

New-Atheism and the question of morality in contemporary English prose

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Abstract

The current article argues that eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century evolutionary biology and the twentieth-century scientific positivism define the creative mind of the fiction of our age. This New-atheism borrows a lot from its ancestral philosophies going back all the way to the Greek classical era as well. God is taken by the New-atheists as something more 'dangerous' than atheists of the past. According to the new-atheists, a bigger story than that of God's is in the offing all around us and it is our human responsibility to let not God interfere in our understanding of that story. Ian McEwan's is a prime example as his novels are strictly linked to the discourses of New-Atheism and Postmodernism. McEwan's works illustrate the sense of being trapped in the web of the age of information where the divine gift of language is disseminated and there is no way out from the cultural and political maze of the 21st century. McEwan sees civilization as various strains which are tied together through an unnatural process. Literature of the day has further received a blow at the hands of yellow journalism as well. A writer of caliber needs to avoid journalistic stereotypes and newspaper clips designed to portray purposefully a particular nation in a particular complexion. The present

article discusses the possible impact of journalistic trends on McEwan's writings. McEwan's efforts in connecting the existing instabilities with the action of the novel constitute the main source of interest in his art. There is a moral sense behind all the anger and frustration in his works, but he understands the system's flaws so vaguely that the novel soon turns into a voice of condemnation of whatever is not in agreement with the ideology of McEwan.

Key Words: evolutionary biology, scientific positivism, New-atheism, Ian McEwan, William Chittick, "the station of wisdom", Rashtreya Sehwak Sangh, Tehreek-e-Talibaan Pakistan, Victorian style faith, Dover Beach, novel of dynamism.

The eighteenth-century philosophical empiricism, the nineteenth-century evolutionary biology and the twentieth-century scientific positivism, largely, define the creative mind and design the creative dimensions of the fiction of our age. These formative features have contributed in emergence of 'New-atheism'. New-atheism borrows a lot from its ancestral philosophies going back all the way to the Greek classical era and urges the presentation of the absence of God in all aspects of the moral values rather than simple rejection of God as a supernatural being.

God is taken by the New-atheists as something more 'dangerous' than a mere superstition of the 'simplistic' atheists of the previous centuries. God to them is that superstition that affects the attempts by the 'experts of God' to tell a different kind of story. 'Religious story of origins is suspected precisely because it is a story – because it 'imposes an anthropocentric narrative order upon the non-linear flux of the universe'.' According to the new-atheists, a bigger story than that of God's is in the offing all around us and it is our human responsibility to let not God interfere in our understanding of that story. As a result, our contemporary English writers' major interest lies in the universal human 'will-to-narrative' the story.

Ian McEwan's (b. 1949) is a prime example as his novels, among the most important literary specimen of our age, are strictly linked to the discourses of New-Atheism and Postmodernism. These novels are not experimental in form but these rather blend technique

and form. Since McEwan's novels promote certain philosophical concepts, these give rise to certain amount of controversies when it comes to the state of morals and decadence of virtue of late 20th and early 21st centuries.

His is the art that many have called, "the potent narratives of redemption". This narrative does not see much scope for the Divine to cast its reflection on it. God, consequently, needs to be replaced by more powerful and realistic belief, for example, in family, love, scientific progress and, art. These particular recurring images in the thematic pattern of McEwan's works illustrate the sense of being trapped in the web of the age of information where the divine gift of language is disseminated, truth is mortal and there is no way out from the cultural and political maze of the 21st century.

"What we might a little glibly call the McEwan formula: scientific-rationalist-hero-realises-world-more-complicated-place than previously-thought. It is striking that this realization is once again accompanied by the revelation that the supposedly disinterested scientist is no more immune to the virus of narrative than his literature-loving wife or even the religious lunatic who stalks him. Victorian literary anachronism which has no place in the modern era: It was the nineteenth-century culture of the amateur that nourished the anecdotal scientist . . . The dominant artistic form was the novel, great sprawling narratives which not only chartered private fates, but made whole societies in mirror image and addressed the public image of the day . . . Storytelling was deep in the nineteenth-century soul.⁵ Yet, once again, the supposedly archaic desire to tell and be told a story is more resilient than we might think: our narrator himself is forced to admit that twentieth century sciences like psychoanalysis and anthropology are themselves 'fabulation run riot' (*Enduring Love*, p. 50). Even Joe's own account of the decline and fall of the narrative form in the age of Einsteinian theoretical science is, of course, a 'narrative in itself': it is not written 'in pursuit of truth' but of 'readability' and an equally compelling case could be made that the twentieth century represented the 'summation' of narrative in science (pp. 48–51).¹

¹ Arthur Bradley and Andrew Tate, *The New Atheist Novel: Philosophy, Fiction and Polemic after 9/11*, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010, P.19.

Regardless of what we may say of his power of narrative, it is for sure definite that McEwan's literary career took a major shift in many ways after the events that followed September 11, 2001. The gravity of the tragedy itself and the intensity of the web of ideologies woven around it, forced his desire for narrative order to respond in his own particular way to it. With atmosphere of fear and impending chaos dominating the narrative, McEwan is uniquely placed among novelists to write about the post-September 11 world. Ultimately, it is the public mood that comes to resemble the tone of his novels.

Saturday (2005) is among his most celebrated novels. When we assume that a writer had a particular kind of gloom and attraction towards an atmosphere of chaos and all he needed to cash upon is an event wherein his style and mood would adjust naturally, we undermine the sensitivity of creative impulse that corresponds to a happening or a set of happenings urging the writer to 'suffer with those it sees suffering'. *Saturday*, shows great amount of sense of political correctness and was going to have its profound impact on the genre in the following decade. The entire debate, that surrounds the following decade in the world of novel writing, between science and religion, idealism and materialism etc., is initiated in many ways by *Saturday's* seamless insight into terrorist attack which kills thousands and leads the entire world into an uncertain future.

McEwan in this novel remains skeptical than ever of what he calls 'Islamism'. By this term he means the extremist versions of the faith spreading throughout the Islamic world with a threatening speed. The biggest threat is posed to the Western civilization as a result of this rise of militancy. The 'Islamists' have viewed the Western culture as exact opposite to their world and thus have normally blamed it for all the ongoing tragedies in the Islamic world. Islamism is definitely targeted in the novel and it seems that his fiction professes that novel as an art form is fully equipped to deal with the fragility of our out of tune world to interrogate the various belief systems to explain our contemporary world.

In a 2002 interview McEwan claimed that novel more than any other work of art form has inbuilt capacity to inhabit the minds of the others. Fiction is a moral space of its own kind 'and perhaps of all artistic forms, it is the most adept at showing us what it is like to be someone else'.

‘The novel is famously good at revealing, through various literary conventions, a train of thought, or a state of mind. You can live inside somebody else’s head. Within one novel you can live inside many different people’s heads, in a way that you of course cannot do in normal life. I think that quality of penetration into other consciousness lies at the heart of its moral quest. Knowing, or sensing what it’s like to be someone else is at the foundations of morality.’ (Wagner, Erica, ‘Divinely Inspired: Philip Pullman’. (*The Times*, 18 October 2000).²

Saturday, allegorically stages the war. It is 9/11 in its true sense of the term. The novel is placed in exactly the place where McEwan comes from and the protest on that particular Saturday when the events are initiated to affect the life a successful professional (neurosurgeon in the novel) are hints towards a biographical novel in the offing. For McEwan, of course, the sensibilities versus terror made him he saw the war being waged that day.

‘harmless streets like these and the tolerant life they embody’ faced with a ‘new enemy – well organized, tentacular, full of hatred and focused zeal’³

This novel is a remarkable contrast of lives of Londoners but metaphorically speaking, of citizens of any city in the world. This is the age of successful capital-oriented world where measures of achievements in life have clear determinants. Through the details of narrative it becomes easier for the reader to see the inherent contrasts within a society which on its apparent surface seems quite smooth and balanced. Whenever the social structures are compared with ease of elaborated lucidity, the suspicions are always stirred in the minds of the readers as if the inevitable is going to strike at the heart of the narrative any moment. This leads to a moral dilemma as well and the reader encounters the uneasiness of the ‘predictability’ of the neatly concealed suspense of the novel within.

This feeling is the journey from personal to general and again from one’s center of being to the outermost skirts of existence. As readers we start feeling that the meaning of all that lies otherwise hidden from the

² www.ericawagner.co.uk/journalism.php?section=journalism2&id=14

³ *Saturday*, p. 6

mind's eye because of the 'speed of life' in which we remain trapped, all of a sudden starts haunting our entire world view of the time that we exist in. Life is brought to full exposure in this novel as well. It is not just Daisy who stands exposed but all of us in front of disjointed frames of our own minds. Fiction starts working as faction all of a sudden and we begin to evolve along with the plot in to a psyche which could either be crooked or refined. It could go either way but for sure it will not give us room enough to stay as it is, the way it had been before entering the world of *Saturday*.

'On one side of this battle, we have Henry, and Henry, it seems, has everything: the successful job, the happy marriage, the Georgian terraced house in Fitzrovia and two eerily perfect kids in Blues prodigy Theo and Faber poetess Daisy. On the other, we have the tragi-comic thug Baxter, who has very little to start with and will soon have nothing at all: he suffers from a degenerative neurological condition and stands, more generally, for the ever-present threat of violence against the happy English home. However, the real difference here is that this conflict is not played out through the novel form but through other forms of art. To Henry – who performs brain surgery while listening to Bach and casually drops in on his son's Blues band's

rehearsals – music represents the only kind of utopia it is still acceptable to believe in: Out in the real world there exist detailed plans, visionary projects for peaceable realms, all conflicts resolved, happiness for everyone, forever mirages for which people are prepared to die and kill. Christ's kingdom on earth, the workers' paradise, the ideal Islamic state. But only in music, and only on rare occasions, does the curtain actually lift on this dream of community, and it's tantalizingly conjured, before fading away with the last notes. (pp. 171–2).⁴

It is also interesting to see that the various readings of the novel may suggest many various contrasting arguments but the way an author sees the evolution of an event in a story and the way he/she portrays psychological responses of various characters within the narrow scope of a plot, all lead the readers to see beyond the obvious surface and a wide-ranging approach appears.

⁴ Arthur Bradley and Andrew Tate, *The New Atheist Novel: Philosophy, Fiction and Polemic after 9/11*. Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010.

It is important to see Saturday on both the level of a specific happening on a particular Saturday and also as the study of the social circumstances which have designed the life of modern man of the twenty-first century. The novel has extraordinary power to inspire us as ordinary citizens whose lives are recorded as part of the tragedy of the novel. This novel is an intellectual argument and emphatic inquiry into the state of affairs which create friends and foes in the modern day's cultural and social domains. It is the novel about ourselves as much as it is about Perowne.

It is possible to read this novel as a prospective clash between the two opposing cultures of the West and the East. These two cultures are opposing each other in many various ways. There is a deep sense of mythos dominating the lives of the oriental cultures. On the western side though it is the domination of logos which stands as the hallmark of the cultures in the occident. There are differences in spiritual, political, and intellectual formats. Due to these differences the interrelationships among the members of the society shape in a distinguishable varied manner. The decorum of speech for example is basically different among the two dominant cultures of the world. The sexual connotations, implied jokes which translate male aggression into language and the perception of male-female interaction are entirely distinctive in bearing of their features when it comes to the contrast to see west as different from the east. The following passage shows deep insight into this civilizational crisis that McEwan's mind is trapped in:

The messiness that McEwan injects into the novel—transforming the public fear of a plane crash or possible terrorist attack, which Perowne witnesses from his window, into the private fear of an actual attack in his house—runs the risk of violating an age-old narrative rule: don't make an external event the crisis. McEwan dodges this and substantiates the storyline by making Perowne feel complicit in Baxter's violent intrusion into his house. He feels as if he abused his responsibility as a doctor by diagnosing Baxter during their initial flare-up after their traffic accident, which humiliated Baxter, and so he must pay for that error.

Also, McEwan is careful to form a sympathetic bond between Perowne and Baxter. They're almost like odd lovers, fascinated and repulsed by each other. Perowne is intrigued by Baxter's unpredictable explosiveness, the hopelessness of his life, just as Baxter is both smitten and

revolted by Perowne's comfort and seeming control over his life. This dance of sympathy and repulsion helps transform Baxter's break-in into an internal crisis rather than an external one. Perowne's decision to operate on him after he's injured furthers the internal battle, especially because the reader has to wonder if he's out for revenge or to help. It's a valid question, not only for Perowne, but for nations like the U.S. who have been attacked. If we have the power to heal, should we seek to destroy?

McEwan's study of the cultures and civilizations can be of a surface level but his concerns about the future of the civilizations are sincere and thoroughly well thought of. He communicates his concerns to us through his characters. It is worth noticing that despite all the chaos in the novel, which of course is a mirror image of the chaos in the world today, his main characters do not deprive themselves into qualities of empathy and the feelings of sympathy which should have been the outline features of our world:

Perowne is a perfect character to represent "contemporary man," if only because he's beyond religious faith, condescending toward art, and places such belief in science. Still, even with such fervent trust in science's answers, there is a part of him, usually well-buried but still accessible (as his daughter's strident efforts to get him to read the classics attests to), that recognizes that facts aren't enough as he operates on Baxter. "Just like the digital codes of replicating life held within DNA, the brain's fundamental secret will be laid open one day. But even when it has, the wonder will remain, that mere wet stuff can make this bright inward cinema of thought, of sight and sound and touch bound into a vivid illusion of an instantaneous present, with a self, another brightly wrought illusion, hovering like a ghost at its center. Could it ever be explained, how matter becomes conscious?"

Very rightly so, the article brings into light the question of conscience. It is a debate not just about God, matter and creation but it is a discourse on the state of the plight of the twenty-first century world. It is about plenty of questions rising in the mind and about no answers to be found either in religion or in politics. The reference to *Dover Beach* in the novel brings the chaos of inquiries into the rhythmic and consoling resolve. *Dover Beach* throws light upon that deeper layer of

human sentimentality without the pulse of which we can only nurture misunderstandings and hopelessness in our societies.

Perowne begs the same question that Arnold's "Dover Beach" does. Who are we and how do we live since "...we are here as on a darkling plain/Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, /Where ignorant armies clash by night."

In the "ebb and flow of human misery," the Sea of Faith has receded, leaving us to figure things out for ourselves in a world that sounds an "eternal note of sadness."⁵

Reference to *Dover Beach* in the later part of the novel is of great symbolic value. This poem is a symbolic journey from the present to the Medieval Europe and finally it returns to the present, excitingly the present of our contemporary times not only Mathew Arnold's. The poem has an emphatic dramatic and didactic tone. Love is, in the passages quoted below, the modern day's maze of confusion reflecting and confirming the faithfulness in a world devoid of spirituality and knowledge of the Self, marked only by 'retreating faith'.

The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.
Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! For the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

⁵ posted by Grant Faulkner, September 12, 2006

This poem stands as the central argument in the thematic structure of the novel. It is a poem about the “darkling plain”. The dominating image in the poem is of the “darkling plain” comparable to the “naked shingles of the world” (Shingles is characteristic of some wave-swept coasts) and therefore is reference to the contemporary desolated state of the world affairs after 9/11, the fateful event sweeping like the wave of a tsunami. The poem has a definite emotional overtone as well. The poem’s historicism creates complicating dynamics as it merges neatly within the diction of the novel and has its own powerful description making us believe that the Faith is dead and what we hear are the ‘roars’ of its distant presence. The world is in its dark phase of entering a clash where forces of darkness are heading towards a full fledged head on collision. The tone of sullenness is put in to contrast with the overall, spell-binding rhythm and its dramatic character. The complexity of the novel’s structure correlated with the falling apart of social structure is the poem’s structure resulting in to fearfulness of absolute chaos. McEwan’s perception of an atheist covers his own position precisely in the poem. McEwan’s New Atheism celebrates not only his criticism of the idea of religion, as is the case in *Dover Beach* as well, but of this world of capitalistic ‘virtue’ and wisdom of science too. It is not any more the simple question of the war between truth and falsehood, reason and unreason. He said in an interview: ‘If we no longer believe in a supernatural God, this is, in itself, not enough: it is crucial that we go on to assert our ‘belief in moral values and in love and in the transcendence that [we] might experience in landscape or art or music or sculpture.’ (The New Republic)

This is a model of life that one could try to possess in a world of suppression, growing extremism and injustice. An image of it appears in the novel as well:

‘He crosses the hallway, soothed by the cool touch of the smooth stone flags under his bare feet. On his way to the main stairs, he pauses by the double front doors. They give straight on to the pavement, on to the street that leads into the square, and in his exhaustion they suddenly loom before him strangely with their accretions - three stout Banham locks, two black iron bolts as old as the house, two tempered steel security chains, a spyhole with a brass cover, the box of electronics that works the Entryphone system, the red panic button,

the alarm pad with its softly gleaming digits. Such defences, such mundane embattlement: beware of the city's poor, the drug-addicted, the downright bad.⁶

However, McEwan's Victorian style faith in self-correcting principle happening automatically in Nature is even more naïve than his explanation and understanding of terrorism. We wonder if this is some kind of pragmatic conception of rhetoric that widely dominates his ordinary talk and his serious fiction as well. His art of narrative depends heavily on his critical perception of the contemporary political landscape. It seems that he is sometimes heavily lost in his visual images and fails to see the difference between fiction and real politics. His political analysis, out of necessity, involves rhetorical situation but the situation that he creates fails to resolve the crisis. Language and literature have their own rules and regulations and politics has its own grammar. When the two distinctive grammars merge in the works of McEwan we don't find as readers sufficient evidence of justifying either.

We wonder if he really believes that the September 11 attacks would not have happened if Mohammed Atta (one of the terrorists engaged in the tragic event of 9/11) had only put down the Qur'an and read *Great Expectation* instead. We wonder if there is a relational paradigm.

There is preconceived position taken in the novel that systems at work on all sides of the conflict are vague and ambiguous. Islamism is definitely criticized but the developed world with its nuances is not left unchallenged. We need to consider as readers that is it our fault as a civilization to encounter this unprecedented chaos or is it that the systems which have opportunities for growth within are not given enough room to groom these possibilities due to unseen forces of corruption. If by Islamization the author means this wave of terrorism on the constant rise for the past three decades, then perhaps it is an unjustified term.

Islam like any other religion does not have terrorist ideology preached either in its scripture or by the messenger of God. Terrorism is a state of mind. It can be controlled by the state of by one's own personal unfortunate concepts to impose one's own set of beliefs on the rest of the world. The Irish terrorists or the Nazis were never tabooed, and very

⁶ Ian McEwan, *Saturday*. Jonathan Cape, 2005. p. 36

rightly so, by term Christianization. Neither the activities of extremist Hindu militant group RSS (Rashtreya Sehwak Sangh) have ever been known as ‘Hinduization’. The history of the world is always marked by two kinds of social minds one the violent the other the pacifist. There are always deeper layers of tension between the social and historical forces which lead a group of people to take arms against their counterparts. Any terminology, coined recklessly, without the social, historical and cultural understandings, is never taken by the philosophical minds as something more than political jargon. McEwan seems to have failed to involve in his narrative, like many other contemporary writers, this fundamental dimension.

It is not the Quran which the terrorists involved in 9/11 tragedy could put aside and be more civilized. Three fundamental reasons need to be kept in mind before any attempt to have any understanding of the civilizational crises of our age.

1. Deep rooted sense of social and political injustice experienced by the nations whom great colonial powers until recently had controlled and plundered
2. Lack of understanding of the Diversity Principle
3. Collapsing social institutions of both the developed and the underdeveloped nations and consequently the rise of illogical romantic affiliations with the distant past of the so called golden age of glory.

The above-mentioned points, lead us to evaluate the question and the quest of identity. There are two ways to define identity. One is “I” and the other is “we”. In the first phase of Islamic political growth, the fundamental civic principle moved around the concept of “we”. It is the Qur’anic and the prophetic principle. It urges humans to believe that the varied complexions of social statures and images of power do not make one superior or inferior. It is the first principle of knowledge, enlightenment or what we call in Arabic “Irfan”. William Chittick while translating ibn Arabi’s text calls it “the station of wisdom”. Despite the unfortunate political history of Islam, the spiritual realm remains intact up to this day where the stations of wisdom dominate the entire perception of one’s success in this world and in the hereafter. This concept, though, stopped evolving in the western intellectual tradition after the

collapse of the Greek Civilization.

The Western culture, with the rise of the colonial powers, became primarily segregationist. The aggression of the crusades, the colonial exploitation and the neocolonial thinking of our age, all are interconnected political separatist agendas. In this agenda 'the other' is viewed as both inferior and dangerous. From Western Africa to North and South America, the civilizations have been wiped out due to blind adherence of this very principle. This did not happen under the worst phases of medieval Muslim history, though (the 20th and the early 21st centuries are exceptions in the Muslim world). In India, for instance, despite one thousand years of domination of Muslims, Hindus remain the majority population. Throughout the Middle East the local Christians, until the 20th century, never had need to migrate to the so called Christian West. And despite all the claims of four centuries of atrocities and massacres in Ottoman era, our neighboring brethren, Serbs formed the largest ethnic group in former Yugoslavia.

Being neutral readers, with desire to seek either positive pleasure from literature or to hold it as a mirror to see our own grotesque features, we expect a writer of caliber to go beyond the political jargons. We can believe that McEwan has no political agenda. But this makes his case even more vulnerable. This makes him appear to us as being naïve, as a man who sees Islam as a misogynistic and separatist ideology without looking into the other dimension which makes Islamic law the one among the first to allocate rights to the weak and accommodate the ideologies of the 'others' within its jurisdiction. There are many charters signed and respected by many rulers of Islamic nations throughout the Middle Ages which give full opportunities to their subjects to participate equally in the cause of nation building.

McEwan's defense, offered by him in many interviews, that he has been brought up among Muslims and has sympathetic realistic understanding of their social plight appears to be even more an ironical a position. Within the social structure of present day developing Islamic nations (to name only a few we can include Turkey, Pakistan, Egypt, the UAE, Iran, Jordan) women's rights are protected by an inherent, incorporated discipline within the social structures so deeply that legislations of the kind we saw in the West in the 20th century are not required to be introduced at all. In all these countries religious plurality is a fundamental social tradition. And until very

recently other religions were allowed to preach their faith and they have continued playing constructive role in the academic and cultural life of these countries.

It is also notable that the growing wave of terrorism has affected more the Islamic nations themselves. Technically speaking all major Islamic military powers are western and American allies and the much needed war on terror was launched and fought within the Islamic countries with the help of trained Muslim armies and Muslim volunteers against the extremists.

A frontline ally, Pakistan has paid the heaviest price for the war against terror. Official count of death toll of 80.000 civilians in terrorist attacks country wide, several hundreds of millions of dollars' budget expenditure on war against the militants and of course the economic collapse as a result of uncertain political and economic circumstances is for any nation a serious blow.

If McEwan's perception of Islamization does not include these 80.000 victims only in one Islamic country and if it overlooks sacrifices of millions in the Middle East and elsewhere against the militant mindset, he has done a great injustice just by taking sides on the basis of surface observations which can be easily manipulated by any propaganda machinery. The Quran, the Bible and other scriptures are not the militant books. Less than one percent abnormal, retarded sycophants who have never represented their mainstream societies and had always been isolated, existed always in all cultures of mankind. The word Islamization to define many billions non-violent, peaceful, educated and cultured Muslims are both literary and socially unfair perceptions.

McEwan sees civilization as various strains which are tied together through an unnatural process. He fails to understand that God (Nature, if you are an atheist) does not create 'monotonies' of virtue. Nature as we have discussed earlier depends on diversity principle to function as a creative energy. Things in nature are not yoked together. What he sees as dis-balance is actually cosmic balance.

What happened in France recently, in October 2020, only shows how fragile the existence has become on earth. The very fabric of societies that we breathe in is torn apart as result of our own misjudgments and insensibilities worldwide. If the members of all the societies are encouraged to realize the role they need to play within allotted space and time, the focus would have not been on the area of 'deprivation thus the rights'

but on the element of 'responsibility thus the obligations'. But this is an unending maze of rat-race what we call society; our concept of social life begins when the concept of competitions starts. If we ever manage to evolve a community on earth where cooperation, not competition, forms the civilizational structure, the social crises would automatically come to an end. Long before the birth of philosophical economics, the scriptures all around the world preached this very virtue of cooperation. Over the millenniums, corruption in the human mind and heart caused the failure and none of the systems of cooperation could ever be implemented. Every single system of thought and philosophy of life ever introduced for the benefit of mankind, has failed today but it is the failure of humanity not of the system. We have failed the systems; the systems have not failed. Realistic understanding of the developing scenario around us if fails to receive clarity of vision, we will drag the world in to that chaos wherefrom retuning to normalcy would not be an option.

McEwan and his contemporaries fail to see it and go on with the stereotypes which emerge as a possible understanding available at the first phase (raw phase) of the creative process. Instead of launching research projects to study lives and matters of neurosurgeons perhaps it is more profitable to live the creative process as part of one's exercise in imagination. A lingered on creative process offers several sets of understandings and a great writer then opts for the one which happens to be the subtlest in an intense creative moment. The absence of this exercise in McEwan's works makes his work scientific but lesser creative.

Literature of the day has further received a blow at the hands of yellow journalism. A writer of caliber needs to avoid journalistic stereotypes and newspaper clips designed to portray purposefully a particular nation in a particular complexion. In our contemporary prose, in McEwan's writings as well, this interrelationship is seriously compromised.

The truth is that it is not the Quran but the poverty which remains the biggest 'terrorist-hunter-motive in the world today'. According to an estimate issued by ISI (Pakistani secret service) that the phenomena of TTP (Tehrik Taliban Pakistan, the extremist group) is primarily rural-based and almost non-existent among the urbanized educated Pakistanis. The same is true for any terrorist organization that has ever

worked in any phase of human history. With the growing number of people living below the poverty line in Islamic countries, the threats posed by Taliban, Al-Qaeda and ISIS are more real than ever. Islamic nations need to be supported to alienate these extremists from their ranks and bring them to justice by their own. There is need for a more interactive talk on cultural and political levels between the, until recently before covid19, developed West and the developing East to overcome the greatest threat to human civilizations in recent years.

Once again the Quran or a particular religion has almost no fundamental role to play in the rise of extremism and its aftermath. Extremism is the profession of either the sickly or the deprived, not of those who have their careers, prosperous businesses and settled families to take care of.

However, it is very likely that after a considerable amount of time (we are reaching it soon, I believe) and made-up stories about the “heroes” of ideological extremist wars (disturbingly, numbers are mounting there as well), the ideology starts attracting the urbanized community as well. At the moment we are in the second phase of this extremist ideological warfare where it has just started to attract the educated Muslims around the world but more seriously those who are settled in European countries.

This is the most sensitive phase our recent history and all the sensible people of the world must get together to stop this phenomenon right now at this very moment. A very detailed range of survey of the minds that are hijacked by the extremists is required; a very sharp sense of political-religious resolve is needed. Otherwise, the doors of Hell are almost about to open their mouths. McEwan’s attitude, keeping this context in mind, is by no means helpful.

Literature has its definite impact on the minds of the people who approach it for various kinds of reasons. All great works of literature involve components which are determined by narrative progression. Initially it is the art of narrative which is essential to both the construction of plot and delineating of the character. Behind all the narratives though there is always a background which introduces the complications of the social matrix. This social matrix offers different perceptions of a common phenomenon and therefore designs in words the images of different ‘consciousnesses’.

The novel is the art of sequence. This sequence is always made colorful by the art of separateness which comes through the speakers

with their stylized language. A skillful writer artfully shifts our attentions from the narrative to the background of the narrative and from one kind of speech to the contrasting speech of different verbal decorum. This technique engages us thoroughly into the reading of the novel and affects us as if it is a discourse that we are living in not just responding to it as an audience. It is arguable that literature can mold people entirely, but the influences of ideological nature can easily be implanted. Literary story tells people about themselves. It is people's life designed by particular situations that in this empirical world captured by the writers and people relate to it. People relate with the characters. This interrelationship of readers' psychology and the plot and characters becomes sometimes people's habit of mind.

Writers of the day must keep in mind that fiction is taken by the reader only partially as fiction. The joy of reading is rooted in impulse of affiliation; in this process readers establish their identities social hierarchies are challenged and new wave of empathy or disgust is created. Fiction has social functions to perform. Literary texts are the models of interpersonal relations. The changes of the tone of the narrative's voice draw our attention to this interrelationship. In the art of narration, the writers of our age are inclined to abandon the upper-class decorum of speech; diction of our age is generally informal but the writers of our age still shows sympathy from a distance for the life of comfort and ease. Within the social divisions of his novel, McEwan introduces significant modulations. This helps him have a certain element of aggression within the voices of calmness and then he dramatically shifts the voice to the dominant one and allows it to take over the general atmosphere of calm. This Victorian technique has enormous impact on the minds of the readers. However, in this critical time of human history where geographical, cultural and religious boundaries are literally redefined, one cannot afford to write a phrase or a statement as casually as the Victorians did. McEwan and his contemporaries must realize that they are not Victorian writers; willy-nilly they all have a job to perform. The task that a writer can assign to itself is of a multicultural nature. The world stands today divided among political, economic and religious factions. It is complicated for the writers to not take sides. But in the past the great writers of the world have shown us the way by declaring in their art that their sincerity sides with the welfare of humanity and not with a particular system of thought.

It is important for a writer to construct a relationship between the past and the future. A writer is the bridge as he stands between the two distant points of time as a bridge. In this way a writer transforms the relationships between time past and time future into one stable entity. McEwan's efforts in connecting the existing instabilities with the action of the novel constitute the main source of interest in his art. There is a moral sense behind all the anger and frustration in his works, but he understands the system's flaws so vaguely that the novel soon turns into a voice of condemnation of whatever is not in agreement with the ideologue of McEwan.

His texts have wide ranging audience and his name is iconic in our age being a philosopher and a writer he has only two options available to himself, to behave like a 19th century reckless evolutionist or a responsible creative artist of balanced sensibilities of 21st century. His novel is the novel of dynamism. It has stories involved in it which have sharp temporal dimension. He has a plot that is constituted around more details than overall perception of the entire community, but it lacks a plan that anticipates the future. *Saturday* can be a remarkable novel as it shows the post 9/11 world its face but it is restrained as it never goes beyond that mirror. One can always ask a question is literature of the day an extended branch of journalism? In the last century holding a mirror to society was among the several definitions of journalism. Elevation of mind should go beyond reporting and capacity of a visionary eye must see beyond the obvious. As ordinary readers we have a right to ask how far our writer's eye can see. And how elevated is his creative potential? Relativity is a beguiling set of matrix and it is important for the reader to escape it by re-creating the concept of truth both within one's own self and within one's social structure as well.

'Objects became junk as soon as they were separated from their owner and their pasts - without her, her old tea cozy was repellent, with its faded farmhouse motif and pale brown stains on cheap fabric, and stuffing that was pathetically thin. As the shelves and drawers emptied, and the boxes and bags filled, he saw that no one owned anything really. It's all rented, or borrowed. Our possessions will outlast us, we'll desert them in the end.'⁷

⁷ Ian McEwan, *Saturday*. p.274.

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Novo-ateizam i pitanje morala u savremenoj engleskoj prozi

Sažetak

Trenutni članak tvrdi da evoluciona biologija XVIII i XIX st., i naučni pozitivizam XX st., definiraju kreativni um fikcije našeg doba. Ovaj novo-ateizam mnogo pozajmljuje od filozofije predaka, sežući sve do grčke klasične ere. Novo-ateisti Boga shvataju kao nešto 'opasnije' od pukog praznovjerja ateista prošlosti. Prema novo-ateistima, veća priča od Božije nastaje svuda oko nas i naša je ljudska odgovornost da se Bog ne miješa u naše razumijevanje te priče. Ian McEwan je sjajan primjer jer su njegovi romani strogo povezani s diskursima novo-ateizma i postmodernizma. McEwanova djela ilustriraju osjećaj zarobljenosti u mreži doba informacija u kojem se širi božanski dar jezika i nema izlaza iz kulturnog i političkog lavirinta XXI st. McEwan civilizaciju vidi kao razne sojeve koji su povezani neprirodnim procesom. Tadašnja književnost dobila je udarac i od žutog novinarstva. Pisac visokog kalibra mora izbjegavati novinarske stereotipe i novinske isječke dizajnirane da ciljano prikazuju određenu naciju u određenom temperamentu. Ovaj članak govori o mogućem utjecaju novinarskih trendova na McEwanove tekstove. Napori McEwana u povezivanju postojećih nestabilnosti s radnjom romana glavni su izvor zanimanja za njegovu umjetnost. Iza sve ljutnje i frustracija u njegovim

djelima stoji moralni smisao, ali on tako maglovito razumije nedostatke sistema da se roman uskoro pretvara u glas osude onoga što se ne slaže s ideologom McEwanom.

Ključne riječi: evolucijska biologija, naučni pozitivizam, novo-ateizam, Ian McEwan, William Chittick, „stanica mudrosti“, Rashtreya Sehwak Sangh, Tehreek-e-Talibaan Pakistan, vjera u viktorijanskom stilu, plaža Dover, roman dinamičnosti.