was the unmistakable ‘turning point’ (Fritzoff Capra) in history, world-view or paradigm – almost foreseen by Joyce, Eliot and Yeats and rendered in authentic personal and historical images in Eliot’s *Four Quarter*. Whereas *The Waste Land* postulated the ancient Indian Upanishad paradigm of five elements – earth, water, air, fire and all containing sky; *Four Quarters* not only returns to the Western four-elements – paradigm, but to archetypal quaternary comprising full-circle; to circle-cycle paradigm; to centre-circumference paradigm (‘Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold’ – Yeats).

A natural sequel to and consequence of everything connected to a whole in the other synthesis of sciences, psychology and philosophy is the radical shift to what Berkley stood for and what any ‘observer’ in Einstein’s relativistic universe is – a point of ‘consciousness’ without which nothing would happen.

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