

Reduction of Science into Scientism

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Abstract

This qualitative study addresses key issues of relationship between scientific knowledge, meaning of life and moral values. It explores how degeneration of science into scientism desacralizes knowledge as well as language and generates reductive view of Reality and Truth. Charting through major Western philosophical movements like empiricism, nominalism as well as designative and postmodern theories of language, it leads on to the finding that exclusive reliance on scientific materialism axes spiritual dimension of life, coarsens moral values as well as ethics and promotes a pessimistic, selfish model of human life and human nature. This insight will offer possibilities to reread and rethink about the interconnections between the sacred and secular domains of life and make a quest for the forgotten source of knowledge, thereby reaching out to a more inclusive, fuller perspective on life.

Key Words

Science, Scientism, Metaphysics, Moral Values, Meaning of Life

1. Introduction

Science is one of the domains and modes of knowledge. The immense advancement undertaken in the field of science cannot be underestimated, however Wilber (1998) argues that as modernity has failed to discriminate between the ethical, scientific, artistic and religious spheres, it has resulted in their cancerous “dissociation, fragmentation, alienation” from one another. Holistic approach towards knowledge was exchanged for atomistic approach that damaged or destroyed harmony between these spheres, which made possible the arrogant encroachment of high-tech methods of inquiry. This domination of technology in

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serious discourse in the West removed metaphysics out of any serious contemplation in approaching “reality”. Around 1600, a new religion rightly called materialism, grounded in naturalism and nominalism, positivism and rationalism surfaced on the scene. The world view known as scientific materialism became the dominant philosophy of the modern West.

2. Degeneration of Science into Scientism

Consequently natural science degenerated into scientism, the conviction that only science is the source of truth and reality. The other value spheres were declared to be unreal and useless. According to scientific materialism, matter alone accounts for complete reality. Spirit, soul and heart were expunged, and the notion of reality shrivelled into the phenomenal world made cognisant by evidence provided by reasoning and senses. This exclusive concept of fragmented reality was declared as the entire reality (Wilber, 1998). Resultant upon the domination of positivism and empiricism was a univocal world view that ruthlessly dismissed everything as illusory that could not be seen through Galileo’s telescope. This study explores how the vision of a Divine Centre and its degradation or absence affect the Divine-human relationship as well as the concomitant concepts of nature of reality, self, its potential, effect on moral values, society and language.

3. Literature Review

There are different levels of existence and degrees in the hierarchy of universal existence that start from the Absolute Itself which is beyond existence, which alone is Real, is the Source of the Sacred, and transcends all relativity and contingency. Creation marks the division between Worshipped and worshipper, this world and the next that transcends this world, the division between body and Soul, between the spiritual world and the material world. Michon (2007: ix-xix) writes that the core of pre-modernity was the faith that there is an Objective and Absolute power, whatever name it may be given, and all other contingent considerations are secondary to its truth; corresponding to the different levels of reality there are different types of spheres and diverse means of knowledge.

Nasr (1988) explains that multiple realms like polity, law, art, language, literature, even the sciences were pervaded and knit together by the Divine principles. Similarly, Wilber (1998) writes that a universal theme in the traditional civilizations was human-Divine connection in all forms of knowledge ranging from astronomy, alchemy, metaphysics, medicine, politics, economics, physiology. The governing idea of every major metaphysical tradition explaining human nature and reality was *Philosophia Perennis*, a universal doctrine that postulated that there is an Absolute Reality that is Divine and Sacred. East and West alike, since 3000 years, have always recognised and used diverse methods of acquisition of human and divine knowledge. According to Wilber (1998), three basic modes of knowing – senses, reasoning and revelation or intuition- have always been available. The validity of each of these separate methods of knowledge can be authenticated, and is important when addressing its own realm/domain. Therefore a complete and graceful understanding of the Cosmos must comprise all three types of knowledge. Confinement to only one mode generates exclusive focus on natural sciences or logic /mathematics or gnosis.

In the West in the Medieval Ages, Happold (1963) writes, two valid modes of knowledge were acknowledged:

1. The first was through ‘ratio’, which was understood as logic, discursive reason and corresponds to what Wilber calls the eye of mind.
2. The second way of Knowledge was *Intellectus*, which was responsible for imagination, creative insight, intuition, connection with the divine. It corresponds to the eye of contemplation. It is the source of the sense of religion, the divine.

This is the faculty enjoyed in abundance by the artist, musician, and poet, and causes the sudden flash of bright ideas that come from outside and overwhelm a creative genius. W.H. Auden in one of his lectures “Making, Knowing and Judging” at Oxford in 1956, distinguished between primary and secondary imagination in literature, and wrote that primary imagination is a part of *Intellectus*; it makes contact with the sacred, arouses awe, and stirs the impulse to respond to it, which then through secondary imagination, finds expression in different languages in different culture-specific images. As opposed to the active use of

discursive reason, Intellectus holds human will in abeyance. It rests in passivity, is worked on, and its activity has the quality of the given. Ratio works analytically, meticulously and precisely from one point to another, sifting and separating; it makes effort and its achievements are acquired, whereas Intellectus drives in a flash to relationships, makes interconnections between different things and unifies apparent contradictions (Happold, 1963: 27-29). However, modernity and modern age have made an accelerating movement away from the twin sources of knowledge: intuition and revelation, the divine principles, the treasure of 'non-human' wisdom, which is perennial, because prior to all ages and therefore can never be lost (Guenon, 1999:1). On the other hand, technology, that is, practical application of scientific knowledge wherein is constituted Western superiority, has progressively overshadowed true knowledge. Action which serves immediate practical end, degenerates from absence of divine principle into an agitation as unprofitable as it is trivial. Modernity has made action its exclusive preoccupation denying all value to contemplation. A world where everything seems to be in a state of pure "becoming" no place is left for the "Motionless Mover" and the permanent. Positivism and rationalism make formal denial of what lies beyond, that is, the metaphysical realm, which is the realm of the immutable. Repudiation of true knowledge and its object, that is, transcendent and universal is justified by modernity as philosophies of becoming, evolutionism, progress. Deprived of this magical power that vibrates through the natural world making it exuberant with creative energy and life, it becomes torpid and machine like a clock that once made by the clock maker is working automatically (Herman, 2016). The resultant spiritual crises necessitates quest for exalted levels of being and living (Saputra, 2016: 195-215).

Similarly Postmodern philosophy of language's "linguistic reductionism" has replaced the idea of linguistic richness as a Divine gift. If it is to have future, philosophy of language has to restore relationship between language and meaning making in life. Human nature, life and many folded experiences entwine and enfold in both the celestial and tangible domains. Accordingly, it is necessitated to broaden the concept of reality. Nevertheless mystical discourse is not acknowledged as an appropriate area of study and research by linguistic

departments. Denial and absence of a bridge between pure linguistics that focuses only on form and structure of language, and language as a reflection of Divine and a tool that can show the path to commune with God in various theories of language and reality indicates a deep deficiency in our present perspective on cognizance of truth and reality. It is not just omission; it brings to the fore a more disturbing problem, that is, our world order is premised on denial of the Divine principles and their ramifications, applications and vital significance in creating fullness of life and constituting reality. The predominance of science and technology have become the determining features of our lives, dismissing the reality of the need for ardent longing to tread the mystical path of love of God, purify heart of material desires in order to achieve the sublime goals of life (Wilber, 1998; Fiumara, 1995).

4. Theoretical Framework

In order to understand what modernity and scientism are and how the modern world has become spiritually impoverished to degenerate science into scientism, I have drawn upon the perspectives of “traditionalists” - Huston Smith, Coomaraswamy, Ken Wilber, Guenon, Schuon, Burckhardt, Lings, Sayed Hossain Nasr, Michon - and deconstructivist as well as revisionist post-modern critiques of modernity like Derrida, Frankfurt School, Charles Taylor, Skoldberg and Alvesson. The premises, assumptions, and worldview of modernity have been subjected to severe criticism. That the modern world is in a state of crises, there is almost unanimous consent between traditionalists and postmodernists, and deconstructivist as well but as to the nature of causes and solutions there is considerable difference. The various trends of political, economic, nationalist, sociological, feminist and literary thought that go under the banner of postmodernism differ from the ‘traditionalist’ critiques in their view of the Divine, sacred and faith in one Absolute which in traditionalists’ view is more fundamental, valuable, and real than the contingent material world. The traditionalists explore how the vision of a Divine Centre or its degradation or absence affect the Divine-human connection and the concomitant concepts of nature of self, its potential, effect on society and language. Guenon writes in *The Crises of the Modern World* (1999) that of the four periods

in the human cycle as conceived in the Hindu doctrine, we have entered the Kali Yuga, which corresponds to the iron ages in the Western traditions wherein the primordial spirituality is obscured. Guenon accuses the moderns of “down right falsification of history” for branding the Middle Ages as “a period of gloom, ignorance and barbarism.” According to him, modern crises began in the fourteenth century. In his view revival of learning usually associated with Renaissance and Reformation is erroneous, for them in reality caused decline as they triggered the disassociation between the domains of religion, ethics, morality, aesthetics of art and domain of science. Humanism shifted the focus from the Transcendental world to the material world, from soul to body; human became the centre of the world. It reduced spiritual, higher order to merely human desires, eschewing all the values that belong to higher and abiding domains. Humanism was an early form of contemporary ‘laicism’. It attempted to take human needs and aspirations as an end in themselves; so called Enlightenment pushed modern civilization in darkness and brought it down to the lowest level, satisfying material needs of the carnal self of human beings. He looks at rationalism as allied to individualism, an offshoot of Humanism and condemns the modern attitude of mind that premised on positivism and empiricism ridicules and rejects contemptuously the perennial truth of the Eternal, Absolute, Supranational order.

There are different models for the study of religion; social and political dimensions and benefits of religion were prioritised over transhistorical, suprarational aspects of religion in the four decades after mid 20 century, but since then the numinous order of religion has been reclaimed (Otto, 1958; Underhill, 1960). The traditionalists severely criticized profane philosophy and scientism as the only legitimate manner of knowing the different levels of reality (see “Sacred and Profane Science” in Guenon’s *The Crises of the Modern World*, 1999: 37-50). They were thoroughly critical of modern science because of its reductionism and its imperial conceit and pretensions in claiming to be the only mode of knowing. Their greatest criticism of modern science, (and here they part company with those postmodern critiques of modernity which focus only on the social and political consequences of modernity), was its lack of metaphysical principles, its severance from

Transcendental order and the spiritual perspective. Their critique of scientific outlook and attitude, unlike the Romantic sensibility, was an intellectual one, not a sentimental one. Their vast corpus of work is based on the primacy of transcendence, sacred knowledge, value, truth and meaning created through intuition and revelation.

The quest for the sacred knowledge was lost in the mainstream of 18th century European thought (Nasr, 1999: 93-129). Nineteenth century reduced numinous knowledge to vacuous occultism. The nineteenth century, despite the intentional and otherwise horrendous misdeeds, misinterpretations, condescending attitude of Orientalism towards natives, and depletion of the sacred in the Western culture, was also vibrant with the pervasive translations of mystical works, canonical and non-canonical sacred texts of different religions and traditions into various European languages. Much of Sufi poetry, Upanishads, the Tao-Te-Ching was made available in translations. Oriental teachings disseminated through translations were labelled as “a second Renaissance” by Schopenhauer, as it was expected to bring transformation. Despite the huge contribution of Orientalists in translating Sufi texts into Western languages, neither poets nor scholars could revive mystical traditions, *scientia sacra* which lie at the heart of every religion. Nasr (1999) believes that this search was rarely satisfied, because a veritable renaissance cannot take place through the translation of texts alone in the absence of first-hand, direct, authentic knowledge which would make the appropriate understanding of these texts possible.

One of the leading scholarly interpreters of Sufism, Seyyed Hossein Nasr’s books “The Need for a Sacred Science” (2007) and “Knowledge and the Sacred” (1999) bring forth the spiritual and intellectual destitution of Western contemporary culture, and attribute this to the oblivion of the holy subject matter of knowledge, caused by its complete secularization. He explains modernity’s reduction of knowledge to logic and to reason, and contrasts it both with the medieval distinction between reason and spirit, and with allied concepts in the traditions of Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Judaism. According to him (1999: 3), human consciousness which makes knowledge possible is a proof of

“the primacy of the Divine Consciousness of which human consciousness is a reflection and echo... It is in the nature and destiny of man to know and ultimately to know the Absolute and the Infinite through an intelligence which is inseparable from the sacred that is at once its origin and end.... The rational faculty which is at once an extension and reflection of the Intellect can become a luciferian force and instrument, if divorced from the Intellect and revelation which alone bestow upon knowledge its numinous quality and sacred content”.

Nasr believes that West is impoverished in sacred knowledge, it has deliberately sapped the holy traditions and therefore, out of necessity it has now to turn to East for enlightenment. Guenon, Coomaraswamy, Suchon, Nasr, and Wilber argued vehemently for return to traditional point of view whose transmission has been limited due to its deliberate neglect by academics. But its appeal in quality and depth has been considerable and many scholars of note have espoused certain basic traditional thesis. Titus Burckhardt, one of the small circles of traditional authors, has offered many primary texts of Islamic mysticism in European languages, and also numerous studies of sacred art. In England, Martin Lings wrote on Islamic mysticism. There is a big number of scholars especially in the field of comparative religion and Islamic Studies who have carried out important scholarly studies and translated from Oriental languages from the traditional point of view. This group that includes Huston Smith and W. Chitick, contested against some tenets of modernism and furnished intellectual arguments about the profounder forces which had caused modernism.

As the sacred dimension had weakened in the West, it could not make a genuine link with the Sufi tradition that had conserved its central instructions in both its doctrine and praxis. Nasr (1999) writes that truncated teachings of an originally esoteric nature originating from Europe were themselves almost depleted of the holy content to empower Western people to release and renew metaphysics from a debilitating rationalism. Guenon and Schoun were among some of the few intellectuals who openly embraced Islam and were initiated into esoteric teachings of the Algerian Shadhiliyya Order; likewise Lings and

Burckhardt were also initiated into Sufi orders. Thus traditional teachings started spreading in the West when they started writing in the European languages during early twentieth century. Direct contact with the teachings of the Sufi masters has been of significance in reviving the sense of transcendence and the sacred, despite the occult knowledge propagated by pseudo gurus and the consequent prevailing confusion in the modern world.

5. Analysis: Reductive Effects of Scientism

Dominance of Instrumental Reason

Nasr (1999) writes that since the 17th century, the whole modern period was severed from the springs of Transcendental knowledge, i.e., revelation and intuition, which make possible the entry into spiritual levels of being. According to Nasr, wisdom degenerated into the Satanic thrust for primacy of instrumental reason used for power and manipulation, when ratio was cut off from Intellectus (1999: 1 -64; 130-159). Once society loses its faith in the idea of sacred, and socio-politic structures lose the divine perspective and lose their foundation in religion, they can be restructured and manipulated. The yardstick applied is neither piety nor altruism but is that of monetary success. Primacy of instrumental reason, gives ascendance to profit motive, generates Marko centric behaviour, and accords prestige to technology.

Fragmented Knowledge

Knowledge in modernity is based on experimentation and analysis of facts and figures. Empiricism is not just a mode of research mechanics, but a deeply entrenched philosophical position in Western culture hostile to metaphysical knowledge and shuts out all the religious, mystical and poetic traditions and emotions. It is an attitude which reduces human beings to objects. This hegemony of Western empiricism that underlies virtually all the foremost researches in natural sciences, economics and politics was the massive cultural earthquake, which brought about the shuddering collapse of the concepts of holy ethics and moral values (Wilber, 1998). Human beings are now plagued by pessimism, cynicism and narcissism.

Reduction of Religion

The divine and noble purpose and meaning of life was superseded by the canonization of technology and scientific methods of inquiry as the supreme achievement of Western Civilization that generated a myth that humanity's liberation from ignorance, obscurantism, superstitions depends on use of scientific methods and not on faith in God, who was spurned as a fabrication of human mind. Religion was considered as an opium for masses or a remnant of a primitive stage in the evolution of humanity. Sigmund Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1999) reduces faith to neurosis, anthropomorphism and superstition i.e., objectification of the subjective. Freud discards spiritual ecstasy as a genuine experience. He rejects holy as a form of infantile fantasy and looks at pre-moderns as childish in their faith in God. Freud (1999: 32) says that religion like gods is the creation of human mind. Science might explain some facts but it has failed to use language as a ladder to leap up to the sublime truths. Mystical literature serves as a bridge between the human and the divine and helps human beings to find and bring meaning, core values, depth, concern, care, worth, significance to their lives.

Inadequacy of Objectivist Stance

Moral values differentiate human beings from animals, whereas the objectivist stance of science is basically value-free; it cannot differentiate between good and bad. It states the facts as they are, but not what ought to be. Schuon (2001:19) exposes the inadequacy of so called objectivity in his book "Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts" when he says,

True objectivity does not contrast cold with heat, but transcends them both. Inability to distinguish truth from error, or justice from injustice is the weakness of science. The spontaneous indignation of a good man in the face of error and injustice is taken for lack of objectivity. It is forgotten that anger can be a criterion of veracity and thus of impartiality.

Reductive View of Reality and Truth

In the West, two crucial philosophical movements in the 17th and 18th centuries were Naturalism and Nominalism that reduced reality and

truth to physical level, the lowest rung in the Chain of Being. Reality was truncated as it was confined to phenomena recorded via tangible senses. This ascendance of natural sciences generated a philosophical position known as Naturalism. Their limited concentration on objective reality culminates in determinism scientific and materialism. Naturalism does not consider the origin of humanity as a spiritual phenomenon, but as a result of Big Bang's ramifications - natural phenomena - that can be explored through scientific methods (Medina; 2005). Likewise Nominalism dismissed the reality of abstract ideas beyond spatial-temporal domains. It contended that abstractions are the product of human mind's conceptual system of concretizing abstractions and repudiated meaning as a universal entity, an independent essence.

Reductive View of Human Nature

Scientific materialism creates a parochial worldview which generates a materialistic, physical view of human nature that eschews altogether the spiritual essence or levels of human consciousness which can relate with the divine. Human beings are regarded as essentially products of their physical and material environment as well as behavioural and societal conditioning. Hobbes' philosophic stance that viewed society as a leviathan and life as cruel, and Ricardo and Adam Smith's economics encouraged a selfish, egotistical model of human life. The insights of these economic theories infiltrated into natural sciences. Marx and Freud reduced human nature to financial benefits for physical survival and libido respectively. This selfish and materialist interpretation of humanity that was acclaimed as a universal truth declined to see human beings as the vicegerent of God, as the paragon of animals.

Coarsening of Value System

The effect of desacralized, profane knowledge was extended in value system, thought processes and structure of feelings. Materialism had a precarious defect; its doctrine was atomistic, i.e., atoms of matter are insentient and impersonal. But ascendance of matter also leads to a valorisation of insentience, and impersonality. The sensible, conscious and spiritual began to be pushed out of the picture of reality, and the

reality principle of libido, economic competition, the dialectics of class struggles, the evolutionary process in which the fittest survive came to the fore.

The mystical dimension of all primitive and higher religions finds expression in music, language, art, sculpture and literature. They are not merely the aesthetic aspect of mysticism because beauty is an expression of holy. The sublimity and soul moving splendour of numinous poetry and their chanting by the *qawaals* in the sub-continent, is akin to the magical effect of the Mevlavi dervishes' whirling dances in Turkey, the mystifying loveliness of the hallowed dances of Pubelo Indians, the haunting magnificence of sacred places like majestic mosques, cathedrals, Buddhist and Hindu temples. They exude a consecrated, celestial presence. The diversified forms of religious and mystical traditions in music, architecture, arts, language and literature let one experience the ethereal, the spiritual expressed and represented in tangible forms.

The meanings of words such as sanctity of mystical insights, loyalty, truth, selfless devotion, sacrifice, spiritual beauty, duty and the concept of genuine happiness changed. The value system coarsened and degenerated to scorn noble values as sublimation of suppressed animal instincts or hegemonic strategies of a dominating class. Cosmetic beauty and titillation of senses have eclipsed real happiness.

Reduction of Higher Reward Systems

Without identifying the nobler reward structures, materialistic theories of psychology and economics keep human drives skewed to a materialist basis. Consequently, the affiliation between values and their reward is also degraded. The 19th century ethics derived from materialist biology settled on only two types of rewards - money and sex- that are related to corporeal survival.

Reductive View of Language

Representational theory of language and Reduction of Meaning

The designative tradition in philosophy of language presented, according to Medina, (2005: 40) an account of meaning that could

eliminate the mystifications of religious and spiritualist conceptions of language. However, this myopic view on the mimetic aspects of meaning ended in “an incomplete and one-sided account of language.” Though the accomplishments of the referential tradition and its contributions to the philosophy of language are indisputable, it is deficient in overlooking the constitutive features of language because of its single-minded emphasis on designation. Language does not reflect and imitate only: the spiritual function of language that helps us develop a relationship of love with God is based on the theory of language that looks on language as God’s gift. Language as a tool to connect with the Divine is the presiding idea in mystical literature and is underpinned by the longing to achieve humanity’s highest potential, the divine purpose of human life. Martin Lings (2006:14) writes, “[the] aspiration towards that beyond was a dominant factor in the lives of all the people of the antiquity”, and language was considered as a tool to attain this goal. Language in religion and mystical literature serves to strengthen the bond between human and God. It is likened to a light house which spreads light. This function of language is based on the idea of divine origin of human beings. Smith (2001: 45-57) writes that Pre-moderns recognised mystics as “cross- cultural constant[s]” in the typology of human personality. This spiritually uplifting effect of language was not construed as a symptom of sentimentalism or neurosis; it appealed to heart (*Intellectus*) which was believed to be receptacle of divine love. In the book “*Knowledge and the Sacred*” Nasr (1988:3) writes,

“It is in the nature and destiny of man to know and ultimately to know the Absolute through this precious gift of intelligence which allows him to know the Ultimate Reality as the Transcendent, the Beyond and the objective world as a distinct reality on its own level, and the Ultimate Reality as the Immanent, as the Supreme Self underlying all the veils of subjectivity and the many selves or layers of consciousness within him. Human consciousness is an echo, a reflection of Divine Consciousness and therefore despite the forgetfulness it continues to be blessed with the possibility of contemplating God.”

This spiritual notion of language was slashed superciliously by natural sciences’ arrogant claim of authenticity of only two domains of

knowledge, i.e., senses and rationalism disregarding the metaphysical realm. Yule (1999) writes that in the lack of direct physical confirmation to account for the beginning of language and linguists' exclusive concern with atomistic linguistic data ended the debate on metaphysical origin of language (Ellis, 1992: 12). The Linguistic Society of Paris in 1865 officially forbade further research on the origin of language. This prompted Jespersen (quoted in Ellis, 1992: 12) to remark that the labour of "the etymologist tended more and more to be purely mechanical, and the science of language was to a great extent deprived of those elements which are intimately connected with the human soul". Jespersen (quoted in Ellis, 1992: 12) compared isolated words, forms and structures in one language with other such separate words and forms in other languages to lifeless leaves "shaken off a tree rather than parts of a living and moving whole". Language is a living organism; it grows and changes. It is neither ossified nor is it like a fossil in a museum. Language is a living whole, whose parts cannot be separated from the whole. Meanings in a language always grow from their context and severed from the context the meaning is either changed or lost. Nasr (1999: 46) argues,

Since formulated knowledge is inseparable from language, the deserialization of knowledge could not but affect the use of language. If European languages have become less and less symbolic and ever more unidimensional, losing much of the inward sense of classical languages, it is because they have been associated with thought patterns of a unidimensional character. The anti-metaphysical bias of much of modern philosophy is reflected in the attempt made to divest language of all metaphysical significance, a process which, however, is impossible to achieve completely because language like the cosmos is of an ultimately divine origin and cannot be divorced totally from the metaphysical significance embedded in its very roots and structures.

Language not only determines our worldview, it also constitutes our world. The German philosopher and linguist Wittgenstein (1999) says that our world is circumscribed by the limits of our language. Maulana Abd ar Rehman Jami (1928), the 15th century Persian Sufi poet, read the universe as *liber mundi*, a grand symbolic book that can be deciphered

only through intuitive knowledge revealed to the hearts of Sufis. The perennial idea accepted in all traditional societies that nature is a great book inviting our serious attention and reflective interpretation was acknowledged by Kepler and Galileo as well, but Nasr (1999: 46) writes, “the language of this book [for them] was no longer the sacred language of Saint Bonaventure, Dante, or the Kabbalists, associated with symbolic and anagogical meaning, but mathematics understood in its purely quantitative and Pythagorean sense”. Mystical literature is born out of divine truths and it articulates Transcendental truths not verifiable facts.

Postmodern Linguistic and Textual Reductionism

Bacon’s (1561-1626) supercilious rejection of faith and belief as idols of mind, Descartes’ (1596-1650) definition of human as “I think therefore I am” and Nietzsche’s (1844-1900) announcement that God is dead generated the metanarratives of rationalism, positivism, logical analysis as the only tools of knowledge, remedy for dispelling ignorance, prejudices, superstitions and guarantee of progress of civilization. Linguistic philosophy in Postmodernism, especially the extreme theory called ‘Deconstruction’, criticises and dismisses many myths of modernity, e.g., the positivist faith in the supremacy of natural sciences and rationalism. Yet, it is reductive because of its denial of the truth of the numinous ideas of the sacred dimension of life. This sceptical view and its rejection of the Sacred conclude in nihilism (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: 156-167) as well as cultural materialism and narcissism (Cowie, 2005: 43-44; Fairclough, 1989).

The 19th century “linguistic turn in philosophy”, argued that language other than being representational and mimetic of the phenomenal world, also constructs that world. It proposes that language is a closed system of signifiers whose placement and playing with each other independently produce meaning. Wilber (1998: 116-136) writes that this is a reductive view of language as it reduces world’s spiritual, material and social reality to discourse. As opposed to the modernist, referential paradigm of language, Postmodernism looks at language as constitutive of meaning, but its theoretical position to locate power in the text only problematizes human experience and reduces its reality to text only. Royle (2003) writes that for Barthes, Levi Strauss and Derrida,

there is no meaning outside the text, as it is always slipping, fluid and therefore indeterminate. Wilber (1998: 124) observes that this scepticism is extended indiscriminately into spiritual domain, arguing against the divine origin of life and language and their Transcendental goals, yet this sceptical attitude is never deployed to deconstruct the myth of materialism and its accompanying ideas of pay rise, salary and market. In a secular view of world which is no more rooted in the idea of Divine, words become empty of meaning, floating without being anchored in the Objective reality.

Alvesson and Skoldbeg (2004: 165-179) observe that this linguistic and textual reductionism constricts and reduces the amplitude of language and objectivity of reality to a jail, an echo-chamber. It denies that any sort of meaning actually exists or can be conveyed. On the other hand, religion and mysticism look at language as a beacon house that can show light to the seekers of God. It throws a bridge between the earthly and the Divine. This solipsistic view reduces human beings to “*homo ludens*”, the irresponsible, playing human being, who is liberated from every external responsibility for referents. Self-referring signs in language are thus without goal and therefore, without any moral sense of responsibility (Alvesson and Skoldbeg, 2004: 157). This extreme view unleashes ruthless destruction of all values, virtues and meanings.

6. Conclusion

Scientism reduces the abiding values of love of God, the ideas of beauty and honour, ethics, love of country, loyalty, ethics, purpose, sacrifice, faith, idealism, religion and duty as stratagems designed by power structures to control human behaviour for vested interests. To construe human mind as a blank sheet only without the imprint of the Divine lowers and vitiates meaning and purpose of human life, and dismisses idealism and ethics as flattering words for hypocrisy.

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