

Longinus - Romantic - Last Representative of Classicism - Tempers Romantic with what is sound in classicism.

Undoubtedly, Longinus is the greatest Greek critic after Plato and Aristotle. His treatise 'On Sublimity' embodies his main critical view points. It shows his critical attitude that is radically different from that of the classicists. That is why he gets different epithets from the critics. Some critics call him the first romantic critic, others praise him as the true representative of the classical tradition or the exponent of modernity in literature. This difference of opinion about his real critical approach is mainly because of his firm concern with the peculiar <sup>effect</sup> ~~concern~~ of poetry on the readers. Let us see it in a brief.

According to the classical theory of inspiration poet is an inspired person who utters songs when he is not in his right mind. It was because of this theory that Plato condemned the poet as an irrational person who misleads people by appealing to their emotions. Longinus also believes in this theory of inspiration that the poet is a possessed person and points out that herein lies the power of the poet. He does not try to explore the source of power but dwells on its effects on the readers. He discovers that the high type of poetry, which is lofty and sublime, has the effect not of mere pleasure, instruction or persuasion but also of ecstasy and transport - 'lifting out of oneself.' The elements of passion, ~~in~~ intensity, exaltation and transport are the fundamentals of sublimity in literature. These are the romantic traits brooded by Longinus in the aesthetic criticism of the classical age.

Further more, before Longinus, the Greek and the Roman critics used to judge any work of art in accordance with the set rules. They tried to consider it either from the pragmatic or the ethical standpoint. Longinus sets aside all these standards. He judges a work more by its essence than by its form. He emphatically

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says that the readers or the hearers should be carried away, transported and moved to ecstasy by the grandeur and the passion of the work. Because of his, this insistence on passion, ecstasy, imagination and intensity, he is called the first romantic critic.

But an impartial analysis of his theory reveals that he is not a thorough romantic in the modern sense of the <sup>term</sup> word. Of course, he advocates in favour of emotion and passion but he also hints that these elements of human nature should be guided by some rules. He says 'mere grandeur is exposed to danger when left without the control of reason and scientific methods. That is he maintains a close affiliation with <sup>modern</sup> classicism. In other words, he tempers romanticism with what is sanest in classicism. He points the way to the storm and fury of the romantic movement but re-imposes the classic discipline. He proclaims the efficacy of inspiration but he does not think that beauty comes like a wind to fill the sails of the poet's ship and drives it without effort across the sea. That is why is called an exponent of the genuine classical spirit.

Some of the classical qualities are evidently obvious in Longinus criticism, he always shows great reverence for the ancient Greek models, tradition and advocates for imitation. He stands for fitness, correctness, selection and balance. He believes in rules and regulations and strongly argues for a refined and cultivated poetic style. He also maintains a balance between an unimpassioned and 'hard'. Because of the consideration of these facts, Longinus is called one of the last classical critics.

More over, some critics call him the

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most modern of the ancient critics. It is true that he anticipates much that is modern in critical works. His concern with the sense rather than with the form of literature, importance of imagination and feelings, his efforts at interpretation and appreciation, his widening outlook and variety of judicial methods are the features that reappeared after centuries. Thus, it cannot be denied that some of the seeds of the modern critical features are floating on the surface of Longinus' critical views.

In short, there is a fusion of the romantic, the classical and the modern strains in Longinus' critical approach. And it is this fusion that is the real key to his greatness, originality and relevance. He has the similar appeal to both the romantics and the classics, and as well as, to some extent, to the modern. He really gave a new positive direction to literary criticism.

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