**THE MODERN AGE**

Modernization had been successful in different countries, such as Britain, Germany, France, Japan and USA, thanks to the industrialization, which brings the states to be competitive on the international level, because every nation wants the control of trade routes. As a result, conflicts were inevitable. Therefore, there was an atmosphere of tension which will culminate in the First World War. The war was an important turning point because many people leave their faith in liberal democracy, capitalism and the Victorian idea of progress.

In addition, both the war and the development of industry and science made Russia and the USA the two great powers, instead of Britain and France, and American capitalism replaced British one.

Although, the economic depression in the 1870s and 1880s had caused serious unemployment among the working-class. Consequently, the State began to exercise some control of the economy and the policy of the modern Welfare State was born. It provides national insurance for old-age pensions, medical treatments and unemployments pays. Since capitalism was in crisis, some people of the working-class started agreeing with Marx, who stated the need to take power away from the middle classes with revolutions and establish socialism. Indeed, for example, in 1917 Lenin and the Bolshevik party took control of the Russian State in the name of the working-class.

However, the most profound Victorians’ fear was about religion: they were afraid of living a life without a meaning or without God.

Moreover, even the Christians experienced a sense of man’s isolation and weakness towards a world which did not seem to obey any divine principles or be part of any divine plan. But the only point of reference every man had was himself and therefore every decision and act depend only on him. This insecurity and sense of isolation is clearly evident in the artists’ works of this period, but there are different interpretations:

- T. Hardy and J. Conrad were pessimists and decided to accept whatever happens as well as possible;
- V. Woolf, D. H. Lawrence and E. M. Forster thought that personal relationships and human core replaced the lost divine love;

- T. S. Eliot, Belloc, Chesterton decided to ignore their rational doubts and became Christians;

- G. B. Show and H. G. Wells tried to improve society with reforms.

There was no set of values to which writers could refer to and be sure they were valid, and therefore they made their characters express their own vision of reality, without letting the reader have an alternative point of view. Consequently, everything became relative. About that, in 1906, Albert Einstein formulated the Theory of Relativity which states that space and time changed accordingly to the observer’s point of view.

Henry Bergson and William James also rejected the conventional ideas of time. In particular, Bergson stated that people’s past and future exist together with the present in people’s mind and run into one another in the “stream of consciousness”. The stream is what constitutes a person’s mind and determines his thinking, but it is not rational. It follows a semi-conscious level and therefore it is irrational.

The importance of the irrational is well expressed in Sigmund Freud’s The Interpretation of Dreams, where he argued that people’s behaviour depends on the unconscious part of their minds.

Another psychologist, Carl Jung, in his The Psychology of the Unconscious argued that there is a racial memory which is a primitive memory existing in every individual of the experience of his race during its evolution. It brings people to see the symbolic power of the world, without making people realizing it. Only the psychologist and the poet discover symbolic meaning and understand their importance. This is was also the object of the French symbolist poets, who tried to give mystical significance to their impressions of the world of senses, using language which spoke to the irrational in the reader. They influenced the writers of the Aesthetic Movement, especially Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot. They broke completely with the Victorian tradition and were the founders of a new necessary poetry. This new development started with the critical writing of Hulme, who believed in Neo-Classicism and wanted the writers to return to a Pre-Romantic idea of man. Hulme’s theories. found their most relevant expression in T. S. Eliot’s work. At the same time, Eliot was also influenced by Ezra Pound, one of the founders of the Imagist Movement. It tends to use a dry and hard poetic language with clear and precise images. The imagists’ poetry reflected the cold, mechanical reality of the modern world. Eliot’s ad Pound’s poetry was obscure and difficult, full of literary references beyond the education of most readers.