

RATIONALISM AND D. H. LAWRENCE: A 21ST CENTURY PERSPECTIVE

by

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ABSTRACT

Since the time of the Greek philosopher Plato, Western intellectuals have relied on *logos* or “the word” to make philosophical propositions about the world humans find themselves in. *Logos* or “the word” has generally been privileged over *mythos* or *pathos*, denoting emotion and feeling. This privileging has sometimes been challenged by intellectuals within the Western tradition. D. H. Lawrence was the most vocal and passionate writer to do so in modern times. This text traces the development of rationalism in the Western tradition and Lawrence’s resistance to it. It also examines modern theoretical developments and notes their convergence with Lawrence’s ideas. It concludes by claiming that the postmodern intellectual climate in the West tends towards a critique of rationalism, much like Lawrence.

INTRODUCTION

The history of Rationalism is the history of Western civilization since Plato. The various transformations of the meaning of *logos* are of particular importance to the student of philosophical thought in the Western tradition. Rationalism as a mode of thought has been given predominance over emotionalism or romanticism in the Western tradition at least since Plato, rationalism being associated with the masculine and romanticism with the feminine, with the privileging of the former terms over the latter. The rational and the masculine have also been associated with the West, whereas the East has traditionally been defined as irrational and childlike, thus equating it with the feminine.¹

In recent Western history, the nineteenth century was a period full of ferment. At that time changes were being made in every field of life and that set the stage for the debates that continue to the present day. The rule of reason having been challenged by the Romantics, Feminism rose in the late nineteenth century as an organized movement. At that time, too, nationalism and imperialism were on the rise and race theory was widely accepted as indisputable. The age of science was being ushered in with industrialization and the middle classes were gaining in prosperity. Spiritualism was losing ground as materialism increased. In the realm of philosophy the dualism created by Plato and Descartes still reigned supreme, so that the need to harmonize the material and the spiritual was felt less and less. In the middle of all this ferment, D. H. Lawrence was born in Nottinghamshire, England, in 1885.

One of the most misunderstood and controversial writers of modern times, Lawrence is also, as Philip Rieff has pointed out, “the most talented believer in the irrational yet to come out of contemporary rationalist culture...” (xiv). Lawrence’s personality, interwoven with his works, has been a subject for endless debate and speculation, as has his work. Struck with tuberculosis at the age of sixteen, Lawrence struggled with the disease all his life, succumbing to it at last at the age of 45. He also struggled with nihilism and the horror of death, coming to terms with it in an emphatic celebration of life and the living body. One reason why many people find him incomprehensible and frustrating is that one cannot hope to feel the force of his ideas unless one suspends judgement and gives oneself over to his writing, as it were. This point has also been made by M. Elizabeth Sargent in her essay, *Thinking and Writing from the Body: Eugene Gendlin, D. H. Lawrence, and “The Woman Who Rode Away.”* Readers who refuse to enter *physically* into his writings “remain outside the knowledge the story is working to discover and share” (114). Lawrence’s work deals with “the woman question” as much as with the ravages of industrialization and capitalism. He attacks the rationalist tradition, arguing for a valuing of feeling and instinct, a position for which he took much abuse from the proponents of rationalism. However, there are few who dispute the keenness of his insights, the brilliance and passion of his language and the total integrity of his art.

¹ For a thorough discussion of the subject see *Orientalism* by Edward Said.

In this work my aim is to elucidate the Western rationalist tradition and Lawrence's reaction to it. I will also attempt to show the compatibility of Lawrence's ideas with postmodern theories dealing with the Self. Although Lawrence does not overtly address issues of colonialism in his work, he was living at a time when Europe ruled over roughly 85% of the world. In critiquing rationalism, Lawrence criticizes the arrogance to which man, in particular Western man (rather than woman) is subject. No other modern writer combines such passion in ideas and language as does Lawrence. His position is peculiar because he had to rely on metaphysics to criticize Western metaphysics. He had to criticize the vogue for "ideas" through his own ideas. In tackling these issues he anticipates modern theorists of language, in particular Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida.

RATIONALISM IN THE WESTERN TRADITION

As Bruce Lincoln shows in his book, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology and Scholarship*, when the *mythos* of Homer and Hesiod gave way to the *logos* of Heraclitus and Plato, it was regarded as a move from “symbolic to rational discourse, anthropomorphism to abstraction, and religion to philosophy” (3). The latter terms, of course, were given predominance over the former, as Plato literally gave new meaning to the terms *mythos* and *logos*. As Lincoln points out, in the times of Hesiod and Homer, *logos* meant “a speech of women, the weak, the young, and the shrewd, a speech that tends to be soft, delightful, charming, and alluring, but one that can also deceive and mislead” (10). On the other hand, *mythos* meant “the rough speech of headstrong men” (12). The meanings were reversed by the time of Heraclitus and *logos* came to mean “rational discussion, calculation, and choice” (Kahn; qtd. in Lincoln 18). Plato took *mythos* to mean a false story and condemned poets as liars. Lincoln puts the whole process in a nutshell when he says,

...Plato’s dismissive attitude toward myth prevailed through the Enlightenment and produced the master narrative of the entity that calls itself “Western Civilization.” This is the creation myth that makes all good things come from Greece and thematizes the transition “*from mythos to logos*” as the paradigm of the dynamism, progress, science, and rationality that are supposed to characterize and distinguish Europe forever after. Interestingly (and anachronistically) enough, these ideals that the story traces to Athens may also be understood as the aspects of capitalism that, in common opinion, are most appealing and least problematic (209-10).

The move from *mythos* to *logos* is generally believed to be a good thing. The binaries that were thus set up (rational/irrational, progressive/backward, scientific/mystical,

moral/amoral etc) served to distinguish the West from the East and the masculine from the feminine, with a valuing of the former terms over the latter. In recent years modern theoretical movements like poststructuralism and deconstruction have brought these binaries to light and questioned them. Rationalism itself has been questioned by dissidents within the Western intellectual tradition.

According to the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, Rationalism is the theory that “reason is an independent source of knowledge, distinct from sense-perception and having a higher authority.” In modern times, being reasonable is equated with being scientific, with attributing a cause-and-effect process to phenomena. The chain of cause-and-effect is something humans have observed in the world around them. Since human beings like to make sense of things, since they like to feel that they have control over them, they tend to ignore anything that does not fit into the cause-and-effect chain. If they persist in this attitude, they eventually reach a stage where they believe that they understand everything and are able to control everything. They declare that religion is a human fiction and that God is non-existent, even though they cannot account for the mysteries of life and death.

Rationalism is closely bound up with patriarchy, resulting in what modern theory, specifically feminist theory, has termed in recent years as *phallogocentrism*--privileging the phallus and the word. Privileging the word is tantamount to privileging rationalism, as opposed to romanticism or emotionalism. Throughout the history of Western discourse, emotion has been associated with women rather than men. Plato condemned poetry as something that manipulates the audience by stimulating emotion:

In this, [according to Plato] poetry appeals to the basest part of the human soul (that which is appetitive, not disciplined or reasoning) and to the baser forms of humanity: women, children, and the lower strata. (Lincoln 38)

Women and emotionalism are two subjects that have traditionally been looked down upon in the Western intellectual tradition. Very recently, however, feminisms associated with writers like Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Germaine Greer, among others, have started focusing on the valuing of the female experience, including a valuing of emotion. This also includes an acknowledgement of the irrational as a valid part of the human experience. In her book *The Wounded Woman*, psychologist Linda Leonard states: “It is neither a weakness to be in the irrational realm nor to use it as a source of knowledge. To the contrary, it is a weakness to be unable to face this aspect of life” (81-82). She quotes Kierkegaard in saying that one can become so wise about how things work in the world that one adapts to them perfectly and becomes a worldly success. However, this can lead to one “becoming an adapted imitation of others. The danger is that one forgets that the Self is a higher power, that one fears to allow the spontaneity that cannot be controlled since it may cause one to lose one’s safe and established position.” This attitude “starve[s] one of the vital life substance.” A person falls into despair, and in despair s/he tries to be defiant.

For at bottom one defiantly refuses possibility, refuses what is beyond the ego’s power to control. Taken to the extreme, this attitude is demonic for it refuses all help from a greater power, seeing all power and strength to exist only in oneself. (80)

Sometimes letting go and acknowledging that one is not in control is what saves one’s sanity. The irrational must be acknowledged so that it can cease to be a threat. The rejection of rationalism does not imply falling into barbarism; rather it implies

recognizing the irrational and the primitive that is also part of our nature. It implies humility and wonder in the face of creation; not the arrogant assertion that human reason can master the mysteries of life. It is in this sense that D. H. Lawrence rejected rationalism. But before we can look at this rejection, we must come to an understanding of what the term Rationalism meant at the beginning of the twentieth century, when Lawrence started writing.

The Age of Reason or the Enlightenment as it is called is generally taken to be the period stretching from the Peace of Utrecht (1713) to the French Revolution (1789). This period was preceded by a cultural and intellectual revolution that took place in the seventeenth century and which was closely related to the scientific advancements in physics and astronomy wrought chiefly by Galileo and Newton on the one hand, and the achievements in thought by men like Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes on the other. Although Descartes is considered the father of seventeenth century rationalism, the conflict between rationalism and mysticism dates back many centuries. In his book, *An Intellectual History of Modern Europe*, Roland Stromberg states:

Dialectical movement has manifested itself abundantly in Western history. In Greek philosophy, Thales was matched against Pythagoras, Plato against Aristotle, the materialists and sceptics against both; Christianity fused with Greek philosophy in a higher synthesis. In the Middle Ages, Peter Abelard ranged his rational philosophy against St. Bernard's mighty existential faith, while Aquinas, who synthesized these two, was in turn negated by Ockham. We come to the time when Protestantism reacted against Catholicism, and the revival of numerous ancient philosophies during the Renaissance, gave to modern European man a fantastically rich menu of intellectual dishes.

If we can discern one basic tension or polarity beneath all the others, it would be one that opposed the scientific, rationally oriented, and intellectually sophisticated tradition of Greek philosophical thought to the fervent, "committed," ethically-oriented faith of Christianity. (7)

Stromberg states that the work of men like Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo had important implications for philosophy. Galileo wanted to make physical nature subject to “mathematical, quantitative treatment.” To this end he suggested that “physical nature should be reduced to a mechanical proposition, exactly calculable.” It should be purged of all features that seemed to endow it with soul, life, or conscious will. Aristotle had regarded all things as a combination of form and matter and as links in a great “chain of being.” But with the progress of science, “a mechanistic picture of the world replaced an organic one” (38-39).

By the seventeenth century this mechanistic view was well established. Human beings were detached from physical nature and regarded it as a machine whose laws could serve them. Stromberg quotes Whitehead as saying that nature became “a dull affair...,” something “hard, cold, colorless, silent, dead” (40). It was the beginning of the dissociation between humans and nature. It was also the beginning of a new frame of mind and a new attitude towards the world. People learned “to think of the natural world as consisting of inert physical matter in mechanical relationships, rather than as a great organism analogous to a living thing...” (41). They made a sharp distinction between the world of mind and of matter. The chief seventeenth-century thinker to bring about this change was, as has been said before, Rene Descartes, who reconstructed the universe from his famous formula: “I think, therefore I am.” Descartes took doubt to be the foremost guide to his investigations and thus introduced skepticism as the basic principle in rational investigation. After Descartes, Malebranche tried to synthesize religion and reason. Then came Spinoza, who

displaced the dualism of Descartes with an assertion of the “unity of God and man, mind and matter, in a pantheistic universe.” for which he was condemned as an atheist.

(Nussbaum 5) Spinoza rejected dualism. For him God *was* reason; God was not apart from things, rather all things were different expressions of the Divine. For Europeans of his time, however, Spinoza stood in opposition to Descartes, whose theories had been “Christianized” by Malebranche. According to Nussbaum,

Spinoza was impossible for a Manichean Europe. For the Europeans, the meaning of existence, the reality of man, the reality of nature, the reality of God depended upon the dualism which Descartes maintained. Thus it was that the “God-drunken” Spinoza was rejected by the Europeans of his time and of the succeeding generations as an atheist and accepted only by later generations for whom the world was ceasing to have meaning and a God....By rejecting Spinoza and retaining Descartes, Europe could keep its God while it unmade and remade its material world at will. (5-6)

Spinoza’s philosophy, if adopted, would have run counter to the move towards materialism that was rapidly gaining ground as an inevitable result of the new mechanistic view of the universe. Other important changes being wrought in society at the same time strengthened this trend. With the loss of prestige and privilege for the aristocracy and the Church, the middle classes were rapidly gaining in power. The scientific and materialistic mode of thinking was well suited to the bourgeoisie, which dealt with manufacture, trade and commerce, as well as the professions. Rationalism and the bourgeoisie were mutually beneficial and thrived on each other. Newton, the next towering figure in the history of science, paved the way for the Enlightenment. The *philosophes* of the eighteenth century lent the ideas of rationalism more force and energy, believing themselves to be casting off the darkness of former times. The nature of their work was no less political than intellectual, since they hoped to smash belief in privilege

and to shatter the power of old prejudices. The life of Voltaire, probably the most prominent of the French *philosophes*, shows how passionately these ideals were held by the leading intellectuals who were not at the same time aristocrats.

The Enlightenment gave way to the Romantic Movement, which was a reaction to the rigorous classicism of the previous age. It also marked a change in values and sensibilities. In his *History of Western Philosophy*, Bertrand Russell writes with evident distaste, but also objectivity, about the Romantic Movement. According to him, the period from 1660 to Rousseau had been dominated by the memory of the wars of religion and the civil wars in France, England and Germany. People were afraid of chaos, of “the anarchic tendencies of all strong passions,” of the necessity for sacrifices to maintain safety. “Prudence was regarded as the supreme virtue; intellect was valued as the most effective weapon against subversive fanatics. Restraint in the expression of passion was the chief aim of education, and the surest mark of a gentleman...” (67).

What happened to change this state of affairs? Defenders of romanticism would like to say that human nature cannot be long confined to excessive orderliness and must break free from such constraints sooner or later. Russell gives a rather unconvincing reason for it. According to him, people reacted against rationalism because they were bored:

By the time of Rousseau, many people had grown tired of safety, and had begun to desire excitement. The French Revolution and Napoleon gave them their fill of it. When, in 1815, the political world returned to tranquility, it was a tranquility so dead, so rigid, so hostile to all vigorous life, that only terrified conservatives could endure it. (677)

Russell goes on to say that the revolt that took place in the nineteenth century took two forms. One was “the revolt of industrialism, both capitalist and proletarian, against monarchy and aristocracy....” The other revolt was romantic, and Russell calls it part reactionary and part revolutionary. The Romantics did not desire peace and quiet, but a “vigorous and passionate individual life.” They hated industrialism “because it was ugly, because money-grubbing seemed to them unworthy of an immortal soul, and because the growth of modern organizations interfered with individual liberty” (677). For Russell, the Romantic Movement boils down to the revolt of “solitary instincts against social bonds” (682). The Romantics certainly valued individual liberty over social obligations. In their protest against materialism they felt themselves to be isolated from the masses and the bourgeoisie, the latter symbolizing deadening conventionality and hypocrisy that smothered originality and sincerity in individuals.

While in literature writers and thinkers made much of the non-rational (and sometimes irrational) faculties, and exalted the imagination, in philosophy there was no parallel movement. As Joan Stambaugh states in her book, *The Real is Not the Rational*, in philosophy the problem of the non-rational faculties or emotions never gets developed in a linear way like rationalism. “The emotions remain as a static, problematical if not actually suspect quasi-area of the human being” (48). The first notable philosopher “in whom the whole course of the ‘irrational’ erupted in a strikingly clear if not unproblematic way,” is Schopenhauer. (66) The most important philosopher Schopenhauer influenced in his turn was Nietzsche, who, though once a devoted disciple, ultimately rejected his mentor completely. The most important concept for Schopenhauer

was the *will to live*, which he confused with drive and instinct. His will is a blind (unconscious) driving irrational force, and its nature is suffering and want. What is more, it is incapable of finding any appeasement or satisfaction through its willing. It has no control and is impotent and deluded. (68-69) Nietzsche amended that with his own concept of the *will to power* as the basic human drive.

Nietzsche believed in the *elan vital*--in living the life within the person to the full. (Magee 236) He advocated authenticity and selfhood. All these concepts are central to Lawrence's thinking as well. As Russell points out, Nietzsche's outlook owes much to the Romantics--particularly Byron--in spite of his criticism of them. (*History* 761) Nietzsche also criticizes Socrates and Plato for replacing the "strength and goodwill, warmth and beauty, as well as a full grasp of the tragic being of mankind" possessed by the pre-Socratics with reason. He accuses them of replacing the Greeks' ancient insights into tragic existence with "the trivialising practice of rationalising everything...[Nietzsche] never forgave Plato for setting up a hero whose main qualities are those of talking everybody else into the ground" (Magee 237).

In his dialogue with Magee, Stern calls Nietzsche a precursor of Freud because he placed a lot of emphasis on the unconscious. Contrary to general opinion, Freud did not discover the unconscious. The word had been in usage since the end of the eighteenth century and it was a key term for Nietzsche. He did not have a systematic theory of it, as did Freud, but then he distrusted systems. (239) In his excellent study of Nietzsche and

modern literature, Keith M. May notes the similarities between Lawrence and Nietzsche. According to him, Lawrence independently reached many of the conclusions reached by Nietzsche, especially on the will to power.

In the discussion of rationalism as a context for Lawrence's writing, it would be pertinent here to mention Darwinism. According to Ronald Granofsky, Darwinism was "the most significant , influential, and... controversial new model of the world to arrive in Western culture since the sixteenth century, and it was absorbed into popular consciousness at the time that Lawrence was growing up" (5). It would be enough for our purposes to note here that, according to Granofsky, Lawrence reacted vehemently against the evolutionists and declared that their theories were all wrong. Believing in creation, individuality and purpose as he did, Lawrence objected to "the insignificance of the individual in the chromosomal scheme of things" propounded by evolutionist theory.

(13)

Like Darwinism, another set of ideas that was current in Lawrence's time was race theory, which dealt with "ideas about primitive origins and primitive classifications, modern decadence, the progress of civilization, the destiny of the white (or Aryan) races, the need for colonial territories..." (Said 232). In *Orientalism*, Said quotes Lionel Trilling as saying that in late nineteenth century Western culture, "racial theory, stimulated by a rising nationalism and a spreading imperialism, supported by an incomplete and mal-assimilated science, was almost undisputed" (232). There are instances of this influence in Lawrence's work, but they are not of central importance in the consideration of his philosophy.

The intellectual (and political) revolution that he did react to, and engage with wholeheartedly, was the feminist movement, as shown by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *No Man's Land*. The authors bring home to the reader the fact that the rise of feminism in the late nineteenth century was the definitive event that altered and shaped the course of modernist and post-modernist literature. They convincingly argue that modernism itself is a product of the sexual battle that was engendered as a result of feminism, as are "the linguistic experiments usually attributed to the revolutionary poetics of the so-called avant-garde" (xii). For Lawrence the emergence of the New Woman was a disturbing event, along with the predominance of industrialization and mechanization and the concomitant rise of capitalism. Although Lawrence was not a communist, he was definitely not in sympathy with capitalism either.

These and the particular circumstances of his personal life combined to create Lawrence's ideas and his art. The important thing to note here is that, artist that he was, Lawrence was not simply a misogynist or a communist or a racially prejudiced man. Even though he was undoubtedly affected by the social climate around him, he brought his unique vision to bear upon his surroundings so that his thought offers us a chance to transcend simplistic views of humanity.

D.H. LAWRENCE AND THE REVOLT AGAINST RATIONALISM

In many ways the year 1900 was a turning point in the rise of modernism. In *The Twentieth Century Novel*, R. B. Kershner documents the changes taking place in the Western world at this time. This was the year when Max Planck first set forth the quantum theory. Uranium was separated out in the same year. Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* was published. The Labour Party was founded in England at the height of the Boer War. The first zeppelin flew in 1900 and the first wireless speech was sent. Queen Victoria died and the New Woman made her appearance: it was the start of the feminist movement. The Great Exposition was held in Paris in 1900. (31-32) All these changes signalled, at the same time, the rise in the importance of science and "rational" thinking, and a deepening sense of crisis and discontinuity in the minds of people. Kershner quotes the American writer Henry Adams as saying how terrifying he found the exhibits at the Exposition. He felt that in the span of a short seven years "man had translated himself into a new universe which had no common scale of measurement with the old" (qtd. in Kershner 32).

Industrialization and urbanization were on the rise at the turn of the century, with the greater part of both the laboring class and the middle class engaged in nonagricultural manufacturing and production or in the service industries. Mass transit systems were being installed in cities and the mass media were expanding like never before. All this was attributed to the progress of science and rationalism:

Insofar as there was a bourgeois public consciousness at the turn of the century, it was dedicated to rational enlightenment, the conviction that, with the help of reason, civilization had improved and was daily improving further the lot of everyone. The prestige of the sciences had never been higher...In some ways, a belief in rational progress had actually displaced religious belief. (35)

However, this belief was misplaced. Max Weber, for one, called the form of thinking prevalent at the time “instrumental reason,” and declared that it was a form “divorced from any inherently reasonable ends” (Kershner 35). Weber’s pronouncement was soon to be proved true.

The event that had the profoundest effect on the modern psyche was, of course, the Great War which started in 1914. Kershner quotes Paul Fussell as saying that the War was more ironic than any other in history because it was a public embarrassment to the idea of progress, so firmly entrenched in everyone’s mind. (37) Writing in 1959, Philip Rieff observed:

As it has turned out, no age has been more horrific than this age of science. The Unconscious has revenged itself for the setbacks it has suffered at the hands of rationalist science; repressed as theology, it has manifested itself in all sorts of perverse religions--as we saw in Germany, the great center of rationalism in the nineteenth century. (xiii)

D. H. Lawrence shared with many of his contemporaries the angst that seems to be the lot of modern human beings. The loss of faith, Darwinian visions of nature, the discontents fostered by an industrial civilization, the enemies within the self defined by Freud, and the Great War were all contributing factors, along with the disturbing rise of the New Woman, as noted by Gilbert and Gubar. (*No Man’s Land* 21) For Lawrence,

however, many of these factors were reflected in his personal life as well. Lawrence's personal life is of central importance in an understanding of his work, and it has been well-documented. The conflicts that arose out of the marriage of his father, who was a collier, and his mother, who was a refined school teacher, greatly affected his personality. His father was a crude and ill-tempered drunkard belonging to the working class, while his mother was a refined bourgeois. She did not want her children to follow in their father's footsteps.

As literary historian Ifor Evans has pointed out, both Lawrence's background and his inner experience were different from any other novelist of his time. Living as he did in a coal-mining town, he knew the crude and degraded life of the miners, but he also knew

Sherwood Forest, or what was left of it, nearby. As he looked around him, Lawrence was appalled at the havoc industrialization had wreaked in its wake. The damage was twofold: modern civilization seemed to him to have corrupted not only the natural landscape, but also the emotional life of men and women. "To discover again a free flow of the passionate life became for him almost a mystical ideal" (Evans 277).

All of Lawrence's works embody his conception of life: his rejection of dualism, his disgust with the mechanical quality of modern life, and his rebellion against a society that promoted a false spirituality and belittled the importance of the physical body.

Lawrence wrote in almost all the genres. He is best remembered as a novelist, and with good reason, but it is in his non-fiction--in his essays and poems--that one finds his ideas most clearly expressed. In talking about Lawrence's ideas on rationalism, mysticism and

religion, I will draw mostly on his non-fiction, although I will use the other works to support my arguments wherever necessary.

It might be useful here to start with Lawrence's most direct engagement with rationalism--the twin essays, *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* and *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, written in 1920 and 1921 respectively. As Philip Rieff points out in the Introduction, both these works were ridiculed by critics as incomprehensible and bizarre. Lawrence presents here his own take on the Unconscious and explains it in terms vastly different from those employed by Freud. *Psychoanalysis* is much shorter than *Fantasia*, containing six chapters in which Lawrence set out his ideas with perfect earnestness and solemnity. After the response he received from critics, he changed his tone to one of mockery and satire and restated his ideas in more detail and more plainly in *Fantasia*.

In the first book, Lawrence accuses psychoanalysis of doing away "entirely with the moral faculty in man" (4). For Freud, the sex motive or the incest motive is the basis of all human action and makes up the unconscious. Lawrence insists that this is not the case. For him the sex motive is one of the two great impulses in humans. The other motive is the need

to create and this motive is superior--or should be superior--to the sex motive. Lawrence equates pure idealism with pure materialism and asserts that "the most ideal people are the most completely material" (12). This might seem like a strange rapprochement since idealism by definition is not material. But it makes sense when Lawrence further asserts that since people invent their own automatic principles and work themselves according to them, they are just "like any mechanic inside the works" (12). Ideals can easily become

fixed and rigid, and that is their failing. If a person tries to mould his/her life according to fixed ideals, they will kill the spontaneity inside themselves that is so necessary to living a full life. Lawrence defines the unconscious as “the spontaneous life-motive in every organism.” For him it is something pre-mental and is free from any interference from the mind. It is not “a shadow cast from the mind” (13) but something that is present at the very beginning of life: “Where the individual begins, life begins. The two are inseparable, life and individuality. And also, where the individual begins, the unconscious, which is the specific life-motive, also begins” (13).

The unconscious, then, is linked with individuality. Every individual, Lawrence says, is endowed with a unique nature, an individual consciousness which is created out of nothing and is new every time. A child, when it is born, is not the sum total of its parents’ personalities but is a totally new unit, with a unique personality of its own. This nature that appears spontaneously is “causeless,” in Lawrence’s words. And it cannot be explained rationally; it is something outside the scope of mental comprehension. “Granted the whole cause-and effect process of generation and evolution, still the *individual* is not explained” (14; emphasis mine). What escapes the pale of science and the explainable is a mystery that can only be traced back to religion. Indeed, according to Lawrence, “Religion was right and science is wrong.” This individuality that is *created* is very much like the soul, and that is what Lawrence would call the unconscious, except that the word *soul* has been appropriated by idealism and means “only that which a man conceives himself to be” (15)--that is,

one's *idea* of oneself. The unconscious, then, is that mysterious individuality that is created with each new life and which cannot be apprehended with the mind; it can only be experienced, but never understood. For Lawrence, it is arrogant of us to assume that this inconceivable entity can be "understood" by reason. Freud attempted just such an understanding, and is therefore the enemy for Lawrence. The unconscious is that which promotes the creative process in us and should not be hampered by ideals. But this was exactly what modern humans had done in Lawrence's eyes and opposing this was the burden of his lifelong struggle against rationalism.

In *Psychoanalysis* Lawrence presents his own theory about the nerve centers in the human body and identifies them as the "solar plexus," the "lumbar ganglion" and so on. It is not necessary to go into the intricacies of the eight nerve centers he identifies in the body. For our purposes it is sufficient to remark that the main import of these nerve centers is that they serve as poles in opposition to other such poles in the world surrounding the individual. A polarity is established between a person and other persons or, in some cases, between an individual's own nerve centers. The latter scenario leads to frustration and arrests the normal development of an individual. In *Sons and Lovers*, Lawrence's autobiographical novel, the polarity between the hero Paul and his mother is disturbed and abnormal. She is too dependent emotionally on her son with the result that he is unable to transfer his affections to any other woman. This leads to an unacknowledged hatred and resentment against the mother that is displayed when he gives her an overdose of morphine. Paul's neurosis is also apparent in his cruelty to

Miriam and Clara, the women who love him spiritually and physically respectively, but whom he is unable to love in either sense.

Let us now consider how Lawrence uses the concept of these nerve centers in describing the role of instinct as opposed to reason in humans. The child has an instinctive knowledge of the mother, a knowledge which is not mental. In the womb it develops, not out of its own volition, but instinctively, as it were. Objective knowledge of another person really is knowledge of the gulf between two beings. Therefore, Lawrence asserts, we can never really know another person. In his *Studies in Classic American Literature*, he discusses Edgar Allen Poe and how his need to *know* his wife eventually led to her death. According to Lawrence, what Poe wants to do with his wife Ligeia is “to analyse her, till he knows all her component parts, till he has got her all in his consciousness...But she won’t be quite analysed out. There is something, something he can’t get” (*Criticism* 334). He quotes Poe on Ligeia’s eyes and how passionately he wanted to fathom what lay in them. She, for her part, wanted to be known, to be probed. But before Poe could discover the secret of her eyes, she died of an overstrained consciousness. “It is easy to see why each man kills the thing he loves,” declares Lawrence. “To *know* a living thing is to kill it. You have to kill a thing to know it satisfactorily. For this reason, the desirous consciousness, the SPIRIT, is a vampire” (335). One can know something about another person, but to try to *know* another person is to destroy him or her. The essence of a person--or any living thing for that matter--can never be known by the conscious mind; it can only be experienced by the senses:

Man does so horribly want to master the secret of life and of individuality *with his mind*. It is like the analysis of protoplasm. You can only analyse *dead* protoplasm, and know its constituents. It is a death process.

Keep KNOWLEDGE for the world of matter, force, and function. It has got nothing to do with being. (335)

In *The Art of Loving*, Erich Fromm makes the same point while discussing knowledge as one of the elements of love. According to Fromm, the basic problem of existence that has plagued humans in all times and all cultures is the necessity of overcoming one's loneliness and separateness from other beings. One of the solutions to escape the prison of one's isolation has been a fusion with another being in love. This fusion also serves another basic human desire, that to know "the secret of man" (29). According to Fromm, humans are unfathomable to themselves as well as to their fellow beings. We cannot know ourselves and each other because we are not *things* that can be analysed. Yet we cannot help wishing to know this secret. A desperate way to know the secret is to have complete power over a person:

the power which makes him do what we want, feel what we want, think what we want; which transforms him into a thing, our thing, our possession. The ultimate degree of this attempt to know lies in the extremes of sadism, the desire and ability to make a human being suffer; to torture him, to force him to betray his secret in his suffering....

The other path to knowing "the secret" is love. Love is active penetration of the other person, in which my desire to know is stilled by union. In the act of fusion I know you, I know myself, I know everybody--and I "know" nothing. I know in *the only way knowledge of that which is alive is possible for man--by experience of union--not by any knowledge our thought can give*. (30-31; italics mine)

Both Lawrence and Fromm insist that thought alone can never lead us to full knowledge. For Fromm, "[t]he only way of full knowledge lies in the *act* of love: this act transcends thought, it transcends words. It is the daring plunge into the experience of union"

(Fromm 31). Lawrence likewise valorizes experience rather than abstract thought. *Being* is something to be experienced, not analysed. Similarly, the mode of being must not be set up according to rigid ideals; it must be allowed to develop spontaneously.

The single force responsible for this development is the unconscious, whose primary goal is the incarnation and manifestation of itself. In the end it gives birth to consciousness. But the unconscious is not to be taken as an abstraction; it is always a concrete entity. (42) The individual cannot develop save in establishing a polarized circuit with other beings.

This circuit of polarized unison precedes all mind and all knowing. It is anterior to and ascendant over the human will. And yet the mind and the will can both interfere with the dynamic circuit, an idea, like a stone wedged in a delicate machine, can arrest one whole process of psychic interaction and spontaneous growth. (*Psychoanalysis* 44-45)

The same idea is expressed in Lawrence's essay, *Why the Novel Matters*: "Men get ideas into their heads, of what they mean by Life, and they proceed to cut life out to pattern" (*Criticism* 107). Instead of allowing one's personality--or unconscious--to unfold spontaneously, people try to live up to ideas they have borrowed from their surroundings. As a result, they become distorted and neurotic beings. Lawrence does not mean here that mankind must not be civilized; he means instead that every individual must submit his or her will to the divine mystery and let one's personality blossom to its fullest, as intended by the divine spark within oneself. In his essay *The Reality of Peace* he makes the same statement:

There is a sacrifice demanded--only one, an old sacrifice that was demanded of the first man, and will be demanded of the last. It is demanded of all created life. I must submit my will and my understanding--all I must submit, not to any other

will, not to any other understanding, not to anything that is, but to the exquisitest suggestion from the unknown that comes upon me. This I must attend to and submit to. It is not me, it is upon me. (*Phoenix* 670)

Once we let an idea, or more correctly an ideal, intervene in the process of development, it retards or damages the personality. This is the reason for neuroses or madness according to Lawrence. Psychoanalysis takes the unconscious as a mental construct to be investigated, while Lawrence takes the unconscious to mean the essence of an individual, which is pre-mental and not dependent on or capable of being understood by the mind. In his poem *Climb Down, O Lordly Mind*, he puts his thoughts on the subject in a nutshell. A man is not just a mind; he is many more things besides: "... in his consciousness he is two-fold at least: / he is cerebral, intellectual, mental, spiritual, / but also he is instinctive, intuitive, and in touch" (*Complete Poems* 473). The mind needs to know its own limits; it needs to acknowledge that it *has* limits. A person is like a moon, and the "white mind" shines on one side of the individual. But there is also the other, dark half, which is the darker because of the strong white light that shines on the other side: "for the strongest light throws also the darkest shadow." A person is not all intellect, or all reason; s/he also has a mysterious

side which cannot be apprehended by the mind. For Lawrence there is a seat of consciousness in the blood which is often ignored:

The blood knows in darkness, and forever dark,
in touch, by intuition, instinctively.
The blood also knows religiously,
and of this, the mind is incapable.
The mind is non-religious.(474)

Lawrence ends the poem with a defiant “I am, I do not think I am.” For Lawrence, ideas are not more important than the living, breathing individual. Even the trees and flowers are alive and have their own individuality. They are infused with “the strange creative urge, the God-whisper, which is the one and only everlasting motive for everything” (Kangaroo 331).

In *Why the Novel Matters*, Lawrence takes issue with philosophers who, like Plato, conceive of the soul as superior to the body. For Lawrence, saying that the body is just a vessel of clay is nonsense. For him his hand is as alive as his mind or his brain that directs it. It is wrong to say that it is a mere nothing as compared to the brain. He is not impressed by abstractions:

These damned philosophers, they talk as if they suddenly went off in steam, and were then much more important than they are when they're in their shirts. It is nonsense. Every man, philosopher included, ends in his own fingertips. That's the end of his man alive. (*Phoenix* 534)

Those who condemn Lawrence as the prophet of sensuality do him an injustice.

Lawrence only valorizes the body as a corrective to the undue emphasis on the soul which serves to split the human personality and leads to mechanization and frustration in life. Both Gertrude and Miriam in *Sons and Lovers* were the victims of a spirituality which made them suffer. Gertrude, because she was unable to see any good in her husband who was a completely sensual man, and Miriam, because she regarded the sexual act as a sacrifice she must make if she loved Paul.

In *Psychoanalysis*, Lawrence maintains that it is the failure to maintain a healthy polarity between individuals that leads to psychological problems. We suffer “unspeakable

agony” because we fail to establish and maintain the vital circuits between ourselves and our surroundings, including other human beings.

Delicate, creative desire, sending forth its fine vibrations in search of the true pole of magnetic rest in another human being or beings, how it is thwarted, insulated by a whole set of india-rubber ideas and ideals and conventions, till every form of perversion and death-desire sets in! How can we *escape* neuroses?...

The amazingly difficult and vital business of human relationship has been almost laughably underestimated in our epoch. All this nonsense about love and unselfishness, more crude and repugnant than savage fetish-worship. Love is a thing to be *learned*, through centuries of patient effort. It is a difficult, complex maintenance of individual integrity throughout the incalculable processes of interhuman polarity. (45)

One must not only develop a healthy polarity or relationship with others around one, but one must also maintain one’s own integrity in the process; one has to perform a fine balancing act. Any tilting to one side would result in neurosis or perversion. One has to guard against ideas and conventions distorting one’s relation with others, but at the same time one has to maintain a healthy relationship with oneself. This is the dilemma that Keith May highlights in his essay on Lawrence and Nietzsche: “Give thyself, but give thyself not away” (*Nietzsche* 137). One must not submit oneself entirely to another. In *Women in Love*, Ursula resists doing that with Birkin, whereas Hermione submits herself completely. In spite of being rich, intellectual and socially superior, Hermione is a martyr who wants to throw herself at the feet of the man she thinks she loves. She also feels like she needs his support to make her whole. She feels “a terrible void, a lack, a deficiency of being within her” (*Women in Love* 29). Ursula, on the other hand, is completely self-sufficient; not only does she rely on no one, she fights Birkin and even mocks him at times. The relationship between Hermione and Birkin does not last because it is not an

equal relationship, whereas Ursula and Birkin stay together in spite of apparent conflicts. As May points out, for Lawrence love involves giving oneself, but it is “a voluntary giving of the wholly-formed self, not a submission of a fledgling self whose entire, adolescent mode is givingness” (136).

For Lawrence, the whole of life is an effort at establishing a balanced polarity with the outer universe. This connection is what ensures the development and evolution of every individual psyche and physique. Modern human beings have failed at it utterly. We use ideas to subdue the universe but these ideas also act as insulation between us and the world. Lawrence sees the human will as a great balancing faculty which prevents automatization in the psyche. For Lawrence the will is akin to conscience. But it is the spontaneous will that performs this function; not the will allied with an automatic circuit or with the mind: “The *spontaneous* will reacts at once against the exaggeration of any one particular circuit of polarity” (47). The will is something that becomes aware of an imbalance as soon as it is created, and strives to correct it so that the mental health of the individual is preserved. Fromm refers to the same phenomenon when he writes about a person being sensitive to himself or herself. When we are upset, we need only to listen to the inner voice “which will tell us--often rather immediately--why we are anxious, depressed, irritated” (*Loving* 116). The important thing is not to rationalize this voice away. This is what Lawrence means by the will allied with the mind--that it has a rationalizing role that keeps us from admitting the truth to ourselves and others.

The mind itself is by no means a bad thing. Everyone must develop mental consciousness. But, Lawrence maintains, “mental consciousness is not a goal; it is a cul-

de-sac” (48). It provides us with the means of arriving at our fullness of being and to adjust ourselves to the external universe. But the real goal is to live the creative life, avoiding the lapse into automatism. The mind is “a great indicator and instrument” but to use it as author and director of life is sacrilege. *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* ends with the pertinent question: “what tyranny is so hideous as that of an automatically ideal humanity?” (49)

In *Fantasia of the Unconscious* Lawrence’s tone changes from one of seriousness to that of flippancy and mockery, largely, one feels, out of self-defense. He warns the general reader in the very beginning to leave the book alone and even gives arguments for further thinning of his readers. Throughout the short book he self-consciously maintains a humorous and light tone, although his ideas are no less serious for all that. He rants and raves and goes into tirades against the objects of his hatred. In *Fantasia*, Lawrence deliberately picks a fight with the reader, provoking him/her into a reaction and laughing at him/her all the time. In doing so he dares the reader to mock him. But the ideas, as I stated earlier, are entirely serious. According to Anne Fernald, in this work Lawrence is trying, “in a belligerently anti-academic way, to combine ancient human myths with modern psychoanalysis” (188). Indeed, this is also the project of *Psychoanalysis*. In the foreword to *Fantasia*, Lawrence gives science its due:

I have nothing to say against our science. It is perfect as far as it goes. But to regard it as exhausting the whole scope of human possibility in knowledge seems to me just puerile. (54)

Lawrence’s position, then, is not as extreme as it might seem. The fact that he does not employ banalities and that his style is full of passion and fire might account for its strong

(positive or negative) effect on readers. But his position is in fact quite moderate. In the foreword to *Fantasia* he calls his work a “pseudo-philosophy,” and disparagingly refers to it as “pollyanalytics.” He confesses that this work is deduced from his creative work, and not vice versa. “The novels and poems are pure passionate experience. These ‘pollyanalytics’ are inferences made afterwards, from the experience” (57). His purpose in writing this book is to analyze the metaphysics of his time and to find out a new way of seeing things: “We’ve got to rip the old veil of a vision across, and find what the heart really believes in, after all: and what the heart really wants, for the next future” (57).

Fantasia begins with a discussion of psychoanalysis. Freud had attributed a sexual motive to all human activity. While Lawrence agrees that a large element of sex enters into all human relationships, it does not follow that sex is everything. The first motive for all human activity, according to Lawrence, is the essentially religious or creative motive. The sexual motive comes later, and there is a conflict between the interests of the two at all times. In the same breath, Lawrence declares that there is a close relationship between the two. “The two great impulses are like man and wife, or father and son. It is no use putting one under the feet of the other” (60). These two statements are rather contradictory. It is almost as if Lawrence, having made the first statement, thought of the second one as also being valid. One is aware that, among others, French writers like Zola and Maupassant have likened religious frenzy to sexual ecstasy in nineteenth century novels like *Nana* and *Bel-Ami*. Lawrence admits of the presence and importance of both impulses. According to him, the orthodox religious person wants to downplay sex and the

scientist wants to find a cause for the religious impulse. Both are in error because they want to find the truth without considering things as a whole. According to Lawrence, the religious impulse *has* no cause. The First Cause is an unknowable thing. Although a lot of what Lawrence says might seem mystical to the reader, Lawrence himself insists that he is pragmatic. He declares that he does not like mysticism. (64) This requires further elaboration.

The *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* defines *mysticism* as “[t]hose forms of speculative and religious thought which profess to attain an immediate apprehension of the divine essence or the ultimate ground of existence.” According to the dictionary, although mysticism springs from a religious desire to seek communion with God, it ignores the practical element in religion and leans instead towards the metaphysical aspect. Although Lawrence criticizes sole reliance on thought, he does not criticize thought or reason *per se*. He employs (indeed he must employ) reason to make his arguments credible and valid. In this connection, a consideration of his poem entitled *Mystic* would not be out of place. The poem is, as Charles W. Schaefer has pointed out, “a poetic exercise in demythologizing mystical experience,” or “demystifying mysticism...while defending its elevated function in the life of the mind” (31). In Lawrence’s words,

They call all experience of the senses *mystic*, when the experience
is considered.

So an apple becomes *mystic* when I taste in it
the summer and the snows, the wild welter of earth
and the insistence of the sun

....

If I say I taste these things in an apple, I am called *mystic*, which

means a liar.

The only way to eat an apple is to hog it down like a pig
and taste nothing
that is *real*.

But if I eat an apple, I like to eat it with all my senses awake.
Hogging it down like a pig I call the feeding of corpses.

(*Complete Poems* 708).

The simple act of eating an apple with one's senses alive to the experience is dismissed by others as mystical. For Lawrence, experience alone is not enough; it must be valued, relished, not taken for granted in a mindless way. Schaefer puts it well when he calls the poem "a powerful allegory of the fundamentally irreconcilable gulf between the poetic and nonpoetic mentalities, the irreconcilable gulf, that is, between the living and dead imagination, or, as the angry Lawrence would have it, the difference simply between life and death" (31). Being alive to experience is not simply to be dismissed as something mystical; it is the celebration of life that Lawrence never tires of advocating. One can see that simply satisfying the senses is close to being an animal for Lawrence. Experience gathers its value from being *considered*. Thought is celebrated as imagination, especially the creative imagination. In this sense both the physical *and* the mental aspects of human life are valued by Lawrence. The experiences he talks about are self-evident; they can be *felt*.

In *Fantasia* Lawrence repeats his conception of the different nerve centers in the body and the quality of individuality possessed by every being. But this uniqueness does not preclude other qualities:

This quality of pure individuality is, however, only the one supreme quality. It consummates all other qualities, but does not consume them. All the others are there, all the time. And only at his maximum does an individual surpass all his

derivative elements, and become purely himself. And most people never get there. (71)

One finds the same idea in Nietzsche's philosophy, as pointed out by May. Nietzsche "maintains that self-becoming is an exploration, a series of goals, each indescribable until one has reached it and is pressing on to the next..." (*Nietzsche* 111). For both Nietzsche and Lawrence, the majority of people are incapable of making this progress. Both mistrust a co-operative society as one which is standardized and has no real distinctions. Lawrence was not a believer in equality, and advocated leadership by a few exceptional individuals whom the masses should follow. As May states, in Lawrence's view "becoming what one is is supremely valuable and arduous. It is *the* value, the one factor that separates Lawrence's heroes and heroines from the rest of his characters" (111). One might give the example here of Connie and Mellors in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Both of them are misfits in their social classes and both transcend their given condition to become, in a way, classless. Clifford Chatterley remains a creature of his class and does not develop into anything. Rather he regresses to the level of a child in the arms of Mrs. Bolton.

Lawrence's project in *Fantasia* is to trace the development of a child's consciousness. There are frequent digressions and almost all of Lawrence's main ideas are scattered throughout the book. He launches a scathing attack on the "love and benevolence ideal" as he sees it being practised in his society. He calls love a generous impulse; but he sees the love ideal as prevalent in society as a dangerous thing. According to Lawrence, people should not be bullied into what is ideally good for them.

One must beware of having a high ideal for oneself; but one must particularly beware of having an ideal for one's children. "All we can have is wisdom. And wisdom is not a theory, it is a state of soul" (91).

The goal is *not* ideal. The aim is *not* mental consciousness. We want *effectual* human beings, not conscious ones. The final aim is not to *know*, but to *be*. There never was a more risky motto than that: *Know thyself*. You've got to know yourself as far as possible. But not just for the sake of knowing. You've got to know yourself so that you can at last *be* yourself. "Be yourself" is the last motto. (105)

Knowing oneself would mean having an idea of oneself and trying to remain true to that idea all one's life. If one did that one would be frozen in certain behaviors for the rest of one's life and no growth would take place. If there is no growth there can be no fulfillment. On the contrary, being oneself would mean letting one's unconscious or one's self unfold as it was meant to unfold by the divine creator.

Life is not a question of points, but a question of flow. It's the *flow* that matters. If you come to think of it, a daisy even is like a little river flowing, that never for an instant stops. From the time when the tiny knob of a bud appears down among the leaves, during the slow rising up a stem, the slow swelling and pushing out the white petal-tips from the green, to the full round daisy, white and gold and gay, that opens and shuts through a few dawns, a few nights, poised on the summit of her stem, then silently shrivels and mysteriously disappears--there is no stop, no halt, it is a perpetual little streaming of a gay little life out into full radiance and delicate shrivelling, like a perfect little fountain that flows and flows, and shoots away at last into the invisible, even then without any stop. (*Phoenix II*, 542)

Passages like this are sheer poetry and they are inspired by Lawrence's essentially religious vision of life. It is not simply mysticism; the mystery is out there, for anyone who wants to think about it. When the scientist claims that everything is cause-and-effect, Lawrence responds that saying that something is cause-and-effect does not resolve

the mystery. Life is not mechanical; it is infused with creativity. Dynamic consciousness is not mental; it is pre-mental: “Not even the most knowing man that ever lived would know how he would be feeling next week; whether some new and utterly shattering impulse would have arisen in him and laid his nicely conceived self in ruins. It is the impulse we have to live by, not the ideals or the idea” (*Fantasia* 105). But, Lawrence hastens to add, we have to know ourselves very well before the automatism of ideals and conventions can be broken. “The savage in a state of nature is one of the most conventional of creatures. So is a child. Only through fine delicate knowledge can we recognize and release our impulses” (105). Here Lawrence refutes the criticism that he advocates a return to the condition of savages. Although we cannot live by ideals, the impulse has to be recognized for what it is and released accordingly. One needs to realize that one is a victim of fixations before one can do anything about it. But one can never know anything fully. A definite answer is a kind of death. “To know is to die” (108). We can never know ourselves.

Knowledge is to consciousness what the signpost is to the traveller: just an indication of the way which has been travelled before...

Yet we *must* know, if only in order to learn not to know. The supreme lesson of human consciousness is to learn how *not to know*. That is, how not to *interfere*. That is, how to live dynamically, from the great Source, and not statically, like machines driven by ideas and principles from the head, or automatically, from one fixed desire. (112)

If one really thinks about it, there are no new ideas in the knowledge of the Self. The road has been travelled before numerous times. There are, of course, advances in material knowledge--in the knowledge of the workings of the psyche and the physical body, but metaphysical knowledge about the self has always remained the same. Only different

ideas have been in fashion at different times. These ideas keep repeating themselves in different guises and in different words, but they remain the same because mankind has not yet been able to solve the mysteries of life and death, of pleasure and pain, and the eternal question: “why?”

The function of the mind, then, is to register the workings of the dynamic impulse. It is not the originator of the impulse. The origin is hidden, unknown. We can call it God, or the First Cause, or whatever else we like. Elsewhere Lawrence calls it the “Holy Ghost” or man’s “vital sanity” or the “old Adam.” The “old Adam” is just another name for the original unconscious. In the essay *Introduction to Pictures* included in the posthumous collection of essays entitled *Phoenix*, Lawrence develops this idea in detail. He calls the mind or the spirit the self-aware-of-itself. This is something that can make us noble, but more often it leads us into degradation. For example, if a glutton’s mind tells him that the food he is eating is good, he will keep on eating even if his body protests and tells him to stop. This is clearly a perversion or a neurosis. According to Lawrence, we do not yet know how to handle this self-aware-of-itself. It can only be controlled by “the divine, or demonish sanity which is greater than itself.”

It is difficult to know what name to give to that most central and vital clue to the human being, which clinches him into integrity. The best is to call it his vital sanity. We thus escape the rather nauseating emotional suggestions of words like soul and spirit and holy ghost. (766)

The human spirit or the self-aware-of-itself traps us so that we are unable to act from this vital sanity. We are too self-conscious. All our emotions and passions are mental and self-conscious. Indeed, we see examples of this everywhere in today’s mass culture. The

films, magazines and popular novels are all produced keeping the love ideal in mind. As Richard Stengel says in his 1979 essay, *No More MoonJune: Love's Out*: "As lovers, we are all actors--we imagine ourselves most spontaneous when we are most imitative. We learn how to love from movies, television, novels, magazines, and advertisements. We learn to adore love, to idolize love, to fall in love with love" (138). There is no genuine passion to be found. This is Lawrence's argument exactly.

We can escape from this trap of self-consciousness by "going quite, quite still and letting our whole sanity assert itself inside us, and set us into rhythm" (*Phoenix* 767). The nerves and the brain are merely an apparatus for registering consciousness. Consciousness, Lawrence asserts, does not arise in the nerves and brain but in the blood. Lawrence's philosophy of the blood consciousness was one that confused many critics and scholars. Bertrand Russell was one of them. In his *Autobiography* he writes none too kindly about Lawrence:

He had a mystical philosophy of blood which I disliked. "There is," he said, "another seat of consciousness than the brain and nerves. There is a blood consciousness which exists in us independently of the ordinary mental consciousness. One lives, knows and has one's being in the blood, without any reference to nerves and brain. This is one half of life belonging to the darkness.[...] We should realise that we have a blood-being, a blood-consciousness, a blood-soul complete and apart from a mental and nerve consciousness." This seemed to me frankly rubbish, and I rejected it vehemently, though I did not then know that it led straight to Auschwitz. (245)

The last phrase would have exasperated Lawrence, for he did not advocate destruction but quite unwittingly indicated the processes whereby it might take place. As an instinct, brutality is undoubtedly part of human nature but acknowledging this fact does not mean that one advocates it. Hate and brutality are part of the baser instincts in humans that

need to be controlled by thought. As shown already, Lawrence stresses the need for such control. In every one of his writings he advocates life, not death. Even *Women in Love*, a book obsessed with the death wish, affirms life in the end for Ursula and Birkin. It is significant that Birkin, who rants and raves about hating mankind is the one who is “saved” in the end by his commitment to Ursula and decides to go South with her. In asserting her own desire for life, Ursula proves to be his salvation.

Now suddenly, as by a miracle she remembered that away beyond, below her, lay the dark fruitful earth, that towards the south there were stretches of land dark with orange trees and cypress, grey with olives, the ilex trees lifted wonderful plummy tufts in shadow against a blue sky. Miracle of miracles!--this utterly silent, frozen world of the mountain-tops was not universal! One might leave it and have done with it. One might go away. (490)

It is not only in Birkin that Lawrence put a part of himself; it is also Ursula, if not all the others. Birkin’s pessimism and death wish is counter-balanced by Ursula’s affirmation of life. In almost all his work, Lawrence demonstrates this tug-of-war between pessimism and hope which was undoubtedly part of his own personality. It is significant that in this tussle hope wins out every time. Lawrence is definitely *for* life. His essay *Whistling of Birds* is a hymn to life.

Written just after the first world war, *Whistling* affirms passionately the irrepressible renewal of life after death and destruction. The essay describes the renewal of the birds’ song after the long and dreary winter. The song is a metaphor for life that is *chosen*, willingly and deliberately. Lawrence is not alone in his determination to choose life. Many others have reached the same decision after grappling with the horror of death in their minds and souls. In *Whistling*, Lawrence celebrates the impulse to life that cannot

be quenched--the hope that lives in all of us. He uses the metaphor of the whistling of birds for his depiction of this inextinguishable flame of life and hope in humans:

It was startling and almost frightening after the heavy silence of frost. How could they sing at once, when the ground was thickly strewn with the torn carcasses of birds? Yet out of the evening came the uncertain, silvery sounds that made one's soul start alert, almost with fear...

It was almost a pain to realize, so swiftly, the new world. *Le monde est mort. Vive le monde!* But the birds omitted even the first part of the announcement, their cry was only a faint, blind, fecund, *vive!*

In its passionate flow *Whistling* can hardly be called prose; it is a throaty song that intoxicates the listener with its heady tones. Lawrence not only affirmed life but insisted on the inevitability of it:

We are lifted to be cast away into the new beginning. Under our hearts the fountain surges, to toss us forth. Who can thwart the impulse that comes upon us? It comes from the unknown upon us, and it behooves us to pass delicately and exquisitely upon the subtle new wind from heaven, conveyed like birds in unreasoning migrations from death to life. (*Phoenix 3*)

It was not for nothing that Lawrence adopted the phoenix as his symbol. The philosophy of the blood consciousness in some form might explain Auschwitz, but it certainly does not advocate it. Lawrence believed in recognizing and controlling one's impulses through knowledge. To say that he was for anarchy and death is to do him a grave injustice. Lawrence could not even stand anarchy in the individual psyche; how could he advocate universal anarchy?

We are unaware of the blood-consciousness, but it is that unconscious mechanism which makes us "breathe, and see, and move, and be aware, and do things spontaneously..."(*Introduction 767*). The brain, however, can transfer this spontaneous

consciousness into voluntary consciousness, which we *are* aware of. This is what we call, simply, consciousness. Sleep is the example of a consciousness of which we are unaware. The singing of a skylark is unconscious. A lady in a concert hall sings consciously, but a skylark does not sing like her. It does not sing mentally and deliberately, with the voluntary consciousness of the lady. The voluntary, conscious self-aware-of-itself realizes that “it is a derivative, not a primary entity.” (768) It also realizes that the spontaneous self is the original reality. The self-aware-of-itself is always egoistic. The moment it comes into being,

It begins to assert itself egoistically. “It cuts immediately at the wholeness of the pristine consciousness, the old Adam, and wounds it. And it goes on with the battle. The greatest enemy man has or ever can have is his own spirit, his own self-aware-of-itself” (769).

For Lawrence this internal conflict in man gives rise to external conflict in the form of war and industrial competition. For four thousand years, says Lawrence, man has been accumulating ideas and using them against his pure consciousness, his old Adam.

The queen bee of all human ideas since 2000 B.C. has been the idea that the body, the pristine consciousness, the great sympathetic life-flow, the steady flame of the old Adam is bad, and must be conquered. Every religion taught the conquest: science took up the battle, tooth and nail: culture fights in the same cause: and only art sometimes--or always--exhibits an internecine conflict and betrays its own battle-cry. (769)

This passage contains a whole theory of art besides encapsulating Lawrence’s ideas in a nutshell. When Lawrence talks about religion here he obviously means something very different from his own religious vision. Here he means religion as doctrine, as a set of precepts. Science and religion are the same thing in this sense. The last part of the second phrase is rich in significance and presents a very interesting argument. The idea that

culture preserves the status quo is widespread today. As we saw with the example from Stengel, culture indeed propagates the dominant modes of thought in a society. That is why the proponents of liberal pluralism today are questioned by theorists like Theodor Adorno whose view of art is not dissimilar to Lawrence's. According to the Frankfurt School, art is autonomous and independent of social considerations. Very often it is in conflict with the dominant modes of thought in society. Art's autonomy from all considerations except artistic integrity makes it probable that art has the potential to reach the truth, or at least get as close to it as possible. According to Lawrence, this truth would not represent "objective" reality, for example, that the earth is round, but would present a subjective vision--that of the artist: "The mode of vision is not one and final. The mode of vision is manifold. And the optical image is a mere vibrating blur to a child--and, indeed, to a passionate adult. In this vibrating blur the soul sees its own true correspondent" (*Fantasia* 126). What the artist sees does not have to correspond with "objective" reality but with the artist's own vision. "Truth", in this sense, becomes a subjective phenomenon, as also recognized by modern theory.

The Body

According to Lawrence, the spirit or conscious ego plants the idea of shame in the old Adam--shame about the body, and the idea that the body must sweat for the food it gets: it must work. It thus creates the nefarious idea of self-sacrifice in man. The old Adam has by now been broken and domesticated to a large extent as a result of this four

thousand year effort. The result of this domestication is that “the grand dynamic ideas” in us “go deader and deader” (*Phoenix* 770). They do not provoke any feeling or reaction in us. Love is one such idea:

The mob, of course, will always deceive themselves that they are feeling things, even when they are not. To them, when they say *I love you!* there will be a huge imaginary feeling, and they will act up according to schedule. All the love on the film, the close-up kisses and the rest, and all the responses in buzzing emotion in the audience, is all acting up, all according to schedule. It is all just cerebral, and the body is just forced to go through the antics.

And this deranges the natural body-mind harmony on which our sanity rests. Our masses are rapidly going insane. (*Phoenix* 771)

As an example of this insanity, Lawrence indicates modern humans’ enthusiasm for destruction. Since they are terrified of their own incapacity to feel anything, since they can no longer have any “living productive feelings,” they opt for “destructive sensations, produced by katabolism on [their] most intimate tissues” (771). All the modern forms of thrill are just the means to ever greater numbness so that ever more effective forms of thrill are sought. “We explode our own cells and release a certain energy and accompanying sensation.” Since humans must have sensation, and since they have blocked all means of experiencing genuine and productive feeling, they must go for destructiveness. As Fromm states, getting into an orgiastic state is one of the ways humans try to escape their separateness. (*Loving* 11) It is indeed a process of suicide, as Lawrence declares: “All the wildest Bohemians and profligates are only doing directly what their puritanical grandfathers did indirectly: killing the body of the old Adam. But now the lust is direct self-

murder. It only needs a few more strides, and it is promiscuous murder, like the war” (771).

These words ring chillingly true. The latest example of this self-destruction might be seen in the current rage for plastic surgery and “makeovers”; in the piercings and tattoos; in the horrendous number of suicides by young adults; in “road rage”, in the drinks and the drugs and in the mockery of love that is made in popular television programs where love is nothing more than prostitution. The urge for self-mutilation and self-loathing perhaps affects more women than men, as suggested by high rates of anorexia among women, by the countless number of “beauty products” on the market, and the by now common and horrible practice of breast implants, among other things. The body is under attack from all sides. The modern age portrays the body as disgusting. One of the reasons might be the objectification and commodification of human beings in today’s materialistic society. Science is busy “improving” upon nature’s handiwork in all spheres, and the human body is no exception. Human beings are objects for exchange, and their exchange value depends upon how close they get to the masculine or feminine “ideal”. Far from redeeming it, the current vogue for pornography and sex only further degrades the body and deepens the split between mind and body endorsed by philosophers like Plato and Descartes and their followers.

In his preface to the Compass edition of *Sex, Literature and Censorship*, a collection of essays by Lawrence, Harry T. Moore states: “Serious readers soon discover that Lawrence was a profoundly moral man and that he was obsessed not with sex but with life....This full expression of life is often concerned with love, not mere sex: with

love as one of the great oppositions to the mechanization of humanity” (8). As has been suggested

before, Lawrence laid emphasis on the body only to correct an imbalance created by thousands of years of despising the body. As Moore says in his introduction,

In the modern day world Lawrence had discerned and was trying to correct the present-day imbalance between intellectual and emotional elements, not only in sex but in all other phases of human life. He stressed passion and the emotions because humanity had so long neglected them: he was not trying to destroy the intellectual processes, but merely to bring them into their proper relationship with the emotions. (27)

This is a correct appraisal of what Lawrence was trying to do. Lawrence explains his position in the essays *Pornography and Obscenity* and *A Propos of ‘Lady Chatterley’s Lover’*. In the first essay he starts with making a casual observation which holds a great deal of insight. The meaning of pornography, he states, is “pertaining to harlots.” The phrase is, of course, a masculine and patriarchal construct, implying men’s widely held assumption that harlots are different from “decent” women. Men have always divided women neatly into two categories: the madonna and the harlot. The first is wife material and the second is for play. Bertrand Russell alludes to this distinction in his own mind when he talks about his first love, Alys, and how he prized the fact that lust had no part in his passion for her. (*Autobiography* 81) In *Marriage And Morals* he reiterates the fact that men are incapable of loving sexually the women they respect. Probably this distinction has served to absolve men of their guilt in exploiting women who are forced to sell their bodies to them. Whatever the case, it is (or was) widely assumed that nice women do not have sexual passions. In three short sentences, Lawrence puts paid to this

idea with great simplicity yet eloquence! “If a woman hasn’t got a tiny streak of a harlot in her, she’s a dry stick as a rule. And probably most harlots had somewhere a streak of womanly generosity. Why be so cut and dried?” (*Pornography* 64). Why must women be neatly compartmentalized into “decent” and “indecent” women when both roles have been assigned to them by men? A woman, like a man, is a complicated human being, often with conflicting desires and passions. The problem is that she is branded in a way a man is not, when it comes to sexual expression. Even in the twenty-first century, this problem is far from resolved.

In the essay Lawrence defines what is pornographic to him and what is not. Healthy expression of sexuality is not pornographic; it is when it becomes secretive and sly that it becomes pernicious. Moreover, it can be recognized by “the insult it offers, invariably, to sex, and to the human spirit.” This is genuine pornography that even Lawrence would condemn, because “[p]ornography is the attempt to insult sex, to do dirt on it. This is unpardonable....The insult to the human body, the insult to a vital human relationship! Ugly and cheap they make the human nudity, ugly and degraded they make the sexual act, trivial and cheap and nasty” (69). One can see right away and clearly that mere titillation is abhorrent to Lawrence. His concern is with endowing this most basic human drive with dignity.

For Lawrence it is amazing how ordinary people like to “do dirt on sex.” Common men have “a disgusting attitude towards sex, a disgusting contempt of it, a disgusting desire to insult it. If such fellows have intercourse with a woman, they triumphantly feel that they have done her dirt, and now she is lower, cheaper, more

contemptible than she was before” (70). Because they have been told that sex is sinful and the body is base, because they believe that a woman is inherently evil, they would like to be lofty and ascetic. But since they cannot help their own bodies’ impulses, go to women they must, but at the same time they feel superior by thinking of women as low and contemptible. Things might have improved somewhat in the West since the time Lawrence wrote, but they were certainly true in his day and are true of most chauvinistic societies today. Lawrence is right when he says that it is individuals of this sort who like to tell dirty stories and jokes and who wallow in pornographic material. They have “the grey disease of sex hatred, coupled with the yellow disease of dirt lust” (70).

On the other hand, there are those who make the whole thing sterile and meaningless by “disinfecting” it with scientific explanations so that the only thing left is the deliberate and scientific mechanism. These people thoroughly “mentalize” sex so that it is entirely a cerebral process. Either way its dynamism is lost.

In his essay *A Propos of “Lady Chatterley’s Lover”* Lawrence describes another attitude to sex. This is the attitude of the “advanced young” who are cynical and ironic about everything. “These young people scoff at the importance of sex, take it like a cocktail, and flout their elders with it.” For them it is merely “a slightly nasty toy” (87). One might say that this same attitude is very much prevalent in society at the present time. Lynne Schwartz highlights some of the reasons why Lawrence is not in fashion in the academy today in these words: “Lawrence is a ‘hot’ writer (passionate, I mean); our tastes are ‘cool.’ After the political and social upheavals of the century, we live by irony,

skepticism, disillusion, a distrust of earnestness that is expressed as scorn” (qtd. in Adelman 42). In her foreword to Adelman’s book, Sandra Gilbert gives the same reason for Lawrence’s fall from favor. He is too earnest, not ironic enough. Lawrence is aware of that and this is the very thing he complains of. He complains about the fact that only counterfeit emotions exist in modern life. This is because we have been taught to mistrust everyone emotionally, otherwise we might end up getting hurt: “Don’t trust *anybody* with your real emotions: if you’ve got any: that is the slogan of today. Trust them with your money, even, but *never* with your feelings. They are bound to trample on them” (*A Propos* 90). Materialism is bound to push out emotion. Since real emotion is ridiculed, the only thing left to feel is counterfeit or mental emotion. But mental feelings and real feelings are very different. Real feeling can only be felt in the body.

The body’s life is the life of sensations and emotions. The body feels real hunger, real thirst, real joy in the sun or the snow, real pleasure in the smell of roses or the look of a lilac bush; real anger, real sorrow, real love, real tenderness, real warmth, real passion, real hate, real grief. All the emotions belong to the body, and are only recognized by the mind. (*A Propos* 88)

This surely is an interesting hypothesis, and Lawrence states it over and over again, in different words. We *feel* things in the *blood*, in the *body*; not in the mind. The mind just registers the fact that the body is feeling these things. It is not such a far-fetched statement, if one thinks about it. Emotions were suspect for the rationalists and continue to be suspect for proponents of mechanical efficiency. It would be difficult even for the rationalists to pinpoint exactly *where* we feel our emotions. Do we feel them in our brains first and the knowledge is conveyed to the body later or is it that our bodies are hit with them first and the brain registers the fact afterwards? The role of stress and anxiety

in illness seems to indicate that the body is affected by grief much earlier than the mind is able to come to terms with it.

In his 1929 essay *Introduction to These Paintings*, Lawrence presents an interesting hypothesis about the degradation of the body in Western tradition from the Renaissance onwards. According to Lawrence, the English and the Americans are both paralysed by fear. This is the reason for the English failure in the visual arts, “for, on the whole, it is a failure” (*Criticism* 53). The fear started in Shakespeare’s time, and it was caused due to a social phenomenon: the spread of syphilis. The result was “a terror, almost a horror of sexual life” (53). According to Lawrence, Hamlet’s real horror is sexual in nature. He shrinks from the thought of his mother’s “incest,” he recoils from Ophelia and “almost from his father, even as a ghost.” The Elizabethans started “the grand rupture” in human consciousness; they were repelled by any expression of the physical and the instinctive-intuitive nature of man. According to Lawrence, syphilis or “pox” was something new in England at the end of the fifteenth century. “The royal families of England and Scotland were syphilitic; Edward VI and Elizabeth born with the inherited consequences of the disease” (54). The Tudors and the Stuarts were all enfeebled by and died out because of this disease. The nobility of England and Scotland were also pleasure loving and free living and were doubtless affected by it as well.

The Elizabethans seemed to treat the problem as a huge joke. “Pox on you!” was a common oath at the time. As far as Lawrence is concerned, it was a very cowardly way of meeting a calamity. In spite of all the jokes, the horror and terror of the disease were very real and deeply affected the people’s psyche, including their sexual life: “The real

natural innocence of Chaucer was impossible after that. The very sexual act of procreation might bring as one of its consequences a foul disease, and the unborn might be tainted from the moment of conception. Fearful thought!" (57) The fear thus ingrained itself in the consciousness of the people and the sexual act came to be associated with some of its horror. According to Lawrence this was at least partly responsible for the rise of Puritanism. This "terror-horror" element also affected people's feeling of communion with other people. "In fact, it almost killed it. We have become ideal beings, creatures that exist in idea, to one another, rather than flesh-and-blood kin" (58). By saying "flesh-and-blood kin" Lawrence does not only mean blood relations. He means it also in the sense of his favorite blood relation--that of blood-consciousness.

A deep instinct of kinship joins men together, and the kinship of flesh-and-blood keeps the warm flow of intuitional awareness streaming between human beings. Our true awareness of one another is intuitional, not mental. Attraction between people is really instinctive and intuitional, not an affair of judgement. (58)

The feeling of mutual attraction or kinship, which was hitherto physical, became mental and ideal. It was replaced with a social and political idea of oneness. People began to be afraid of the instincts and intuition. They suppressed them and thus killed the vital contact--the "intuitional awareness" between each other. "Now we know one another only as ideal or social or political entities, fleshless, bloodless, and cold, like Bernard Shaw's creatures" (58). Lawrence claims that it was this intuition that had given birth to great art in the past, like that of Boticelli or Giorgione. He calls this art "images of magic awareness." Modern people, particularly the English and the Americans, according to Lawrence, cannot feel anything with the whole imagination because "[t]he imaginative vision, which includes

physical, intuitional perception,” is dead in them. (59) Or, the highbrows work up a “cerebral excitation,” which is no good. But all of them are subject to a deep dread and hatred of “the strange intuitional awareness of the body, dread of anything but ideas, which *can't* contain bacteria.” (60)

To a social historian, Lawrence’s ideas may seem far-fetched, over-general, exaggerated and lop-sided--which they are to some extent--but they also contain a certain amount of truth. Certainly they support his argument well. As Garry Watson states in his essay *D. H. Lawrence and the Abject Body: A Postmodern History*, Lawrence takes Max Weber’s theory a step further in this essay. Weber states in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* that “the arrival of the Protestant ethic on the world-historical stage ushered in a new form of worldly asceticism that gave birth to capitalism” (qtd. in Watson 4). According to Lawrence, modern bourgeois consciousness “turns upon the secret poles of fear and hate. This is the real pivot of all bourgeois consciousness in all countries: fear and hate of the instinctive, intuitional, procreative body in man or woman” (*Introduction to These Paintings* 61). Since this fear and hate had to appear righteous, it became moral, condemned the instincts and intuitions and the body itself and promised a reward for their suppression. Morality as it is preached teaches people to be “good” and they will be rewarded. If they are “bad,” they will be punished. Of course, the distributors of awards and punishments are the influential people in society; the good who have gotten hold of the goods, in Lawrence’s words. This is the same argument Paulo Freire makes in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The oppressed are taught that the world cannot be changed; that things can only be this way and not otherwise. Through these means the

oppressors maintain their dominance over the weak, being all the time righteous about it. The “white man’s burden” amounts to the same thing. In his influential book, *Orientalism*, Edward Said documents how a whole discourse about the Orient was developed to justify the West’s imperialist policies. The natives in far-off lands were considered “uncivilized” and their subjection was rationalized as a civilizing practice that was undertaken for their own good.

As Gauri Viswanathan has pointed out in *Masks of Conquest*, English literature was taught as a subject in India long before it became part of the curriculum in England itself. The objective was to inculcate a reverence for English “qualities” in the natives. Palmer and Baldick have shown that in Britain itself, English studies was first introduced in women’s and working men’s colleges in order to produce a “soft” or “civilizing” effect upon them. It was used as a tool for gender and class control. (Slemon 153) English studies was, of course, part of a whole system of “education” designed to keep the masses in check.

According to Lawrence it was this “baited morality” that caught the masses and put them in the service of industrialism without their realizing what was happening to them. Thus “our modern ‘civilization’ of money, machines, and wage-slaves was inaugurated” (*Introduction* 61). This was due not only to hatred and fear of the body, but also of the imagination--which, as we know, is one of the non-rational faculties, closely allied to instinct and intuition. Watson points out that Lawrence uses the term “bourgeois” instead of capitalism but his idea is very similar to that of Weber. “In

summary, then, what our modern civilization is founded on is the suppression of the ‘instinctive, intuitive body’” (Watson 6).

Man and Machines

Industrialization was a great evil for Lawrence. As has been said before, he saw the ugliness and lifelessness it created at close quarters. Eastwood, where he grew up, was a mining town, and his father worked in the mines. There are allusions to his disgust for the machine everywhere in his work, but I will mention some instances where it is more pronounced and is dealt with in more detail. These are his novels *Women in Love* and *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* and also some of his poems.

Women in Love records Gudrun’s reaction to her home town when she comes down from London after a long absence. Beldover was “utterly formless and sordid, without poverty.” It was “a shapeless, barren ugliness.” The countryside was “defaced.”

She felt like a beetle toiling in the dust. She was filled with repulsion.

They turned off the main road, past a black patch of common-garden, where sooty cabbage stumps stood shameless. No one thought to be ashamed. No one was ashamed of it all” (23-24).

Gerald Crich, for whom she feels an instant attraction, is the industrial magnate who controls these mines. However, this is an attraction doomed to failure. Perhaps it is significant that as old Mr. Crich becomes more and more feeble and Gerald comes to control the mines more and more with mechanical efficiency and ruthlessness, the relationship between him and Gudrun becomes deader and deader. In the end, when he has achieved everything, when the factories are running smoothly without a hitch, Gerald is forced to face the void within himself. Lawrence probably felt ambivalent about

Gudrun. Sometimes it appears that he might have hated her. Certainly there is nothing pleasant in her association with Loerke, who is referred to as a clever rat-like creature. Gudrun remains mistress of herself, New Woman that she is. In her capacity as New Woman she is definitely much stronger than Gerald. She is both attracted and repulsed by the miners themselves, “powerful, underworld men who spent most of their time in the darkness. In their voices she could hear the voluptuous resonance of darkness, the strong, dangerous underworld, mindless, inhuman. They sounded also like strange machines, heavy, oiled” (138). Although the colliers are “half-automatized,” they still have a vital physical quality about them; a physical presence that is strangely attractive. Gerald, apparently, would want to crush such vitality, as he does with his Arab mare in the chapter named *Coal-dust*.

In chapter 17--*The Industrial Magnate*--Gerald's father is described as kind and generous to the miners. Not so Gerald. Gerald is destructive, and in the end this destructiveness turns inward when he loses himself in the frozen landscape. We are told that as a boy Gerald had killed his brother by accident. Gerald also objects to living life “spontaneously” and “individually” as Birkin would have people do on the grounds that everyone would be cutting everyone else's throat in five minutes if they were allowed to do as they wished. ““That means *you* would like to be cutting everybody's throat,”” is Birkin's retort to this. (48) Gerald really is the personification of the death-wish in the novel. It is no wonder that he is associated with lifeless machines. He also symbolizes the death of mechanized man in combat with the New Woman. In the contest between

Gudrun and Gerald, it is Gerald who loses because he has not been living as a man should live. In fact, he has depended on Gudrun to infuse him with life, as in the chapter entitled *Death and Love* when he goes to her house at night after visiting his father's grave.

He had come for vindication. She let him hold her in his arms, clasp her close against him. He found in her an infinite relief. Into her he poured all his pent-up darkness and corrosive death, and he was whole again. ...

He felt his limbs growing fuller and flexible with life, his body gained an unknown strength. He was a man again, strong and rounded. (393)

The Industrial Magnate is a brilliant exposition of Lawrence's ideas about industrialism. It presents not only Lawrence's own ideas but also opposing ideas from the perspective of Gerald Crich. When Gerald first takes control of the mines he feels a sense of power. His vision becomes clearer; he sees that humans are *instruments* to be used.

There had been so much humanitarianism, so much talk of sufferings and feelings. It was ridiculous. The sufferings and feelings of individuals did not matter in the least. They were mere conditions, like the weather. What mattered was the pure instrumentality of the individual. As a man as of a knife: does it cut well? Nothing else mattered. (257)

Lawrence uses this ironical tone throughout the chapter to indict both capitalism *and* communism. Of course, one feels, individual happiness does matter. Of course, man is much more than an instrument. Birkin muses on this in chapter 2 (*Shortlands*) when he thinks about Gerald having killed his brother. He wonders if there is such a thing as pure accident in the life of individuals and decides that nothing happens by pure chance.

He did not believe that there was any such thing as accident. It all hung together, in the deepest sense. (40)

Man is much more than a cog in a machine. Individual suffering has meaning and individual feeling is not to be trampled on. Feeling, emotion, instinct, imagination, these

are the faculties that make us human. Gerald is the incarnation of the mechanical and scientific ideal. He represents the ascendance of the human will--the barren, intellectual, mental will that is divorced from feeling, and which is pitted against nature.

The will of man was the determining factor. Man was the arch-god of earth. His mind was obedient to serve his will. Man's will was the absolute, the only absolute.

And it was his will to subjugate Matter to his own ends. The subjugation itself was the point, the fight was the be-all, the fruits of victory were mere results. It was not for the sake of money that Gerald took over the mines....What he wanted was the pure fulfilment of his own will in the struggle with the natural conditions. (258)

It is ironic that in the end Gerald perishes amidst the same "natural conditions" that he had hoped to subdue. He had not had the humility to submit himself to this "Matter" that was greater, more powerful and more mysterious than himself. The clay that sticks to his feet when he goes into Gudrun's bedroom is a chilling reminder of the potency of the earth and that he will be returned to it, no matter how much he fights it.

The theme of industrialization producing a crippling effect on man is also explored in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, written in 1928. As Mark Schorer has put it, *Lady Chatterley*, "like everything that Lawrence wrote, is an affirmation of life values as against the mechanization of human nature" (XX). According to Schorer, this general subject matter of Lawrence's work might be broken down into two themes: the relation of men and women, and the relation of men and machines. In the novel the two are intertwined so that they are inextricable. Rather, the former forms the foreground and the latter, the background of the novel.

The industrialist in this novel is called Clifford Chatterley, an aristocrat who has become paralyzed from the waist down after being wounded in the Great War. His wife

Connie and he shared an intellectual bond rather than a physical one even before he became lame and impotent. Now she stays with him out of a sense of duty, but without realizing it,

she is losing her vitality and her *joie de vivre*. Mellors, Clifford's gamekeeper, is a man hunted by life and society and has sought a refuge in the woods at the Chatterley estate. By his own choice he has been solitary for four years, for he considers society "a malevolent, partly-insane beast" (134). He has been in the war, too, in India. He hates "the world of the mechanical greedy." It is for him "a vast evil thing, ready to destroy whatever did not conform. Soon it would destroy the wood, and the bluebells would spring no more. All vulnerable things must perish under the rolling and running of iron" (133).

The nascent feeling between Mellors and Connie is threatened by this soulless society which will not allow genuine feeling to blossom; it is a feeling as natural as the woods and just as vulnerable and threatened. Industrialization has already destroyed much of the landscape, bringing ugliness in its wake. The motor trip that Connie takes through Derbyshire shows everything to be shapeless and black.

The utter negation of natural beauty, the utter negation of the gladness of life, the utter absence of the instinct for shapely beauty which every bird and beast has, the utter death of the human intuitive faculty was appalling. (171)

The miners themselves are distorted and reduced to half-men by industry. Mellors reverts to the vernacular when he talks about them to Connie. He wants them to realize that people need very little money to live on, including "bosses an' masters, even th' king."

He would tell them to drop the whole industrial life, bit by bit. Not through agitation, but slowly.

I'd tell 'em: Look! look at yourselves! one shoulder higher than t'other, legs twisted, feet all lumps! What have yer done ter yerselves, wi' the blasted work? Spoilt yerselves. No need to work that much. Take yer clothes off an' look at yourselves. Yer ought ter be alive an' beautiful, an' yer ugly an' half dead. So I'd tell 'em. (248)

We could tell the same to today's industrial masses, or middle-class workers, for that matter. If they do not have one shoulder higher than the other, they have stress, the most widespread modern disease, or migraines, or general anxiety and a sense of meaninglessness. Only, as already pointed out, today's consumer culture keeps them stupefied with commodities, including "prime time" television programs which usually shield everyone from thinking at all. That, and the reward ethic Lawrence talks about in *Introduction to these Paintings* keep the masses in line.

Even though times are bad, Mellors--and Lawrence--believe in hope and life. "All the bad times that ever have been, haven't been able to blow the crocus out: not even the love of women," writes Mellors to Connie in the end. The future is uncertain, but one can only do one's best and leave the rest to a higher power. (342) In the words of William K. Buckley, Lawrence presents here "a struggle for fulfillment that gives us not tragedy but possibility" (99). Unlike other twentieth century novelists, Lawrence does not uphold traditional views about unfulfilled love, or "despair over the conventional tragedy of a loveless world dramatized as inevitable" (105). He believes in change and rebirth; in the approach of spring after the dreary winter: "...the grass withereth, but comes up all the

greener for that reason, after the rains. The flower fadeth, and therefore the bud opens”
(*Phoenix* 536).

Yet a lot of his work carries across his despair at the state of things. In his poetry, especially, he bemoans the dehumanization of workers by the machine and by those who exploit them. His poem *What Have They Done To You?* shows his deep feeling for these workers:

What have they done you, men of the masses, creeping
back and forth to work?

What have they done to you, the saviours of the people, oh
what have they saved you from, while they pocketed
the money?

Alas, they have saved you from yourself, from your own
frail dangers
and devoured you with the machine, the vast maw of iron....

(*Complete Poems* 630)

In the poem *Kill Money* one finds his thoughts very clearly expressed:

Kill money, put money out of existence.

...

Make up your mind about it:
that society must establish itself upon a different principle
from the one we've got now.

We must have the courage of mutual trust.
We must have the modesty of simple living.
And the individual must have his house, food and fire all
free like a bird.

(*Complete Poems* 487)

Industrialization, in Lawrence's eyes, denied full living to human beings. The greater mass of humanity had been enslaved by a minority and by a system where the machine was the supreme god. Lawrence insists that a system based on such exploitation must be

done away with. The individual has suffered badly at the cost of society. Modern capitalistic society decrees that an individual must agree to be enslaved by the system if s/he is to survive. For Lawrence as for Fromm, the greatest casualty of the capitalistic system are the feelings, in particular the feelings of love. In *The Art of Loving*, Fromm states that love in all its forms is a rare phenomenon in Western society. Love has been replaced by “forms of pseudo-love which are in reality so many forms of the disintegration of love” (83). According to Fromm, capitalism is directly to blame for this state of affairs: “Capital commands labor; amassed things, that which is dead, are of superior value to labor, to human powers, to that which is alive” (84). Consequently, human feelings that have no exchange value are expendable. They are neither required nor valued. In fact, people feel a certain satisfaction in being desensitized, in being cynical and skeptical. This is of course a mode of self-defense brought about by the realization that genuine human feelings are a useless commodity in today’s society.

Modern capitalism needs men who co-operate smoothly and in large numbers; who want to consume more and more; and whose tastes are standardized and can be easily influenced and anticipated. It needs men who feel free and independent, not subject to any authority or principle or conscience--yet willing to be commanded, to do what is expected of them, to fit into the social machine without friction; who can be guided without force, led without leaders, prompted without aim--except the one to make good, to be on the move, to function, to go ahead.

What is the outcome? Modern man is alienated from himself, from his fellow men, and from nature. He has been transformed into a commodity, experiences his life forces as an investment which must bring him the maximum profit obtainable under existing market conditions. Human relations are essentially those of alienated automatons, each basing his security on staying close to the herd, and not being different in thought, feeling or action. While everybody tries to be as close as possible to the rest, everybody remains utterly alone, pervaded by the deep sense of insecurity, anxiety and guilt which always results when human separateness cannot be overcome. (*Loving* 85-86)

Things have only gotten worse since 1956, when Fromm made his lucid and penetrating analysis. Indeed, all these ideas had already been articulated by Lawrence over a quarter of a century earlier. Apart from the capacity to love, the other significant casualty of capitalism and industrialization is the loss of creativity for modern human beings. One of the most basic drives of humans is the need to create. When a person creates something with his or her own hands, it is a source of pride and joy to the creator. Workers on a conveyor belt cannot experience this feeling. This further adds to the sense of alienation, of having no control over one's life and one's productivity, and leads to loss of self-worth. A factory worker today would find the idea that s/he can have any part in changing the world laughable. According to Michael Lerner, people try to find solace from these feelings in their personal lives but find instead that personal life is not a safe haven from the world after all. (Lerner 151) As a result we are all eternally dissatisfied. There are different ways to cope with this dissatisfaction: some people turn to religion, others to careers, still others to addictions of various kinds, and some go through life looking for that someone or something that would put everything right. Needless to say, they are often disappointed.

The Feelings

It is significant that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was first named *Tenderness*.

According to Lawrence, we do not have any language for the feelings because we do not

even admit their existence. Emotion is a thing we recognize more or less. But far from being educated in the feelings, “we are not even *born*” where they are concerned. (*Phoenix* 757) We know that it is impossible to fake a feeling; either we feel something or we don’t. We can, however, lead ourselves into a belief that we feel something and this is the counterfeit emotion Lawrence condemns. In the end it is dangerous and deadly because it eventually kills the capacity for all feeling. Moreover, when we are trying to conform to an ideal, we only allow ourselves to feel certain things and not others. That is, we resolutely ignore everything we think we ought *not* to feel. This does not make for a healthy self. One day there is a reaction and the old Adam asserts himself. Then everything falls to pieces. This is especially evident in the case of love. Since people think that there are some feelings they ought to have, like the feeling of being in love, they fake it and even convince themselves of its reality. But, says Lawrence, sex is the one thing that will not admit of falsehood:

Sex lashes out against counterfeit emotion, and is ruthless, devastating against false love. The peculiar hatred of people who have not loved one another, but who have pretended to, even perhaps have imagined they really did love, is one of the phenomena of our time....All the young know just how they ought to feel and how they ought to behave, in love. And they feel and they behave like that. And it is counterfeit love. So that revenge will come back at them, ten-fold. (*A Propos* 90)

Lawrence also makes the rather surprising announcement that real sex brings with it an underlying passion for fidelity. Connie and Mellors in *Lady Chatterley* stay together because their sexual intimacy is based on real feeling and not counterfeit emotion. That is the reason why Connie’s affair with Michaelis does not go anywhere. Their relationship fails because it was based on ennui on Connie’s side and ambition on his. Lawrence

definitely believes in fidelity and in marriage. He harshly criticizes Bernard Shaw for his attitude towards both. The modern attitude towards sex is that it is something naughty. “Apart from naughtiness, that is, apart from infidelity and fornication, sex doesn’t exist....And marriage is empty, hollow” (96). Lawrence does not advocate adultery or promiscuity, but following one’s true impulse and staying true to oneself.

For all Lawrence’s emphasis on the self and the individual, he does not advocate that man must live like a hermit. “Togetherness” is an important value for Lawrence. Although for much of his own life he was misunderstood and ostracized from his own society, still he believed in solidarity and connection with his fellow beings as well as the natural world around him. In *Lady Chatterley*, Mellors seeks refuge from modern life in nature in Sherwood Forest. In *Women in Love*, too, Ursula and Birkin “run away” after Ursula posts her letter of resignation and it is in Sherwood Forest that they have their first consummation. Nature was a very powerful influence on Lawrence. He had a religious reverence for it. For Lawrence, connection with “the living universe” is imperative for our well-being. This is the very first relation. Then comes the relation of man to woman and finally, the relation of man to man. This relation, contrary to what some have thought, is not homosexual. In *The Mythology of Friendship: D. H. Lawrence, Bertrand Russell, and “The Blind Man”* Michael L. Ross discusses an important stage in Lawrence’s life--his friendship with Bertrand Russell which ended in a violent rupture. Lawrence touches on this kind of friendship in *Women in Love* where Birkin wants such a bond with Gerald but Gerald is afraid and holds back. While it is true that the nature of this relationship may be ambiguous in the novel, in *Fantasia* Lawrence spells out his

ideas very clearly, leaving no doubt in the reader's mind that this friendship would not be sexual in nature. Man needs communion with other men. He wants to engage in a collective activity with them, for man lives from an inherent sense of purpose.

Is this new craving for polarized communion with others, this craving for a new unison, is it sexual, like the original craving for the woman? Not at all....Men, being themselves made new after the act of coition, wish to make the world new...

This meeting of many in one great passionate purpose is not sex, and should never be confused with sex. (143)

Lawrence sometimes desperately wanted communication with other human beings, but he wanted real relationships, not social ones. In a letter to Trigant Burrow he wrote

I suffer badly from being so cut off. But what is one to do? One can't link up with the social unconscious. At times, one is forced to be a hermit. I don't want to be. But anything else is either a personal tussle, or a money tussle: sickening: except, of course, just for ordinary acquaintance, which remains acquaintance. *One has no real human relations--that is so devastating.* (qtd. in Schorer xvii, italics mine)

Any human relation would inevitably involve a power game. This is exactly what

Lawrence means when he says that love has to be learnt through centuries of patient effort. It means learning to maintain a balance between individual integrity and connection with another. This tension exists not just in love but in all human relations, even that of mother and child.

Man, Woman and Love

“Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
‘Tis woman's whole existence;...” (*Don Juan* 1.CXCIV)

Now we come to a subject which has been very controversial in Lawrence criticism in recent years. Lawrence agrees with Byron on the subject of men and women.

For him, man and woman have different, well defined natural functions. Man, as “thinker and doer” is “active” and “positive” and the woman is “negative.” On the other hand, woman, as “the initiator of emotion, of feeling and of sympathetic understanding” is positive and the man is negative. (*Fantasia* 132). The woman loves and the man is loved. In knowing and doing, man initiates and woman “lives up to it.” In saying what might seem unpardonable to modern ears, Lawrence does not privilege one thing over another. He poses the question:

Was man, the eternal protagonist, born of woman, from her womb of fathomless emotion? Or was woman, with her deep womb of emotion, born from the rib of active man, the first created? Man, the doer, the knower, the original in *being*, is he lord of life? Or is woman, the great Mother, who bore us from the womb of love, is she the supreme Goddess? (*Fantasia* 133)

This, as Lawrence correctly says, is the question of all time. As long as the world exists, it will be answered in different ways by different people. Lawrence himself does not attempt to find an answer to this question. It appears that he endorses equality between the sexes as a condition for healthy love to exist. Not sameness, but equality. To take again the example

of *Women in Love*, Ursula is in every way a match for Birkin--intellectually, emotionally and in moral courage. In the relationship between Hermione and Birkin, Hermione clearly lacks personal integrity and in the one between Gerald and Gudrun, Gerald is much inferior in moral courage to Gudrun. Even in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*--to many a chauvinistic novel-- Mellors is not domineering but tender towards Connie. Connie's being sexually submissive does not imply inferiority. Her submissiveness is very close to

sang-froid at times, for example when she tries to avoid Mellors on her way back from the Flints' and also when she thinks of Mellors as being ridiculous in the sexual act.

In our time the supposition that man is rational and woman emotional has been both challenged and endorsed. Early feminists like Simone de Beauvoir and Kate Millett maintained that women were as good as men in any field and proceeded to prove it. Now, some feminists, notably Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray, feel that women must embrace emotion as their own special quality and value it over masculine rationalism. As Margaret Edwards, professor of English at the University of Vermont, writes in her essay *But Does the New Woman Really Want the New Man?* women are now the "movers and doers" but they do not take kindly to the "wimps" and "wormboys" of modern society. As a common observation shows, says Edwards, couples that are complementary have more chances of staying together than those where the partners are more or less alike. "A logical mate for a person full of energy and drive and purpose is someone offering that valuable old-fashioned commodity, 'invisible support'" (112). Although there are men today who do not mind being cast in that role, women usually have a problem adjusting to such men. However, as a whole, men have usually refused to change with women. They have adjusted to the New Woman by simply letting her do all the work. As Germaine Greer states in *The Whole Woman*, today women's lives are nobler but they are also more difficult. Working outside the home is considered a privilege women have won, whereas housework is still taken to be largely women's domain with the result that women end up

having to do everything by themselves. Edwards quotes Gloria Steinem as saying that “[w]e are becoming the men we wanted to marry” (113). The New Woman is more and more likely to end up alone since finding a man she can respect is getting to be more and more difficult.

Since this is such an emotionally charged issue, women--and men--have strong opinions about it and there are as many opinions as there are people. To be sure, to say that women are more emotional than men is too general a statement and this perception is no doubt affected by cultural norms. Still, this is a common observation in many societies. In her Foreword to Jane R. Martin’s book, *Coming of Age in Academe*, Gloria Steinem talks about essentialism and how the use of this word has changed from criticizing generalizations about women’s experience to shooting down any statement about an experience of females, no matter how credible. “At the extreme, even using the category ‘women’ has brought ‘essentialist’ cries” (XV). Steinem is advocating action for women’s rights here and I am not sure how she would react to my appropriating her statement for my purposes, but the shoe fits, nonetheless. As women, we do share certain qualities, some of which *are* biologically determined--we would not be women without them!--and some are determined by the environment.

To return to Lawrence, let us restate Edwards’s phrase: “*A logical mate for a person full of energy and drive and purpose is someone offering that valuable old-fashioned commodity, ‘invisible support.’*” (Italics mine) This is Lawrence’s argument exactly. In *Fantasia* he admits the importance of women for men--not just for procreation but also for man’s emotional well-being. For a man, there is a time for worldly action and

a time when he gives himself up to his woman. At that time this emotional fulfillment is his highest moment.

All his thinking, all his activity in the world only contributes to this great moment, when he is fulfilled in the emotional passion of the woman, the birth of rebirth, as Whitman calls it. In his consummation in the emotional passion of a woman, man is reborn, which is quite true. (*Fantasia* 134)

It would be very hard indeed to accuse Lawrence of being a chauvinist after reading this statement. Man and woman both depend on each other, but in different ways. When a man is emotional, Lawrence calls it his negative mode. If he stays in this mode and does not revert to his positive self when it is time for worldly action, he is destroyed. This statement is difficult to agree or disagree with. Edwards talks about exactly the same type of men in her essay. The “wimps and wormboys” are the men

who shrink from marriage, from having children, even from the simplest assertion, such as deciding where to go and what to do on a weekend. They are “lazy,” unambitious in their work and unashamed of letting women pay. They do not embrace the roles of provider, arbiter, analyst, manager or leader. They avoid anything the least bit unpleasant. If a confrontation looms, they run and hide. (111)

These very same traits can be described in positive terms as well. In fact they are, when they are found in women. Why can they not be appreciated in men? Maybe there are some women who *would* appreciate these traits in men. According to Edwards, “the male ideal in feminist minds is no longer what it was, yet has taken no definite subsequent shape” (111).

It is as if Lawrence foresaw this confusion over half a century before it was articulated. He did not assert male ascendancy through any kind of chauvinism, but as

something in keeping with the nature of man and woman as he saw it. Man should be assertive but at the same time he should be kind. In her acerbic analysis of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in *Sexual Politics*, Kate Millett consistently gives a part of the truth to drive home her point that Lawrence was a hopeless chauvinist and misogynist. She accuses Lawrence of advocating that woman must relinquish her individuality, self, ego and will. According to Millett, critics who see Lawrence as recommending this to both sexes are wrong. "Mellors and other Lawrentian heroes incessantly exert their wills over women and the lesser men it is their mission to rule. It is unthinkable to Lawrence that males should ever cease to be domineering individualists" (qtd. in Eagleton 141). Millett overlooks the fact that Lawrentian heroes do not exert their wills when they are in their emotional or negative mode--that is, in their dealings with women. Of course, this can only happen if women do not come into direct confrontation with men as persons or individuals. In other words, men can afford to lose themselves to women emotionally only if they do not feel threatened by them in other ways.

Moreover, for Lawrence there is no question of domination or subservience in love. Such an imbalance destroys the relationship. Between Mellors and Connie it is give and take; both of them complement each other. Mellors is not the cynical seducer he comes across as in Millett's criticism. He is emotionally involved with Connie. His connection with her gives him new life, as it were. In chapter ten he tells her as much:

"I thought I'd done with it all. Now I've begun again."

"Begun what?"

"Life."

"Life!" she re-echoed, with a queer thrill.

“It’s life, he said. “There’s no keeping clear. And if you do keep clear you might almost as well die. So if I’ve got to be broken open again, I have.” (132)

Clearly Mellors is being acted upon as much as he is acting himself. It is not merely a simple question of asserting his will over a quiescent woman. If she is passive and quiescent it is conditional upon his being kind to her. Otherwise the relationship would not work, as it did not with Michaelis and Connie. Michaelis taunted her with not performing sexually as he wished:

When at last he drew away from her, he said, in a bitter, almost sneering little voice:

“You couldn’t go off at the same time as a man, could you? You’d have to bring yourself off! You’d have to run the show!”

This little speech, at the moment, was one of the shocks of her life....

“What do you mean?” she said.

“You know what I mean. You keep on for hours after I’ve gone off...and I have to hang on with my teeth till you bring yourself off by your own exertions.”

She was stunned by this unexpected piece of brutality, at the moment when she was glowing with a sort of pleasure beyond words, and a sort of love for him.” (*LCL* 60)

It is Michaelis’s cruelty that kills anything Connie had felt for him. Compared to Michaelis, Mellors is kind. It is this kindness that draws her to him: “Yet he was kind.

There was

something, a sort of warm naive kindness, curious and sudden, that almost opened her womb to him. [...] And after all, he was kind to the female in her, which no man had ever been” (136). Later, when they make love, it is his kindness that will forge their

relationship.

She yielded with a quiver that was like death, she went all open to him. And oh, if he were not tender to her now, how cruel, for she was all open to him and helpless! (196)

Lawrence is obviously sensitive to the fact that for a woman the sexual experience is bound up with emotion in a way that it is not for a man. There might, of course, be some exceptions to the rule, but the fact remains that in a physical relationship a woman is more vulnerable emotionally than a man. In *The Art of Selfishness*, David Seabury, a psychologist, highlights the importance of kindness in a relationship: “...successful erotic intimacy depends upon daily kindness. Nothing so quickly produces frigidity in women, or impotence in men, as hurt feelings” (140). It is not just a religion of sex Lawrence is advocating; it is a religion of love--love that does *not* exclude sex, does *not* rely on ideals and abstractions alone to be a reality.

Lawrence envisages a leadership role for men because he believes that unless men fulfill this role both men and women will be lost. But he does not imply, as Millett does, that women are thereby inferior and contemptible. True, as Gilbert and Gubar have pointed out in *No Man's Land*, like many of his male contemporaries Lawrence is uneasy about the New Woman, but even then he treats her with a certain wry humor combined with something like tenderness, as in his poem, *Poor Bit of A Wench*:

Will no one say hush! to thee,
 poor lass, poor bit of a wench?
 Will never a man say: Come, my pigeon,
 come an' be still wi' me, my own bit of a wench!

And would you peck out his eyes if he did?

(*Complete Poems* 540)

This poem is one of a series of poems included in *Pansies* on the subject of the New Woman. In poems like *Volcanic Venus*, *What Does She Want?* *What Ails Thee?* and *Female Coercion*, Lawrence muses on the role of modern woman and why she is militant

and enraged. Apparently he did not understand or sympathize with the feminist movement. Women were no longer “gentle” and “devoted,” but were “like little volcanoes / all more or less in eruption” (*Complete Poems* 538-539). As in the poem quoted above, if a man wanted to be tender to a woman, she was more likely to refuse him and try to be independent. But Lawrence lays the blame for female militancy on the shoulders of the men. If men were not “Willy wet-legs,” women would not be agitated. This is in keeping with Lawrence’s view of man as positive and active. Man has to have a purpose; to make creative contributions to the world. This is not to say that woman does not have such a contribution to make; but in Lawrence’s eyes her sphere of action is different--it is the realm of feelings and emotions.

Such a point of view is of course controversial and there would be as many opinions on the subject as there are people. In my view women saw the need to be militant in order to combat the repression and injustice they had been subjected to--and are still subject to in many societies. Being from a very chauvinistic Eastern society myself I can appreciate both the feminist movement and Lawrence’s views on it, although they belong to a different time and place. The dissemination of Western ideas in the East is more widespread than one might believe, especially among those who have been educated primarily in English language schools. Today, of course, the means of communication make it possible for a new idea or news item to be circulated around the world within minutes.

In patriarchal societies such as Pakistan, men have considerable power over women, sanctioned by custom and culture rather than religion. In many cases women are

not even aware of their constitutional rights or they do not avail them due to social pressure. Ideally, in such a society, men's power would be contingent upon their not abusing it. But if they are cruel, women must fight them. How many women would want to be militant if they were happy and contented, even if they were confined to their "traditional" roles? Power also confers great responsibility. If men shirk their responsibilities, if they abuse their powers, women must "erupt". This has been the rationale for feminist movements everywhere. Lawrence might have been unaware of ordinary women's repression by men. The woman he criticizes is the smart society woman who pretends not to need a man's tenderness but is sad and lonely without it. As Linda Leonard states in her book *The Wounded Woman*, such women have had to adopt the role of an Amazon warrior out of necessity but they become prisoners of that role and are then cut off from feeling and receptivity. (61) We keep coming back to the question: Is feeling and emotion a woman's dominant mode of being? If yes, is it biologically or culturally determined? In my view, it is a bit of both. Without having a tremendous capacity for feeling a woman would find it very difficult to bear and raise children, which is her biological function. Environment builds on this and we have innumerable elements in culture which serve to reinforce this idea.

Lawrence and Art

Art is one area of human experience that draws the most on imagination, emotion, intuition, and the other non-rational faculties. Any discussion of Lawrence and rationalism would be incomplete without a consideration of Lawrence's conception of

art. In his early essay *Art and the Individual* Lawrence talks about the aesthetic aspect of art, where the audience's interest is aroused "neither by phenomena or causes as such, but by the approval which their harmony and adaptability to an end" win from the audience. (*Phoenix II* 222) The experience of harmony brings us pleasure and the accomplishment of a good purpose is gratifying for us. Lawrence identifies two schools of aesthetic thought: the mystic and the sensual. The former was held by Plato and his followers, and conceived of beauty as the expression of "the perfect and divine idea." The latter was held by thinkers like Darwin, Schiller and Spencer, and stated that (a) art is an activity found even in the animal kingdom and arises from sexual desire and "propensity to play," and is "accompanied by pleasurable excitement;" (b) it is a manifestation of the emotion felt by man; and (c) it is the "production of some permanent object or passing action filled to convey pleasurable impression quite apart from personal advantage" (223).

Art usually has something to do with producing pleasure, but all art is certainly not pleasurable; its experience can even be painful at times. Shall we then say that it brings us to the truth? For Lawrence, art works do not necessarily have to be true in the strict sense of the word:

Not true, except that they have been felt, experienced as if they were true. They express--as well perhaps as is possible--the real *feelings* of the artist....Art...is the medium through which men express their deep, real feelings. By ordinary words, common speech, we transmit thoughts, judgements, one to another. But when we express a true emotion, it is through the medium of Art. (224)

Emotion and feeling are thus the *raison d'être* of art. They give the work of art its force and its vitality. Art is not concerned with political correctness or social acceptance but

with pure expression. This is its justification and the reason of its independence from social disapprobation; in fact art is usually pitted against social norms as is the case with Lawrence. An artist should not have to worry about offending various sections of society but only with truth as s/he sees it. This truth is not to be arrived at through observing social niceties but through the expression of one's deeply felt emotions. Emotions are not something that cloud rational judgement; they warn us against the inhuman rationality of war and oppression. History is full of good reasons for going to war and for oppressing peoples. Only when one thinks emotionally and humanely does one condemn atrocities of all kinds.

For Lawrence, intellectual art is cold and barren because it has no emotion but only wit. There are two things to consider in this regard. One, not all emotions are desirable. In that case, says Lawrence, the art that expresses them is bad art. Two, not everyone is gifted enough to adequately express his or her emotions. This is certainly true, even of gifted artists. As has been said, *Du sublime au ridicule il n'y a qu'un pas* (From the sublime to the ridiculous there is but a step). Lawrence had the gift of expressing himself best in his fiction. That is one reason why some of his non-fiction came across as ridiculous to some people. Lawrence sometimes makes fun of himself and his own ideas in his novels. For instance, although the sex scenes in *Lady Chatterley* are to be taken as sublime, Mellors appears ridiculous to Connie when he is making love to her. Similarly, Ursula frequently makes fun of Birkin's solemn tirades in *Women in Love*. Lawrence himself declares that everything has its hour of ridicule. (*Criticism* 338)

In *Art and the Individual*, Lawrence quotes Hume as saying that the chief triumph of art consists in refining the temper and leading us to acquire a certain disposition. This would enable us, says Lawrence, to *feel* a beautiful thing. One must train oneself to appreciate art and be in sympathy with the thoughts of others. This leads him to elucidate art's purpose:

What then is the mission of Art? To bring us into sympathy with as many men, as many objects, as many phenomena as possible. To be in sympathy with things is to some extent to acquiesce in their purpose, to help on that purpose. We want, we are for ever trying to unite ourselves with the whole universe, to carry out some ultimate purpose...

For Lawrence, this cosmic purpose, for every living thing, is to “come into its own fullness of being;” to learn how to become oneself; to learn how to *be*.

...[T]he central fulfilment, for a man, is that he possess his own soul in strength within him, deep and alone....

This central fullness of self-possession is our goal, if goal there be any. But there are two great ways of fulfilment. The first, the way of fulfilment through complete love, complete, passionate, deep love. And the second, the greater, the fulfilment through the accomplishment of religious purpose, the soul's earnest purpose. (*Fantasia* 156)

Lawrence pursued this fulfilment through his art. His ideas about art have been reiterated in recent years by the Frankfurt school, and most notably by Theodor Adorno. Modern critical theory takes art as a form of resistance to the exploitative forces of a capitalist society. In

Critical Theory and the Literary Canon, E. Dean Kolbas discusses Adorno's emphasis on the autonomy of art and its independence of social, political and practical considerations. Trying to use art for practical ends, even laudable ones, does not lead to the desired results but only to the perpetuation of the status quo. According to Kolbas, artistic

autonomy is “an irreversible historical fact.” This autonomy leads the artist to oppose “a society dominated by destructive instrumental rationality and founded on pervasive social injustice.” This ability to criticize is what gives art “its unique cognitive content, its capacity for being a valid form of *knowledge...*” (Kolbas 86).

Lawrence presents the same argument in his work, particularly in his essays *Why The Novel Matters* and *The Novel And The Feelings*. In the former, Lawrence calls the novel “the book of life.” As a novelist he considers himself superior to “the saint, the scientist, the philosopher, and the poet, who are all great masters of different bits of man alive, but never get the whole hog” (*Criticism* 105). In Lawrence’s view the novel provides the whole picture of “man alive.” For him it is the highest form of expression attained so far because it is incapable of the absolute. As we have seen, absolutes and ideals are anathema to Lawrence:

We should ask for no absolutes, or absolute. Once and for all and for ever, let us have done with the ugly imperialism of any absolute. There is no absolute good, there is nothing absolutely right. All things flow and change, and even change is not absolute. The whole is a strange assembly of apparently incongruous parts, slipping past one another. (*Criticism* 106)

Critics would agree that in his novels Lawrence escapes dogmatism because of this very reason. As stated before, novels are “pure passionate experience” for him. Lawrence himself advises us to trust the tale, not the teller. Art, then, is a valid form of knowledge for Lawrence as for Kolbas and Adorno, because it has a “unique cognitive content.” In *The Novel and the Feelings* he insists on the necessity of educating ourselves in the feelings. According to Lawrence we can do that by listening,

listening-in to the voices of the honourable beasts that call in the dark paths of the veins of our body, from the God in the heart. Listening inwards, inwards, not for

words nor for inspiration, but to the lowing of the innermost beasts, the feelings, that roam in the forest of the blood, from the feet of God within the red, dark heart. (*Phoenix* 759)

And if we cannot do that, if we cannot hear these cries in “our forests of dark veins,” Lawrence recommends looking “in the real novels and listening therein. We must not listen “to the didactic statements of the author, but to the low, calling cries of the characters, as they wander in the dark woods of their destiny” (760).

Earlier in the same essay Lawrence declares that we know next to nothing about ourselves as individuals. We have no language for our feelings. They do not even exist for us. But our feelings are the very thing that connects us to ourselves. Again and again in his work Lawrence gets back to the subject of the Self and repeatedly he asserts that it is a strange, mysterious quantity that cannot be explained. Here he calls it “the darkest Africa whence come roars and shrieks... a strange dark continent that we do not explore, because we do not even allow that it exists. Yet all the time, it is within us: the *cause* of us, and of our days” (757). This is the Unconscious as Lawrence conceives of it. For him, this entity can become manifest in art, particularly in the novel.

The concept of instrumental rationality is one that has been much discussed in the twentieth century and is still being debated. This is the same “instrumental reason” identified by Max Weber, as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. I will devote the next chapter to a discussion of this concept in the light of recent theoretical debates and how they relate to a study of Lawrence today.

RATIONALISM, LAWRENCE, AND POSTMODERNISM

As a movement, Modernism or “the revolution of the word” dates roughly from 1880 to 1939 (Bradshaw 1). According to David H. Richter, “since at least the 1930s philosophers have become increasingly suspicious of systems of thought that rest on strong, essentially unprovable axioms about the nature of reality, society, or human psychological processes” (*Falling* 9). Modern philosophers like Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Husserl and Heidegger all contributed towards this development. Phenomenology--the school of thought launched by Husserl--limited itself to an analysis of whatever is experienced, without trying to find out if that which is experienced has an independent and objective existence of its own. It is easy to see here the movement towards an increasing subjectification of experience. In his masterpiece *Being and Time* published in 1927, Heidegger asserted that human beings were not merely observers of objects in the world around them, they were themselves part of that world. As Bryan Magee has put it, “we are not in any primary sense ‘observing subjects’ or ‘knowing beings’ in the way traditional philosophers have regarded us” (*The Great Philosophers* 258). We are part and parcel of the world of being, inseparable from it. These insights were adopted by philosophers like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida to define the Western understanding of being in order to go beyond it and “deconstruct” it, so to speak.

In *Advocacy in the Classroom*, Gertrude Himmelfarb discusses or rather criticizes postmodernism and relates it to the new trend for the politics of the personal and “engaged” history. According to Himmelfarb, postmodernism is based on “radical

skepticism and relativism...a denial that there is any such thing as knowledge, truth, reason, or objectivity, and a refusal even to aspire to such ideals, on the ground that they are not only unattainable but undesirable--that they are indeed authoritarian and repressive”

(Himmelfarb 86). Today history and knowledge alike are considered to be based on the power structure and the interests of the dominant class. History is not objective, rather it is itself textual just as texts are historical. Himmelfarb states that the slogan “Everything is political” is now complemented by the new slogan “Everything is personal.” The feminist motto “The personal is political” neatly combines the two. In academic circles today,

[t]he suspicion of reason as “phallogocentric,” of logic as “logocentric,” of objectivity as “patriarchal” or “masculinist” lends itself to a subjectivism that exalts feeling, sensation, emotion, and personal experience. (87)

More and more authors are exhibiting what is now called the “nouveau solipsism.” The traditionally impersonal voice of the scholar has been replaced by the personal voice of the author, favored by the postmodern sensibility. (87) Himmelfarb cites the example, in this connection, of the postmodernist philosopher who “looks to the novel rather than philosophy for wisdom because the novel is not inhibited by such archaic ideas as truth and reality.” She states that “the new solipsism, or narcissism” goes hand in hand with “the absence of any idea--or ideal--of truth, objectivity or disinterested knowledge...” (88).

To me it seems that the typical postmodernist intellectual is uncannily similar to Lawrence, with his/her emphasis on emotion, feeling, subjectivism, and the uselessness

of setting up ideals. Also, the move towards the novel as the repository of wisdom was the very thing advocated by Lawrence himself. To my mind, Lawrence's ideas lend themselves well to modern theoretical movements, especially deconstruction. In the following section I will try to make clear some of these connections.

Lawrence and Deconstruction

According to the *Encyclopedia of World Literature*, the effect of deconstruction on intellectual life has been "to open language and sense-making processes in general to a whole range of possibilities, exciting yet often threatening, that do not submit to the control systems traditionally in force in Western thought." In *Deconstruction and the Other*, Jacques Derrida defines Deconstruction as an openness towards the other. Deconstruction draws on the worldview developed by Poststructuralism which states that there are no verifiable or universal truths and everything, including the Self, is a construction brought about by complex social forces. The poststructuralists do not believe in objectivity or impartiality in human affairs. For deconstruction, interpretation is an active process, so that the original authorial intent is seen as something which can only be guessed at. Every new reader brings new meaning to a text. In this sense every reading and every interpretation is subjective. Lawrence had pointed this out in his study of John Galsworthy while criticizing the old historicism:

Literary criticism can be no more than a reasoned account of the feeling produced upon the critic by the book he is criticising. Criticism can never be a science: it is, in the first place, much too personal, and in the second, it is concerned with values that science ignores. (*Criticism* 118)

Drawing on the insights of poststructuralism, deconstruction brings to light the binaries inherent in Western thinking at least since the time of Plato and seeks to undermine them. It states that Western philosophy has based its truth claims on a series of oppositions: male/female, logos/mythos, speech/writing, soul/body, with a privileging of the former terms over the latter. Philosophical thinking has taken this privileging for granted and has proceeded to construct a worldview in keeping with them. One of the mainsprings of deconstruction is the emphasis on paradox and aporia. Deconstruction “places all the terms of Western philosophy under erasure, while returning to those terms as absolutely necessary” (McQuillan 2). It has been called an impossible method--it is both “not a method and a step in, or towards, a methodology” (McQuillan 5). In deconstruction, it is quite possible for two contradictory statements to be true at one and the same time. That is why Derrida declares that deconstruction is impossible.

This reliance on paradox and contradiction as a means to reach the truth is not something new in philosophy. Fromm makes the distinction between Aristotelian logic, which is the basis for much of Western philosophical thinking, and “paradoxical logic,” which was predominant in Indian and Chinese thinking, in the philosophy of Heraclitus and later in the thinking of Hegel and Marx. (*Loving* 73) Paradoxical logic states that what is true is also paradoxical--or seems to be paradoxical. The proponents of paradoxical logic say that reality can only be perceived in contradictions, and that the One--the ultimate reality--can never be perceived in thought. “Thought can only lead us to the knowledge that it cannot give us the ultimate answer” (*Loving* 77-78). It can be

seen that both Lawrence and Derrida subscribe to this transcendental view of being. Let us consider an example of deconstruction's reliance on paradox provided by McQuillan. According to McQuillan, deconstruction must always be open to the other. This "other" is something that has to be taken into account because it is there; because it speaks before "I" do. The unconscious is one example of the "other" which is there and which speaks in me even before I start to think about it. But as soon as I turn my attention to it, as soon as I begin to analyze it, (like in psychoanalysis), it passes into my consciousness and ceases to be the unconscious. [The reader will remember Lawrence's example of sleep as a form of unconsciousness that we cannot *feel* or experience while we are conscious, although we are aware of it]. This mysterious other--in this case the unconscious--cannot be controlled or made an object of knowledge *in its otherness*. As soon as the attempt is made, it is reduced to sameness. It follows that if we are to attempt to define deconstruction, we could say that "deconstruction is an act of reading which allows the other to speak" (McQuillan 6).

It is my contention that both Lawrence and Derrida mean the same thing by the term "the other." The term is difficult to define--it does not simply mean opposite. For instance, in binary opposites like man/woman, West/East, mind/body, conscious/unconscious, day/night, the terms are not simply opposites but also complement each other. Day depends on night to be intelligible, consciousness derives meaning from the unconscious, and so on. Lawrence insisted on this very principle in all his work. The binary he focused on almost exclusively is, as we know, that of mind and body. Lawrence did not simply reverse the

binary in privileging the body; he sought to undo it by affirming the importance of both aspects of human life. As he states in *A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover*, "Life is only bearable when the mind and the body are in harmony, and there is a natural balance between them, and each has a natural respect for the other" (87). Lawrence's opposition to the idea of an "absolute" is also something taken up by deconstruction:

Deconstruction thus aims to modify the model of reasoning that relies on such hierarchical thinking, according to whose logic thought can and should reduce to a single, simple unity--God, truth, the idea, the origin--for that has led to the repression of much in Western culture that has been deemed secondary, derivative, or peripheral. (*Encyclopedia*)

Lawrence was preoccupied with the idea of the other several decades before Derrida made it popular. This other was sometimes woman, and sometimes the "God-whisper," the "old Adam" or the creative energy which was, in Lawrence's eyes, the mysterious cause of our days. The concept of the "old Adam" is interesting, not only in the light of deconstructionist theory, but also regarding postcolonial theory where "otherness" is an important concept. Postcolonial theory makes use of the concept of marginality developed by deconstruction. The previously colonized and marginalized voices are recognized and confronted to undo patterns of exploitation and injustice or simply to promote understanding. Marginality has been endorsed by critics like Homi K. Bhabha as a privileged position, since being on the borders means having access to more than one world. Recognizing the "other" is essential to recognizing oneself--the other and the self are like night and day, like the bright and dark sides of the moon Lawrence evokes in *Climb Down, O Lordly Mind!* Both are necessary to each other and to the whole picture. We ignore either one at our peril.

Lawrence foresaw the shape of things to come well before Foucault and Derrida articulated them. For instance, he anticipates Derrida when he writes:

Man is a changeable beast, and words change their meanings with him, and things are not what they seemed, and what's what becomes what isn't, and if we think we know where we are it's only because we are so rapidly being translated to somewhere else" (*Pornography* 64)

A better explication of the ideas of deconstruction can hardly be found. Deconstruction employs the ideas of de-centeredness, of the present rapidly slipping away into the past, of words not having any fixed meaning, to describe the complexity of human experience. McQuillan talks about the same thing while discussing deconstruction's concept of "presence." "Deconstruction...reminds us that we should not assume that the way we perceive the world is the same as the way the world actually is." If one were to say, "I exist here and now," there would be a very small split in time between one's thinking or saying these words and the actual moment they refer to: "The 'here and now' I refer to is always already past by the time I think about it, but I retain it as a regulatory principle by which I understand my present existence and so paradoxically it always remains in advance of me and part of the future" (11). In Lawrence's thinking as in deconstruction, there is no fixed center, no absolutes, no authority, in the Self or the world in general. Deconstruction brings to light the fact of *logocentrism*-- the privileging of certain terms over others in the history of Western discourse. We have seen in chapter 1 how *logos* replaced *mythos* as the privileged term connoting rationality, meaning and sense at the time of Plato. As Fromm states,

The idea that one could find the truth in thought led not only to dogma, but also to science.... In short, paradoxical thought led to tolerance and an effort toward self-

transformation. The Aristotelian stand-point led to dogma and science, to the Catholic Church, and to the discovery of atomic energy (*Loving* 80).

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the privileging of *logos* over *mythos* or *pathos* has shaped the world we live in today. The inequality implied by these binary structures is taken to be the truth or “common sense” or the “natural” order of things. For modern feminists, “the history of the West is a history of patriarchy or phallogocentrism (privileging the phallus).” The prevalent assumption has been that man is superior to woman. The complicity between patriarchy and logocentrism has been labeled *phallogocentrism* in modern feminist discourse. (McQuillan 9, 11). It might appear that Lawrence is implicated in the process of phallogocentrism with his depiction of man as positive and active, but he does not necessarily mean that because man is positive he is thereby superior to woman. The terms “positive” and “negative” imply difference rather than superiority or inferiority. It is well known that Lawrence did not use words in a conventional sense. He gave them new meanings or used them differently. Following Heidegger, Derrida coined new words to get rid of associations conjured up by the old terminology. Lawrence, with his strange terminology of the “Old Adam,” the “blood consciousness,” the “dark jungle,” was already coining new words and giving new meanings to old ones like “obscenity,” “pornography, and “the unconscious” long before Derrida.

This brings us to another rapprochement between deconstruction and Lawrence-- that concerning language. In a recent collection of essays on Lawrence entitled *Writing the Body in D. H. Lawrence: Essays on Language, Representation, and Sexuality*, edited by Paul Poplawski, several contemporary intellectuals take a penetrating look at

Lawrence's conception of the body and how it relates to today's theoretical debates. In his introduction Poplawski writes about Lawrence's "career-long quest to forge a narrative art-speech homologous to bodily experiences that are 'wordless, and utterly previous to words'" (xi). He cites Lydia Blanchard's 1985 essay, *Lawrence, Foucault and the Language of Sexuality* which deals with both Lawrence's and Foucault's concerns about bringing sexuality into discourse.

In her essay, Blanchard discusses Lawrence's and Foucault's preoccupation with saying the unsayable--with bringing sexuality into discourse. According to Foucault, the attempt to find a language for sexuality has only led to its control and repression. At the same time, this repression has endowed it with more rather than less power. To speak of the sexual experience is to limit it, just as it would limit a religious experience if one were to talk about it. Still, Lawrence was engaged in just such a struggle to create a language of the feelings and at the same time to question the adequacy of that language, particularly in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, which according to Blanchard is "perhaps our most important fictional treatment ...of the relationship between power, language, and sexuality" (25). She quotes Derrida as saying that one must resist language as far as possible. (32)

Lawrence also declared that one must know in order *not* to know, as discussed elsewhere in these pages. In *Lady Chatterley*, Lawrence explores the limits of language while at the same time employing language to do so, just as in *Psychoanalysis* and *Fantasia* he employs ideas to refute other ideas. The same complexity and contradiction lies at the heart of deconstruction.

Modern Theory and the Body

In her essay *Thinking and Writing from the Body: Eugene Gendlin, D. H. Lawrence, and "The Woman Who Rode Away"* M. Elizabeth Sargent mentions a number of contemporary scientists and philosophers like Eugene Gendlin, Sondra Perl, Michael Polanyi and Oliver Sacks, among others, who have brought out the body's role in all knowing and thinking. According to Sargent, "Lawrence was insisting on the role of the body in our knowing long before any of them" (*Writing* 106). Sargent uses the term *proprioception* to describe what Gendlin calls the body's "felt sense" and Oliver Sacks calls "that continuous but unconscious sensory flow from the movable parts of our body (muscles, tendons, joints), by which their position and tone and motion is continually monitored and adjusted, but in a way which is hidden from us because it is automatic and unconscious" (qtd. in Sargent 112). The same phenomenon, the reader will remember, is termed "blood consciousness" by Lawrence. This is the same process through which the child is attached to its mother, and the mother to the child, as Lawrence states in *Fantasia*. In the womb, the child's consciousness of the mother is

utterly non-ideal, non-mental, purely dynamic, a matter of dynamic polarized intercourse of vital vibrations, as an exchange of wireless messages which are never translated from the pulse-rhythm into speech, because they have no need to be. It is a dynamic polarized intercourse between the great primary nuclei in the foetus and the corresponding nuclei in the dynamic maternal psyche. (107)

It is purely a bodily connection, as Lawrence sees it, that relates the child to the mother. There is nothing cerebral about it. Moreover, this is a kind of consciousness that is never broken. All this talk of vibrations, pulse-rhythms and polarized intercourse must have appeared nonsensical to Lawrence's contemporaries. However, modern scientists and

theorists are now discovering and acknowledging the validity of his arguments.

According to Sargent,

In using writing to think in this way--physically as well as mentally and emotionally--and in theorizing about the novel as a way to think in and through bodily experience, Lawrence links himself with contemporary theorists in the field of rhetoric and composition, those who study writers' composing processes and the role of the body in writing and knowing. (107)

Sargent quotes Sondra Perl as saying that as we compose, we can *feel* whether our writing is going well or not. It is not a mental feeling but a bodily one. The body's "felt sense" tells us when we are expressing ourselves best--which words are adequate. She also states how according to philosopher and scientist Michael Polanyi we can know things we cannot say. These are things we can never say, even if we become smarter or find a richer vocabulary to express ourselves. These things cannot be articulated by their very nature. For example, riding a bike or recognizing someone's face are things we do easily enough, but if we were asked to describe exactly how we did it, we would be at a loss to put it adequately into words.

Polanyi developed the concept of "indwelling" ...to explain the body's crucial role in the production of knowledge, and this describes precisely what is needed in the reading of Lawrence's fables--a bodily indwelling: You cannot skim these fables for meaning but have to let your body dwell in them. (114)

Lawrence employs this indwelling to bring his characters to life. As mentioned previously, he puts a little of himself in each of his characters. If readers want to feel the full

impact of his work, they have to do the same. There can be no detached appraisal of

Lawrence's work that would also do him justice. In *Lady Chatterley*, Clifford

Chatterley's paralysis and inability to have sexual contact with his wife is not unlike

Lawrence's own physical weakness and impotence. Birkin in *Women in Love* is mocked by Ursula for his Lawrentian penchant for abstract theorizing and misanthropy. Not only does Lawrence put himself in his characters, he also brings out their (and his) weak points and subjects them to a harsh scrutiny. A reader like Kate Millett who is anything but sympathetic to Lawrence would miss this dimension of his work. Millett summarizes Constance Chatterley's situation thus: "Married to an impotent husband, Connie mops through some hundred and thirty pages of unfulfilled femininity" and "...the sight of a pheasant chick breaking its shell reduces her to hysterical weeping" (qtd. in Eagleton 140). One can only justify Connie's "hysterical weeping" if one has been feeling her "unfulfilled femininity" as she does. One would have to live in her skin. The little chick hatching is a symbol for the life denied her--she can neither live fully nor give life. It is the basic human urge to create, common to man and woman, as Lawrence sees it. At the risk of provoking ridicule, some women might actually feel unfulfilled without a satisfying sexual and emotional relationship with a man, and they might even be primitive enough to want to have a child of their own! The task of understanding such degenerates might be difficult but is not impossible. What *is* surprising is that Lawrence, being a man, should be sensitive to a woman's feelings, even if he does idealize her to some extent.

Rationality in Modern Eyes

In his 1992 article *A Pragmatist View of Rationality and Cultural Difference*, Richard Rorty identifies three types of rationality. The first kind is "the ability to cope

with the environment by adjusting one's reactions to environmental stimuli in more complex and delicate ways." The second kind of rationality "sets goals other than mere survival."

Instead, it "establishes an evaluative hierarchy." The third kind can be said to have the same meaning as tolerance. It is "the ability not to be overly disconcerted by differences from oneself, not to respond aggressively to such differences."

Rorty discusses how in the Western intellectual tradition these three forms of rationality have often been lumped together with the assumption that, because the West was in possession of rationality by virtue of its being technologically more advanced than other areas of the world, it was also *the* model to follow in every area of life. This view has been challenged for political as well as philosophical reasons. Rorty cites the examples of Dewey and Derrida among the philosophers who have attacked rationalism, phallogocentrism and Platonism. For the political side of the question Rorty cites Roger Garaudy, Ashis Nandy and himself. One might add Arif Dirlik and Aijaz Ahmad as two of the fiercer critics of instrumental rationality, particularly as it pertains to capitalism and postcolonialism.

According to Rorty, Dewey believed that "we typically solve old problems at the cost of creating new problems for ourselves." The profound social changes that were brought about as a result of the "New Science of the seventeenth century" were mixed. These included the elimination of feudalism, industrial capitalism, parliamentary government, colonialism and the search for cheap labor and new markets, the emergence of the New Woman, the World Wars, mass literacy and the possibilities of environmental

degradation and nuclear holocaust. These also led to man's alienation from nature and God, as mentioned already in chapter 1. Rorty states that "there is nothing intrinsically emancipatory about a greater degree of rationality" because the efficiency at one's disposal can be used to oppress as well as to free--to increase suffering as well as to decrease it. For Dewey science and religion could be brought together by maintaining a sense of the dignity of human nature: "The sense of the dignity of human nature is as religious as is the sense of awe and reverence when it rests upon a sense of human nature as a cooperating part of a larger whole" (qtd. in Rorty). This, more or less, is Lawrence's position as well, although

Dewey was more sympathetic to science and technology than Lawrence ever was.

According to Rorty, Nandy believes that modern science is built on a foundation of violence and that science today is closely allied with authoritarianism. Nandy claims that "the main civilizational problem is not with irrational, self-contradicting superstitions, but with the ways of thinking associated with the modern concept of rationality" (qtd in Rorty). Rorty likens Nandy's perception to that of Michel Foucault in that he sees modern science as having built "a structure of near-total isolation where human beings themselves--including all their suffering and moral experience--have been objectified as things and processes, to be vivisected, manipulated, or corrected" (qtd. in Rorty). This objectification of human experience is precisely what Lawrence attacks in his works, and that is why his works cannot be objectively assessed but must be felt, compassionately and sympathetically. They are not about things but human feelings, which can never be completely analyzed or objectified.

Contemporary Views of Lawrence

Academic climate in the last decade has not been very friendly to Lawrence. In a 2002 article Gary Adelman of the University of Illinois drew attention to the fact that Lawrence had been dropped from the curricula at many universities in the U.S. and Britain, and that his reputation had been in decline since around 1985. He cites Peter Widdowson and Anne Fernihough as attributing his fall from favor to the presence of “misogynistic” and “proto-fascist elements” in his work. Adelman’s own undergraduate students found it hard to digest Lawrence’s philosophy: “Twelve out of fourteen students considered him a sexist, crypto-fascist, racist caricature. This opinion is held by many academics, who now regard him as a crude historical curiosity.” Disturbed by this trend, Adelman corresponded with about forty novelists and over a hundred poets in the USA and Britain and asked for their opinion on Lawrence. The responses he got reassured him greatly as to the prestige accorded to Lawrence by creative writers. He concluded therefore that “the critical enterprise in academe is woefully divorced from the creative process.” Adelman’s article provided the basis for a slim book entitled *Reclaiming D. H. Lawrence: Contemporary Writers Speak Out*, with a foreword by Sandra M. Gilbert. Gilbert attributes the hostility shown to Lawrence as

different and conflicting attitudes toward what, following Wilde, we might call the importance of being *earnest*.

In referring to “earnestness” here I mean to evoke a quality of passionate commitment and unwavering frankness--a kind of deep seriousness--that seems to me always to have characterized Lawrence, even at his most comic or ironic. (9-10)

Although Lawrence frequently employed a rather flippant style to get his ideas across, he took those ideas very seriously. He passionately believed in whatever he advocated and felt the emotions he portrayed in his works. Apparently this childlike earnestness has been considered mere naivete in intellectual circles during the past few decades. Richard Powers calls the prevailing climate in the academy “the age of the absolute apotheosis of irony” (Adelman 43). The general consensus seems to be that the post World War II world is characterized by irony, disillusionment and political correctness. These factors combined might be said to account for the decline in Lawrence’s literary reputation.

A common observation about trends and fashions is that they keep coming back. If Lawrence was out of favor in the 1990s there is reason to believe that he is making a comeback. In fact, ever since his death, his fortunes seem to have changed every twenty years. Following his death in 1930, his posthumous papers published under the title of *Phoenix* were not well received. (*Phoenix II ix*) It was a few years after the war that readers began to appreciate his works and by the early 1950s a revival was well under way. The most influential critic to firmly install Lawrence into the literary canon was F. R. Leavis, whose 1956 book entitled *D. H. Lawrence: Novelist* paid tribute to him as a novelist and as a man. After occupying a place of eminence in literary circles in the 1960s and 1970s, Lawrence’s works came under attack for not being politically correct, as has already been pointed out. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, a revival of Lawrence’s reputation seems to be in the air. Recently several new books on Lawrence

have been published and critics are turning their attention to him again, albeit through the lens of modern theory. James Cowan, Amit Chaudhuri, Keith Cushman and Ronald Granofsky are some of the writers whose books on Lawrence have appeared as recently as 2002 and 2003. It seems to me that this revival is in keeping with the new postmodernist sensibility. Movements like deconstruction, postcolonialism, cultural studies and even the new feminism owe their existence to a new climate of hope that has grown out of the despair and disillusionment that had marked modernism. And it is precisely hope that Lawrence writes about in his works.

We know that the rose comes to blossom. We know that we are incipient with blossom. It is our business to go as we are impelled, with faith and pure spontaneous morality, knowing that the rose blossoms, and taking that knowledge for sufficient. (*Love* 38)

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